Generation Z and the
Future of Creative Work

Engage 46 Summer 2022

Contents

Foreword

Jane Sillis
Director, Engage

As we launch Engage Journal 46 *Generation Z and the Future of Creative Work* in July 2022, young people and the creative and cultural sector face unprecedented times with the twin spectres of Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis. Sarah Perks, in her editorial summarises the conditions for 10–25-year-olds who work or aspire to have careers in the creative and cultural sector. These include: the negative consequences of the pandemic on young people's training, education, employment and progression; and the paucity of meaningful employment and of genuine opportunities to influence the creative and cultural sector. Despite this, Engage Journal 46 highlights the positive role of the arts in supporting young people's health and wellbeing, addressing inequalities and providing skills and experience which can significantly boost young people's prospects.

Engage has delivered significant programmes in the last 24 months with participants from Generation Z which powerfully demonstrate similar findings. Engage Scotland's *ART evolution* with 44 16-25 year olds supported a co-produced project hosted by three visual arts organisations across Scotland[1]. Supported by Creative Scotland and the Fleming Collection, *ART evolution* sought to remove barriers to visual arts participation exacerbated by Covid-19. Initial evaluation findings demonstrate participants gained enhanced confidence which in turn contributed to their wellbeing. The Engage Cymru *Change Makers* programme supported 30 14-19 year olds

to undertake accredited placements with three South Wales cultural hosts[2]. Prioritising Global Majority young people, participants reported placements gave them a voice and exposure to employment opportunities with the cultural sector, often for the first time. *Change Makers* was supported by Arts Council Wales, Arts and Business Cymru, Newport Fusion, Wales and West Housing Association and Cardiff and Vale Health Charity. The 2021 Alexandra Reinhardt Memorial Award artist commission provides a further example, with nine further education students producing a collaborative exhibition at The Tetley, Leeds[3]. Working with an artist and staff at The Tetley opened students' eyes to potential for careers in the cultural sector, a revelation for participants and their families.

Alongside these initiatives, Engage is committed to supporting members to be effective advocates for the value of participation and engagement in the visual arts. We are painfully aware of the perilous state of art and design education and the negative impact this has on Generation Z's access to high quality art and design education or a career in the creative sector. This is evidenced by *Art Now*, UK-wide research for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in Education with the teaching profession, commissioned by the National Society for Education in Art and Design; and Queen Margaret University's research, *Mapping Contemporary Visual Art and Design Education in Scotland*, commissioned by Engage Scotland and funded by

Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government[4]. Both pieces of research demonstrate the erosion of art and design education for young people and how this has been intensified by the pandemic, but are also a call to arms for government across the UK to support young people – the next generation of the creative workforce – to access education, training and employment in the creative and cultural sectors.

Notes

1 *ART evolution,* **https://engage.org/news/announcing-art-evolution-2/** [Accessed Wednesday 22 June 2022.]

2 *Change Makers*, **https://engage.org/news/change-makers/** [Accessed Wednesday 22 June 2022.]

3 *Alexandra Reinhardt Memorial Award* (ARMA), **https://engage.org/happenings/arma/** [Accessed Wednesday 22 June 2022.]

4 *Mapping Contemporary Visual Art and Design Education in Scotland*, March 2022 **https://engage.org/resources/mapping-contemporary-visual-art-and-design-education-in-scotland/**

Image

Change Makers Engage Cymru

Listed Engage Project Funders

Art Evolution: Art Evolution was supported by Creative Scotland and the Fleming Collection.

Engage Cymru Change Makers: Change Makers was supported by Arts Council Wales, Arts and Business Cymru, Newport Fusion, Wales and West Housing Association and Cardiff and Vale Health Charity.

ARMA: Alexandra Reinhardt Memorial Award artist commission is supported by the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust.

Mapping Contemporary Visual Art and Design Education in Scotland: Mapping Contemporary Visual Art and Design Education in Scotland was funded by Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government.

Editor's Introduction

Sarah Perks
Engage Journal & Podcast Editor, curator and Professor

'Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.'

A popular quote, often attributed to Confucius or Mark Twain but likely an obscure 1980s US Professor of Philosophy Arthur Szathmary who, in turn, says he got it from somewhere else[1]. From wherever it originates, the intention encapsulates a myriad of myths about working in the creative industries, from that of the genius solitary artist to the notion that somehow creative endeavours are not real work. Alongside this,

further research into the creative industries generally shows growth despite the pandemic and often optimistic targets for new jobs in the wider sector in the future[2]. However, data from a report last year, *The impact of Covid-19 on jobs in the cultural sector*, suggests that younger workers (under 25) alongside Disabled people and those without higher education qualifications have been disproportionality affected in the workforce by the pandemic[3], leaving their jobs at a much higher rate. Higher and degree apprenticeships

are now starting that align with programming and engagement[4], and alternatives to traditional provision are building new pathways for a range of needs including neurodiversity and social mobility[5]. Project Art Works' Turner Prize nomination has meant their ethos of collaboration has received a much higher visibility, in the pages of *Vogue*, for example[6]. What are the implications of all of this – and more – on the future workforce of visual art engagement and participation and its related areas?

The decision through the Editorial Advisory Board to focus solely on Generation Z might be considered one that limits or is problematic both in terms of acknowledging a range of ages as early career or entrants into a workforce, and also for lumping together a 15-year age range into easily consumable stereotypes. This is not the intention, but it is important to prefix this journal edition with an acknowledgement of the limitations of this lens, and a defence of the consideration of young people solely. By narrowing our canon, we hoped to capture the concerns of a moment in which young people had been subjected to a tremendous moment of uncertainty and instability in their developing years, and further acknowledge intersectionality within this demographic (of which, arguably, all of us have some lived experience). It is also to recognise young people as a priority focus for our programmes and projects in our sector and for the funders and stakeholders who govern the cultural landscape. And finally, we acknowledge this issue has not been handed over entirely to Generation Z, as this journal focuses on a specific, specialised intergenerational workforce of visual art engagement and participation that is Engage's membership, who develop work with and for young people.

Analysis

Nicola Sim begins the journal with a consideration of placements and pathways into creative and cultural organisations informed by both new developments in work habits and her own evaluation work at Somerset House. Sim considers what notions of hybridity and flexibility

actually mean here, and how important it is to regularly assess our own and our corporate assumptions. Bella Emrys is a board member of Offset in Milton Keynes and a member of Generation Z. For *In our own words* she records and provides a commentary for a discussion with her peer group. The contribution is honest and illuminating, particularly how strongly the group feel about issues such as communications and relationships with them, and their desire for more apprenticeships in our sectors. The need for real and meaningful work experience is a frequent call throughout this journal, here perfectly summarised as 'so you actually get your foot in that door as opposed to just looking through the window.'

In *Mills and more: inspiring textile futures in West Yorkshire*, Julia Roebuck tracks a decline in training and opportunities for an area steeped in textile heritage and experience, and covers the potential of collaborative initiatives such as *WOVEN* and *Our Biennial* in Kirklees as agents of change. Elsewhere, Gen Z has been nicknamed Zoomers, referencing their perceived ubiquitous use of the internet and social media, but are older generations actually reinforcing rather bridging any divides? This is part of the discussion instigated by Adam Stoneman with a group in Dublin. Using IMMA's programmes and experience as a starting point, *What Generation Z can teach us about digital engagement* reflects on the integration of technology in educational settings, in methods of production, and as tools for engagement.

Action

In Glasgow, GOMA's Youth Group has worked together to produce an important resource called *The Future of Creative Work*. This is a checklist for organisations to use to reflect on their own practices. It's also a valuable critique of our journal thematic questions and positioning, as they fairly point out that *how* we ask our questions can influence the answer. With the experience of setting up a co-creation agency with Gen Z in Bristol, Kamina Walton presents a strong and inclusive call to action in *Rise up! How to radically shift the creative sector towards true cooperation and inclusion*. Walton provides a breadth of examples and practical solutions on how we co-create and hand over leadership to young people, ending with a series of questions to be posed to the current leaders of our sector organisations. Rachel Moss is a freelance arts evaluator who uses her recent experience to outline the current progression routes available, and propose a number of methods, including mentoring and retention, to create a multifaceted approach for the future. There's also a pertinent point to question our start and stop dates for career development, with Moss suggesting building aspirations at both a younger age and also extending structured support for those older.

Empathy

The third section of the journal builds on a strong line of discourse throughout this edition, that of an agenda of care, and this reflects our sector's ongoing commitment to meeting a wider range of needs and developing a more sophisticated and integrated approach to diversity and inclusion. With reference to their *Tackling the*

Blues project, Emma Curd and the learning team from Tate Liverpool dissect their approaches to, and learning from their work with mental health literacy, also offering practical guidance on how to embed mental health holistically into projects. In Edinburgh, the Fruitmarket's *Celebrate Art, Celebrate You* project has a focus on working with participants who have experience of mental health issues, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or Autism. Their contribution is a conversation that considers the role of identity in its widest sense and how it impacts on their collective and individual journeys. It's also a reminder to reflect and celebrate success, as Bea Makan states: 'I started as a participant who was so anxious I barely spoke and now, three years later I'm the trainee on the project, being paid to do what I love and I'm about to go to art school after the summer. It really is amazing.'

In the early part of 2022, the Centre of Excellence in Creative Education, With Flying Colours, Plymouth Cultural Education Partnership and Plymouth Culture hosted an event online and in Plymouth. The event, called *Caring and Creative Learning for Young People through, and beyond, COVID-19*, was an important contribution to considering how creative education with a specific focus on the visual arts are changing and being understood with and for children and young people in the post-pandemic context. Provocations and conversations have been edited especially for this journal, which also now publishes the collective manifesto produced by the attendees, who included Cardiff-based Turner Prize nominated collective Gentle/Radical alongside over 50 national and international artists and organisations. This manifesto, *Creative Education and Support for Young People – Call to Action!* also serves as a provocative conclusion in itself for the journal. Somewhere between an advisory column and a 10-point plan, it functions to remind us that, regardless of our varied roles, there are principals that we can adopt personally whilst campaigning for change in all directions.

This edition is notable for strong and similar threads: the need for inclusivity, a lack of opportunity and meaningful work experience,
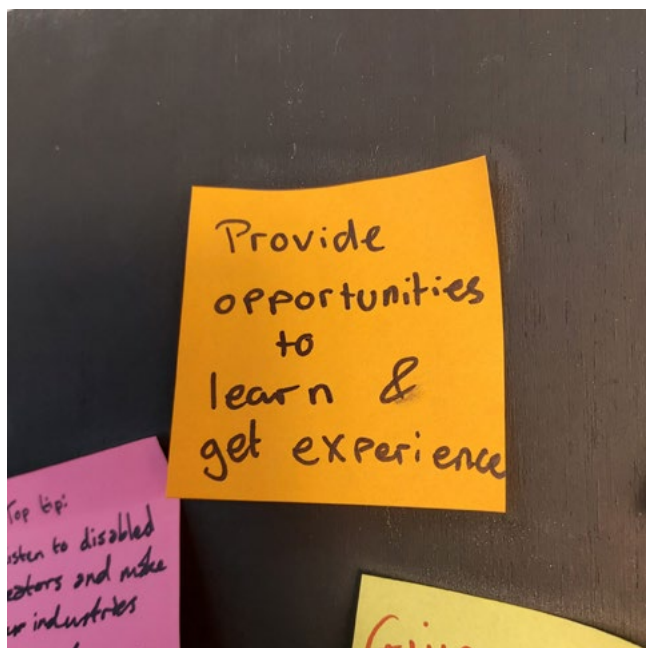
and the desire to look holistically for solutions. There's also a cross-sector and interdisciplinary underpinning, both conceptually and practically, many of the thoughts, comments, and projects cross forms and fields; collaboration with subjects such as science to sport, work across formal and informal education, connection to local civic and global societal agendas. The strategy and projects are increasingly complex in their design and outcomes, and this complexity is also potentially one of the biggest challenges for engagement and participatory practice in the future. How we will truly develop and embody these new values, experiences and skills for this, and the next, generations?

Perhaps a nod to the future comes from Gen Z in their conversation in Milton Keynes:

'We could have art and maths also linked the same amount. Maybe that art industries could blend into other careers as well, and education could maybe push it further along to help people understand that they're not separate subjects and everything can be intertwined.'

— Excerpt from *In our own words*

Notes

1 See **https://quoteinvestigator. com/2014/09/02/job-love/** [Accessed on Tuesday 3 May 2022.]

2 See **https://www.fenews.co.uk/skills/ creative-industries-can-create-300-000- new-jobs-and-generate-an-extra-28bn-for- the-economy-by-2025/** and **https://www. thecreativeindustries.co.uk/facts-figures/ uk-has-almost-2-3m-creative-industries-jobs- official-data** [Accessed on Sunday 1 May 2022.]

3 See **https://www.culturehive.co.uk/ CVIresources/the-impact-of-covid-19-on- jobs-in-the-cultural-sector-part-2/** [Accessed on Sunday 1 May 2022.]

4 MIMA and Teesside University – with myself as a co-course leader – has launched the first apprenticeship in Curating, see **https://www. tees.ac.uk/sections/news/pressreleases_ story.cfm?story_id=7706&this_issue_ title=September%202021&this_issue=340** [Accessed on Sunday 1 May 2022.]

5 See **https://www.a-n.co.uk/tag/alternative- art-school/** [Accessed on Sunday 1 May 2022.]

6 See **https://www.vogue.co.uk/arts-and- lifestyle/article/project-art-works** [Accessed on Sunday 1 May 2022.]

Images

1 Change Makers Engage Cymru

2 Change Makers Engage Cymru

3 Image supplied by The Turnpike for ARMA 2021

4 Image provided by Offset Projects

Hustling, hybridity and changing attitudes to work in the arts

Dr Nicola Sim
Independent Researcher/Evaluator

For years, entry-level placement schemes have been one of the cultural sector's main answers to broadening the diversity of organisations and recruiting younger practitioners who may not access positions through standard routes. While unpaid internships have been rightly phased out, in their place are paid initiatives that seek to shake up the narrow pipeline for accessing arts jobs and foster a more representative workforce. These inclusive recruitment schemes are sometimes criticised for only making a difference at the junior end of organisations, and for only making a temporary difference to individuals, who still have to navigate the competitive, largely white, middle class, highly educated art world once their placement ends. This is a risk all arts institutions should be concerned about. The short-termism baked into these programmes means that younger, under-represented employees are also the least secure.

But what does job security mean for Generation Z? Do members of this generation want a Monday-Friday institutional job? This text looks at the present day landscape of hybrid careers and generational shifts in attitude towards permanent and freelance work. Drawing from an independent evaluation of *Upgrade Yourself: Kickstart* – a creative industry placement programme led by Somerset House in 2021-22 – this essay explores how these types of placement programmes can stay relevant in the current work environment and offer meaningful experiences for young people looking to build a creative career. There

is a clear danger that if arts organisations don't continually evolve their placement offers, listen to young people and equip participants with diverse experiences, these programmes can reproduce precarity and inequality in the sector.

What did we do?

Somerset House, branded 'London's working arts centre', is home to hundreds of resident organisations and practitioners including performing arts companies, creative enterprises, cultural education institutions and individual artists and makers. As a hub for freelancers, start-ups and established organisations it is a uniquely useful place to think about what creative work looks like today.

Since 2018 the Engagement and Skills team have run some form of creative industry placement programme, recruiting young people who are under-represented (n1) in the cultural sector into temporary jobs in organisations and teams resident at Somerset House. I evaluated what was then known as the *Creative Careers Academy in 2020*[1] and was the external evaluator for the new incarnation of the programme in 2021-22: *Upgrade Yourself: Kickstart*. This more recent version of the programme was part funded by the government's *Kickstart* scheme, which focused on supporting 16-24 year olds into work who were in receipt of Universal Credit.

The headings below reflect some of the findings about attitudes to work that came out of evaluation conversations with seven participants

of the programme, eight line managers from host organisations, one worker from Westminster City Council employment services and four members of staff at Somerset House.

It would be problematic to extrapolate too much from a relatively small group of voices, but this research reflects a snapshot of opinion from workers with a range of lived and professional experiences, who have worked on the programme for six months or more.

What did we learn about Generation Z and creative labour from Upgrade Yourself: Kickstart?
The pandemic has thrown ideas about work and security up into the air

Work in the creative industries continues to change at a rapid pace. 49% of the arts workforce in England is freelance[2] and the idea of the *projectariat* – a community of people who move from project to project – is now an embedded reality of the art world[3]. Furloughing and working from home during the pandemic also saw many employees appreciate the benefits of working more independently. And yet the pandemic

also brought to light the lack of a financial safety net for freelancers and led to more focus on job security for many cultural workers.

This push and pull effect was reflected in the varied attitudes of the cohort towards work and security. For some of the people on the *Upgrade Yourself: Kickstart* programme, the 'trauma' of the pandemic and the experience of graduating into unemployment and isolation created deep feelings of low self-confidence and anxiety in the workplace. Undoing fears about being fired and building self-belief were big elements of some participants' placement journeys. For some individuals this mentality also fed into their future work plans, spurring them to prioritise finding permanent, full-time work after their placement. One participant said they loved the idea of doing project-based work and want to work independently in the future but they felt they needed to use this time to 'hustle really, really hard' in an office environment.

Several members of the cohort were more interested in being self-employed or starting their own business straight away. Some had

creative projects, side hustles and entrepreneurial ambitions that they planned to pursue or were already working on. A few participants said they'd like a stable job for three days a week, then two days a week doing their own projects and starting to monetise those.

Host organisations have also seen a 'swathe of entrepreneurship' amongst young people and the huge growth of freelancing in their industries over the last few years. But organisations said they are also looking for some level of stability in their workforce, particularly during this period of massive uncertainty where there are shortages of workers, increasing costs and where businesses are 'preoccupied by all sorts of stuff, including Brexit'. The financial effects of the pandemic and cost of living crisis are heavily influencing young people's decision-making around their future careers, and this can only spell trouble for the inclusivity of the art sector, which has a reputation for instability and low pay. The contraction of the service industry workforce has also created problems for cultural organisations, and it is inevitable that staff shortages and financial concerns can also lead to less attention being paid to inclusive recruitment. All of these factors combined underline the need to urgently look at whether placement/trainee schemes are fit for purpose in a dramatically turbulent job market.

Hybridity is the future

One of my main assumptions evaluating this programme was that the shift towards hybrid working (accelerated by working from home during lockdowns) would not be good news for junior employees on placement programmes.

This was a view shared by several line managers, who believed that early career practitioners benefited most from sharing a physical space with colleagues and learning through 'osmosis'. While this was the case for most participants, it was interesting to hear that many participants also wanted to work remotely for at least a couple of days a week, and they enjoyed having a varied pace to their work patterns. There are inclusivity issues with enforced remote working – particularly for people who live with their families or multiple flatmates – but the key enabler in this programme was having choice and some flexibility to work in ways that brought out the best in the individual.

Some of the resident organisations involved in the programme have also learnt to adapt their working culture for permanent employees, particularly younger employees, who have different expectations than workers who entered the industry even a decade ago:

'They don't want to do five days a week, they just think we're crazy. Somerset House is such a wonderful place to work. But we've got another junior person who doesn't want to be in the office. So they'll work throughout Somerset House in the cafes, we got them an Exchange pass so that you can go and work there. They don't want to sit in the same place. And, you know, I'm rooted to my desk. Whereas young people seem to want to work in all these different types of ways, which is great – whatever ways they find that can enhance their creativity, I'm all for it. But it's strange to me.' (Host)

From speaking with the cohort on the programme and hearing about their experiences of the workplace, it seems that traditional divisions between permanency and freelance are becoming more blurred. The turn towards hybridity in the workplace has also prompted new ways of thinking about co-working. Some organisations have also had to put in place initiatives and networks to support cross-pollination across teams operating in the hybrid work environment.

We discovered that when participating in placements, employees wanted the experience of hybrid working, as they knew this would be required of them in future roles and they valued

feeling trusted to work from home as well as in the office. We also learnt that online working did have detrimental effects on the sense of community around the programme. Previous cohorts on the placement programme have hung out together at lunch and benefited from having a peer group to offload with, which wasn't as possible this year. Line managers also regretted the flattening of conversation and social interaction that came with having their host meetings online, but they also admitted that online was easier as everyone was dealing with intense workloads and different work patterns.

If hybridity is the future of the workplace, it seems essential that organisations also think creatively about how to foster togetherness, co-production, and exchange within their workforce. As one senior leader described, the 'corridor conversation' is an important part of how a place like Somerset House creates community and stimulates innovation. And for younger people with temporary contracts, making the most of the creative energy and connection that comes from working in an arts-centred environment is arguably fundamental for their development and visibility.

Placement programmes should offer exposure to different types of work

In the *Upgrade Yourself: Kickstart* programme, participants could attend bi-weekly *Prepare and Promote* sessions featuring guests speaking on freelancing, networking, branding, and marketing, as well as sessions on balancing work and personal development and unlocking your authentic voice and power. Participants also received mentoring during and after their placement, were introduced to different members of the Somerset House creative community and were invited to networking opportunities. In their placements, many participants had contact with creative freelancers and suppliers, and some were able to shadow suppliers or gain their advice as part of their personal development.

Having exposure to different types of creative work is necessary because, as one Somerset House staff member pointed out, getting started in the creative sector is 'not a linear path' and knowing what route to take is incredibly complex. This is especially true for young people who haven't had lots of engagement with the arts growing up, or who don't have existing links with people

who can offer creative careers advice. Perceiving self-employment as a legitimate career option in the arts, learning about day rates and self-management, etc. is important because, like arts organisations, the arts freelance community is lacking in representation. For example, in a 2020 survey of museum freelancers in the UK, 83% of respondents identified as female and 94% described their ethnicity as white. Anecdotally, some of the managers I spoke to for this evaluation said that many of the freelancers and suppliers they worked with appeared to be from economically privileged backgrounds or were predominantly 'white and middle aged'.

Without institutional intervention, there is no professional body looking out for the diversity and inclusivity of the arts freelance community. It is positive to see that policy makers and public funding bodies are starting to recognise the need to collect more data on the diversity of the freelance workforce and work with consortia and commissioners to establish more equitable conditions and oversight for this community[4,5]. These moves suggest that arts organisations hosting placement schemes also need to be supporting younger people into freelance roles, as these are heavily relied on in the cultural sector, and because this is what many young people want:

'The whole freelancing aspect – I think that's sort of the future of everything – people are going to step away from wanting to work for corporate jobs. People are going to work for themselves. They're going to excel a lot more through that.' (Participant)

It is particularly vital that organisations like Somerset House, which provides substantial space and work for freelancers, are helping to support sector-wide efforts to create more representation and security in the freelance workforce.

Generation Z value boundaries, social justice, and mental health

One of the most exciting and confronting things about members of Generation Z is their more boundaried attitude to work, and their willingness

to forefront mental health and wellbeing, and be attentive to social injustice.

Placement programmes that aim to attract candidates who are under-represented in the cultural sector bring into focus why under-representation exists and what the implications of recruiting differently are. There were occasions on the *Upgrade Yourself: Kickstart* programme where some participants didn't come to out-of-office hours training sessions and events for instance, due to a range of reasons including caring commitments, exhaustion and having a long commute home.

The concepts of grabbing every opportunity out of a desire to get into the creative industries and considering creative work a 'labour of love' are ideas that are bound up in class privilege[6]. The burnout that is synonymous with creative labour and expectations for overworking are also ableist in their assumptions. As I have seen from conversations with young professionals, members of Generation Z are not afraid to call these unhealthy expectations out.

The *Upgrade Yourself: Kickstart* programme provided structured pastoral support and created spaces where participants could openly talk about their access needs and external responsibilities if they wanted to. Staff in the Engagement and Skills team did not reprimand people for not coming to out-of-hours events but showed understanding and appreciation for their circumstances. They (and many line managers) also encouraged participants to put in place healthy work boundaries and tried to be sensitive to signs that individuals were struggling or dealing with external pressures. Participants equally grew in confidence to vocalise what they did and didn't want from work:

'I do think placements like this are such a step in the right direction, where we can talk about wellbeing, we can say we don't like this. And we can actually question whether it's useful to do something rather than just be like – 'everyone's gone through it, just do it.' (Participant)

This kind of sentiment reflects wider findings on cultural/generational attitudes, with research suggesting that Gen Z are less accepting of the 'boomer, grin-and-bear-it attitude to life – one that led us down a path of anti-union consultants and zero-hour contracts from companies with a multi-billion dollar net worth'[7]. The lure and lustre of the cultural sector that has entrenched organisational and self-exploitation is not enough for many younger people, particularly if this is not mentally and financially sustainable. A more apathetic or boundaried attitude to opportunities can feel alien to those who are conditioned to believe in the kudos of a creative career, and accusations of Gen Z being work-shy are well known to young people. But encountering this resistance can provoke those of us in older generations to question our own internalised ablesim and hidden privileges that have allowed certain behaviours to become normalised.

It would be naïve to suggest that all members of Generation Z feel the same way about work, and as I found in the conversations and in my wider research, there are many young workers who buy into the glorification of hustle culture

and competitive individualism, for example. But working with members of this generation highlights the necessity for arts organisations to be prepared to examine and undo some of their accepted practices that have perpetuated exclusivity in the art world.

Placement programmes need to be current, meaningful, and desirable

Placement programmes in arts organisations can have a transformative impact for individuals and provide experience that enables people to break into industries and flourish professionally. They can nurture and develop talent and, with the right support, empower people to bring their whole, authentic selves to their jobs. Many participants (including alumni) speak extremely highly of these programmes and how they have used the platform to go on to fulfil their ambitions.

However the hidden labour and psychological toll of being minoritised or 'under-represented' in a workplace cannot be under-estimated. A couple of participants spoke about their discomfort

with being associated with the *Kickstart* scheme, and taking part in additional training, which sometimes made them feel patronised.

'Even though it's true, I don't like to say that I'm a part of a programme that got me into the job. Even in work, I have to say, 'Oh, I have this thing for Somerset'. And you already feel like you're different because you're the only one that's involved in it. (Participant)

Similar feelings were voiced in the *Creative Careers Academy* programme, where participants sometimes felt under the institutional spotlight and overly celebrated. Somerset House made efforts to tone down internal and external communications around this programme, but it was still the case that some members of the group felt demoralised by being 'singled out.'

As a sector we clearly need to get better at describing the tackling of under-representation as both a matter of social justice and as a business need, and move away from any language that frames this type of initiative as an act of institutional benevolence. The conversations also demonstrate the importance of placement initiatives being perceived as desirable and prestigious. These issues are very present for the Engagement and Skills team at Somerset House, who think continually about the politics, vibe and feel of their programming.

These comments also highlight the significance of authentic, critical feedback and due praise so participants recognise their professional value, as well as mentorship to support participants to navigate these complex issues. Having members of staff and mentors with lived experience of being minoritised was important in the Somerset House programme. It was also vital that this programme had an explicitly stated ambition to support participants to secure further work after their placement, either with their host organisation or another company or onto self-employment. By making this aim explicit, these programmes have more of an obligation to take participants' career plans seriously and support their longer-term future. And by doing this, institutions can also make efforts to avoid tokenising and creating more extremely precarious workers and instead make a genuine lasting difference to individuals and the sector.

Notes

1   Underrepresented in this context includes but is not limited to those who identify as:
- From the African diaspora
- From the South, East and South East Asian diaspora
- From an ethnically diverse background
- Having a migrant or refugee experience
- Affected by a health condition or impairment
- Neurodivergent
- Affected by homelessness
- Unemployed and/or having received welfare benefits
- Carer
- Care-leaver
- Working class and/or first in their immediate family to go to university

References

1   Sim, N. (2020), *Creative Careers Academy playbook.* Somerset House Trust. Accessed here: **https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/file/17051/download?token=QUuZJnwV**

2   Henley, D. (2022), *Time for change: working freelance in creativity and culture.* Arts Council England. **https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/time-change-working-freelance-creativity-and-culture**

3   Szreder, K. (2021), *The ABC of the projectariat: living and working in a precarious art world.* Manchester University Press

4   N. Wreyford, D. O'Brien and T. Dent (2021), *Creative Majority: An APPG for Creative Diversity report on 'What Works' to support, encourage and improve diversity, equity and inclusion in the creative sector.* A report for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Creative Diversity. Accessed here: **http://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/projects/creative-majority**

5   Henley, D. (2022) op.cit.

6   Hesmondhalgh, David, speaking in *Work and Social Justice in Art, Craft and Design: Talks series*, 26 April 2022

7   Greenwood, D. (2022), 'Gen Z would rather quit a job than be unhappy in it' in *i-D*, **https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/g5q9dm/gen-z-leaving-jobs**

8   C. Lister and M. Ainsley (2020), *What's the story? Museum freelance survey 2020.* Museum Freelance

Images

Somerset House, photos by Dan Weill Photography.

In our own words: Gen Z & the arts (a conversation)

Bella Emrys

With Angel Mamah, Alyssa Brown, Amelia Sherman, Erin Mgbolu, Esther Ogunbayo, Grace Mendus, James Greenfield, Jessica McGing, Karina Pop, Laima Lomakina, Maddi Thompson and Mariana Ferreira

Conversation facilitated by **Victoria Gibb & Tara Page, Offset Projects**

Offset Projects have been working on opportunities, career pathways and creative leadership for young people. Discussions for this article brought together young people aged 16-18 years across multiple projects including Open_Plan[1], Fuelled By Youth[2], and The Young Creatives[3] culminating in a youth-led 'conversation' chaired by Milton Keynes sixth form student and member of Offset's Board, Bella Emrys. The article is taken from these conversations with additional commentary written by Bella.

Gen Z & The Arts

As a group of 16 to 18-year-olds, our aim was to facilitate a raw, honest, and exploratory conversation about the thoughts of Gen Z and how the arts sector could evolve to support us better. Following a period of research and an initial exploratory meeting to consider some of our broader thinking, we brought together a larger group of young people, some of whom were already actively engaged in arts activity, and some who were possibly interested in a creative career.

Bella Emrys: So, I'm imagining you have some interest in the creative world but first it would be really nice to get a picture of what do you consider a creative career to look like. And what are your personal goals and stuff like that within the creative sector?

A: So, I think of a creative job as something where you're coming up with solutions to problems in a way, but without it being quantified or, I don't know, more expressive than…mmm,

it's hard to describe.

B: Yeah, like problem solving, but it's more about social problems than actual statistics, numbers, and facts.

C: I also feel like the creative sector has a lot of meaning, so I feel like every individual has their own meaning, their own perspective, and that's something major in any creative part of the industry.

BE: Do any of you have any sort of role models or people that you think have got it right in the creative sector?

D: I don't have any role models 'cause I don't know, I feel everyone has their own path to take, but I think you can take ideas from other people, but sometimes, mostly in the creative world, it's not set like this is how you're supposed to do it. So yeah, I don't know… I don't really have role models, but there's people that I aspire to be like one day to do something like they're doing. But 'cause, we're on our path right now…

A: Now I feel like we're not too focused on the role models, but the work that they're producing. We get more inspiration from similar kinds of work which could be from several different people.

C: And I think it depends what connects with you at the moment. Like, there's this artist called Anish Kapoor and he's thinking about the line drawn between life and death, he did an art piece that was based on the decaying human mind. And even though it wasn't obvious you kind of feel

that message being in the artwork and that really inspired me, but I don't know if I would call him role model per se.

Undervalued, Underpaid & Not Taken Seriously

Like many other Gen Zs, we are at the stages of looking into the future at university, apprenticeships, or other opportunities. Over recent years these systems have faced some challenges and adapting to the 'new normal' has brought what used to be the clear-cut path for most, that of GCSEs, A Levels, university, then a

career into question. 55% of over 2,000 Gen Zs in the UK have said that their long-term plans for the next three to five years had changed because of Covid-19.[4]

With university loan rules set to change over the next year and apprenticeships providing an income alongside an education it's easy to see why alternative routes are becoming more popular with Gen Z, especially those facing barriers such as financial, social or otherwise. Choosing to get into around 50k of debt as an 18-year-old is a big commitment for anyone but

when you plan to enter a financially unpredictable sector like the arts, this can feel even more risky.

A research project titled 'Shit Is Hard, Yo: Young People Making A Living In The Creative Industries'[5] by Miranda Campbell in Canada found that respondents 'articulated an informed knowingness and resistance to the norms of unpaid work in the creative industries and forwarded gender and race as structural categories that impact the experience of entry-level creative work'. During our conversation, the feeling that creativity is undervalued, underpaid, and not taken seriously came up multiple times.

BE: So, I understand that most of you guys are at this age where you're starting to think about careers and university and apprenticeships, and I'm wondering if you have any comments on what further education provides in the way of creative careers? Whether you think university caters well towards people looking to enter the creative sphere, or whether you think that comes more from other places?

E: I think actually the only problem is getting out of university 'cause a lot of entry level jobs or internships in the creative industry are always unpaid internships and things like that. So, it stops people being able to make an income from their creativity – which is the problem! But universities themselves, from what I've seen, offer a lot of good skill building and networking for the creative industry.

B: I've heard a lot of horror stories about how people get into art universities and then afterwards, after they leave, they rack up a bunch of debt and then it's hard for them to get into a job because if they do get into a job then it's like a corporate kind……not being able to unleash their creative potentials.

A: Yeah, I feel like that might be down to the way they push us forward, like, in terms of our education. I mean at college especially; we don't get many connections or networking with other people. They might have a few people in to talk, but we don't get real life experience with industry professionals, and I think that's important when

you're in a creative industry – having someone to contact, share ideas with, maybe generate a project or two just so you actually get your foot in that door as opposed to just looking through the window.

H: When there were careers fayres done in secondary, there'd always be the creative jobs and everything, but a lot of the time it wouldn't be the job that you wanted to do – it would be the jobs that they want you to do…and it would be one of those high up jobs that you have to work up to – it won't be a job that you can go straight into.

E: I think there's also another issue which is capitalism – creative industries trying to fit into the mode of capitalism – but I think a lot of creative people don't want to be held back by that and want to be able to do it in a way that isn't, like, exploited or restricted.

BE: Do you think therefore, that the creative sector is held back by finance, and do you think that there are other things holding you guys back from being able to fully integrate yourselves in that?

A: Yeah, I don't think it's taken as seriously as more of a logic-based career because if there's no end goal like when you start – you're sort of weaving around to find your end goal as opposed to working towards something specific. And I don't think people know how to deal with uncertainty or the uncertainty that comes along with creativity.

C: Yeah, I feel like there's both a financial aspect and an aspect of society too, the expectation is that to get into these types of things: you have to look good, you have to do this and that, and that it's hard to get up there. That's literally the picture they have, they say, 'It's really hard…You can't do that.. No, you have to do computing…You have to do maths… maths will get you along…' and then you're like, 'But I don't like maths, you know'. And then to get experience from high people, it's either that they don't want to teach younger people, they say 'oh, I have the money, I don't have the time' or it's just simply that you can't afford it.

A: Yeah, and creative work can be quite expensive, a lot of the time your vision's gonna be held back
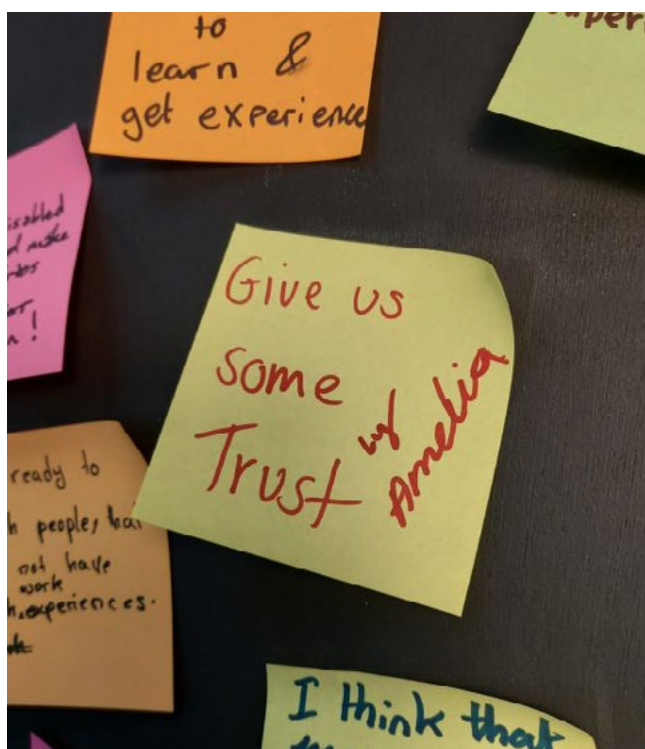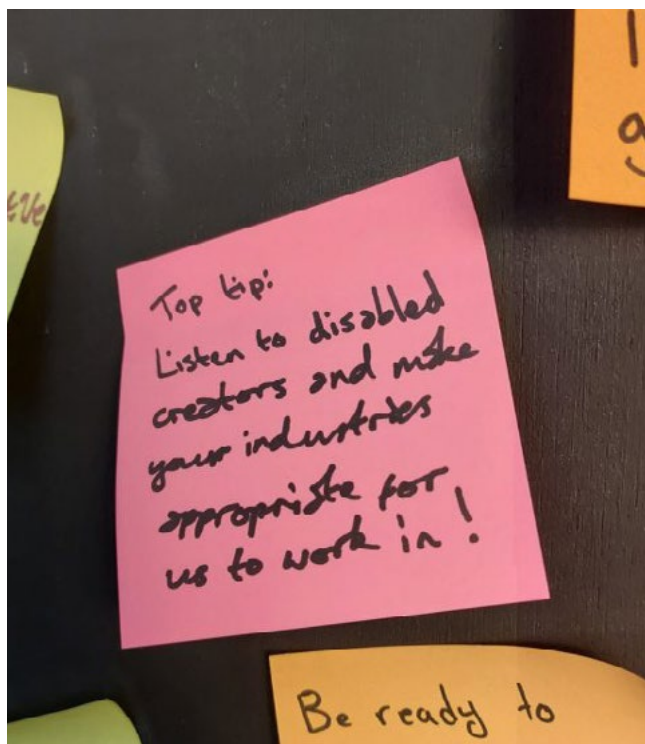
by finances 'cause if you want to make a massive installation with all these things, that's gonna be an issue there, so finance does hold people back in that way, I suppose.

BE: So, what do you think creative organisations are doing, or should do, to open up the creative sector and make sure that they're more inclusive?

A: I don't think anything… haven't heard of anything.

C: Actually, I feel like there are people out there, it's just that everything is just hidden.

A: Yeah, there's no communication – so there's probably loads, but we don't know about it.

C: Yeah, same as 'The Young Creatives', I never knew it existed until my school contacted me like, 'hey, they're here'.

G: The thing is, it wasn't even my school officially, it was my art teacher and my art school informed me on the first day of this happening, so I feel like schools don't encourage it either.

F: Yeah, 'cause in sixth form usually they send out the emails for example, 'do you wanna do this apprenticeship?' and it's all mechanics, doctors, nurses…

C: Yeah, it's never art…never art or dance.

H: Sometimes also the schools don't try hard enough so then there's that lack of people going into the creative industries – they have to find their own way getting there. Because the schools don't always help.

Making change

Overall, the consensus was that although there are quite a lot of opportunities available, they are not easy to find, and many young people only explore the options when someone from school like an art teacher introduces them. More accessible opportunities could engage more diverse groups of people and we explored whose responsibility it is to make these things more accessible and inclusive.

BE: So how can the sector improve for Gen Z?

A: I think the biggest thing is communication. If these organisations want to help people, they should want to communicate with them as opposed to just expecting it to happen.

BE: Any ideas of ways that they could be able to do that? Are there things you'd like to see be done?

G: I think schools need to start putting forward opportunities like artistic and creative opportunities for young people.

A: Yeah, probably between schools, like, hold an event to inspire 'cause people are probably put off the creative industries by hearing all the bad stuff that can come along with it so…yeah, I feel like having a space where people can come together and share ideas would be a good way forward.

G: Yeah, and industries definitely need to be more open – for any type of experience or any type of person – they need to be more inclusive. Definitely.

BE: And what about more specifically in Milton Keynes. Do you guys think that Milton Keynes supports career pathways into creative jobs?

D: I think they do because yesterday we found Hannah and she talked about, you know, her career and how she started a company in Milton Keynes.[6] And we've talked to a lot of people that actually have their career in Milton Keynes, so I think they just hid it 'cause we didn't know about all of that before. And now we know about it and we're just like 'wow, this was in Milton Keynes'. So, I think there's some creative places or companies in Milton Keynes, but we just don't know about it.

G: And I think Milton Keynes is much better than a lot of other places.

A: It could do better though, since we're so close to London. There's even more opportunities in London and we don't really see a lot of that here.

BE: Whose responsibility do you think it is to make this change, make those things happen? Governments?

G: I mean, the government kind of rules a lot.

A: I think whenever the government gets involved with stuff, it doesn't really work out the way people want it to…

H: I think businesses… they keep forgetting the stuff that they do is our future and not theirs. Some people say 'ah our kids are our future' but they don't get our opinions on anything.

All: In agreement

C: If there was less corruption, then that'd be fine because the people who get these higher roles

it's through connections and through families. So, if they actually put people – have like a straight law where they hire people who don't have connections or something – you could probably get a better benefit where people actually think about the creative industry.

Staying relevant

BE: And do you think that current creative organisations are still relevant to you guys?

A: I don't think we know many creative organisations.

All: In agreement

D: I was gonna say for example, like what one?

BE: I mean in general, like, any creative careers that you guys are interested in and, you know, apprenticeships and university courses related to that. Do you think that they are concentrating on the things that you would like them to be?

A: No, but I think they're getting there. After the past few years as well, everything has become more accessible through online means and – definitely now more than ever – more people's voices are being heard, so there's some things that if, like a company, doesn't comment on or encourage, then they could be looked down upon for that. So, I think yeah, the more people that just share how they feel the more likely they are to make changes.

BE: Do you think that they're aligning with your interests and your passions? Do you think that they're helping you towards your goals?

C: In some ways but I feel like, at the same time, I'm kind of searching for the help and when I find it, I get it, but it's just like I'm searching for it – they're not giving me it.

D: Exactly! That's what I was about to say 'cause for a long time I wanted to work in the gallery or theatre…anywhere to bring me my experience. I want to be a set designer, or stage designer or any anything like that but I feel like I don't have any – well, I've done my own set design and stuff like that – but I haven't done it professionally. And I want to do something like that, but there's

no opportunity for me to do that. There's no help from them and I feel like we're just left… When we produce something, that's when people come up to us and are like, 'Oh yeah, so you know how to do this' but while we're working towards it, no one wants to help. You just have to learn it on your own and that's when they'll look at you, when you've done something really good. No one's willing to help anyone.

A: Yeah, I think it'll be very hard for any organisation to align with everyone's interests, I think just more organisations need to be more open with people about what is available and send the message across in such a way that it appeals to every one of every ability – so no one feels that they're not good enough to even start or try…young people just need to be inspired, really.

On leadership

BE: Do you think that there are leadership opportunities for young people within the creative world?

C: No, all I see is sports…so whenever you go to school you have the sport leadership but when it comes to creative, we just have basics. I mean they are trying now, but it's just not enough.

A: Yeah, I think it's harder for people to create leadership roles in a creative setting 'cause with sports, you know, it's all athletics or it's just one sport so you know what to do but with creative it's more intimate, like, you've got to work with so many different ideas and opinions and perceptions.

BE: And within you guys, is leadership important?

B: I mean, it would be helpful to have the chance and the opportunity to lead to get like your voice heard. Creativity is seen more as like a hobby instead of an actual craft. And people don't think that it is so much effort until they actually decide to try and be creative. Then those people that usually go towards like science kind of careers… they don't see the amount of effort that goes into everything.

Valuing creativity

As the discussion progressed, we moved on to consider why some people struggle to agree on the importance of the creative sector or value the work done within it. We also shared some ideas for how we can help to educate people about great spaces which offer many opportunities and valuable careers along with the importance of creative industry work.

BE: Do you guys have any ideas of how we could make the creative world hold more value, like, a lot people see it as not being as valuable or having as much financial stability.

C: I feel like education first of all, ever since you're small, you're told to do this and that, in the way they want you to do it. And I feel that is where it all starts. Everyone starts to think differently and then everyone thinks 'oh, I can't go in that area because they told me', or because I feel like I can't do it anymore. Even though you want to do it, you still feel like you're in the wrong. I feel like education could start showing more of this side and not just how people with experience managed to do this because they had the money and everything!

BE: So how does creativity become more of a career choice rather than a hobby?

G: People need to start taking creative careers much more seriously, yeah, again, it goes back to [people] only wanting to see the final product. When they see the final product they think 'OK, it's done like this' because they only see the final product so they don't see how hard you worked to get to that.

Families also put a lot of pressure on their children to do something…well, a common example is scientific, like, 'Oh, be a doctor or something', and when you tell them that you want to do something creative, there's usually some type of negative opinion or negative reaction. I do think it's changing a bit but there's still that pressure, and I do think that kind of originates from education as well.

BE: How do you think we could encourage the older generations perhaps to see creativity as a more valuable career?

C: Probably see what we're doing, see the process…probably expose them to ALL the jobs that are out there because over time they've grown…they were exposed to the times where everything was really restricted.

A: Well, yeah – they need to be more aware of how everything is changing 'cause when they were our age, jobs were in different demand and people wanted different things. But in this time, I think people are wanting different things for their future.

G: And I also think that the older generation has also had a lot of restrictions when it came to the jobs they could take, I guess. So that's maybe why they can't wrap their heads around the job opportunities we have now like the creative ones. For example, my grandma wanted to be a writer, but then her father didn't let her. And even then, when I told her that I wanted a creative job, she was quite judgmental… which wouldn't really make sense in your head. But yeah, I think it's because they also don't really know the process and they don't know the opportunities that we now have.

A: I think people need to be more aware of the benefits of all aspects of the creative industries and the creative process like coming up with new ideas and how that can affect other things – and just how everything connects really.

E: I was just thinking, even though in schools you

have basic art lessons and stuff… all it is, is like, drawing and painting. They never really speak about the different types of opportunities in the creative industry and all the different roles 'cause there's so much more than you think. Even me, who knows a lot about it, always discovers new, possible, creative roles that I wouldn't have even thought existed. So people just assume that to be a professional creator you would have to be one of the few lucky people who's a really famous painter or something.

The speed of change

BE: So, my personal opinion is that the creative sector is developing at quite a fast rate. Twenty years ago, it probably was a lot more painting and drawing, and now we've got new technologies and social media, and all of these new careers. Do you think there is opportunity and respect for people to join those new areas and how can we integrate smoothly?

G: I think it is developing a lot. Like, I am starting to see a lot more abstract art and I'm starting to see a lot more expression within the creative careers. But I still do think that there's improvement to be made. I still do think that they're not inclusive enough, but I do think that they're evolving.

B: I think that it needs to develop a bit more to maybe get other people to join into this kind of industry as well, because it's not just for those few people that want to draw. It could be for anyone, writers, musicians… It could also be with more science-y roles as well – you would still need creativity in that to, like, come up with experiments, for example.

A: Yeah, I feel like people just don't see the creative jobs as profitable as science and technology.

B: You know, like, how history and geography, they're kinda interlinked. We could have art and maths also linked the same amount. Maybe that art industries could blend into other careers as well, and education could maybe push it further along to help people understand that they're not separate subjects and everything can be intertwined.

BE: Do you think that well it's young people's responsibility to get the schools to make change? Or do you think it's someone else and if so, who?

A: I think it's our responsibility to say what we want.

G: I think that it shouldn't be our responsibility, but I think it HAS to be. Because we shouldn't be the ones telling them, 'hey, we also want opportunities, creative jobs, because science and maths aren't the only things that exist'. But I feel like it kind of has to be our responsibility 'cause no one else is doing it for us.

A: Yeah, like exam boards and things like that, school governors and…

G: Higher power, yeah.

D: I always hear there's an IT apprenticeship somewhere…or an engineering apprenticeship but I never hear anything about, you know creative arts and stuff like that.

G: Yeah, because I remember wanting experience with some type of artistic apprenticeship and at that point, I wanted anything to do with a creative job. So, I was waiting for anything but all I heard about was anything to do with business, maths, engineering etc.

H: Yeah, I had a careers meeting and I talked to the careers person, and they were like 'there is hardly anything' – they were agreeing with me! There's hardly anything in the creative sector for our age to do to go and have that experience. It is like just all the bog standard like business, IT… you get a few, like, hairdressing in there or some cooking but there's just none there for the creative sector.

D: I think if schools went out to people, organisations and tell them that you need to help students – even though you don't have to pay us and what not – but just give us that experience and teach us on how to you know make a career out of this… I think will help us a lot.

BE: Yeah, so what sort of opportunities would you like to be available for you in those situations?
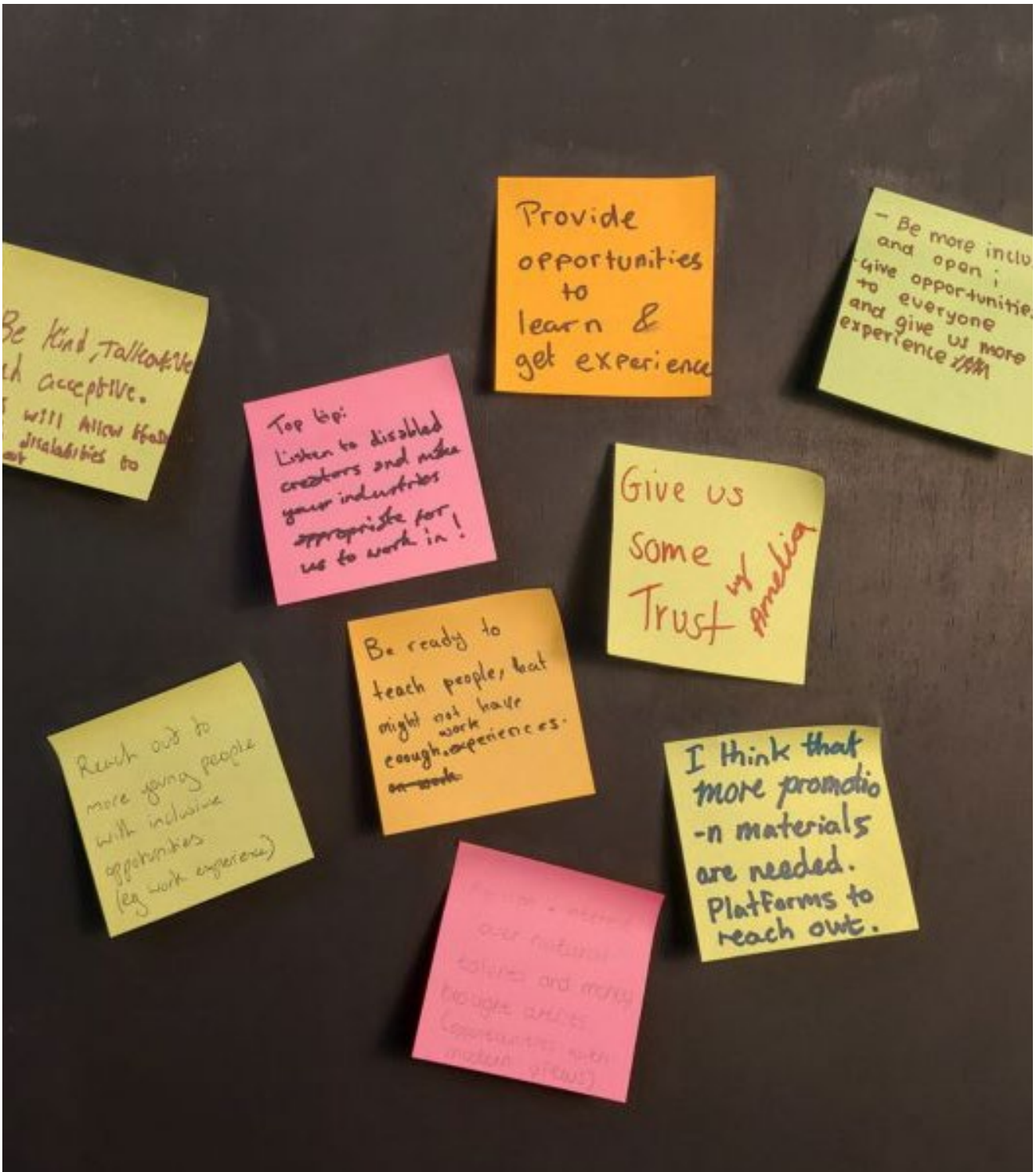
A: Apprenticeships

G: Apprenticeships, sure.

D: Or freelance 'cause you know we're in school, so if I can come in like once in a week, just teach me something different about, you know, how to design or something?

A: Yeah, I think just more contact with people who can talk to us about the industry and more specifically.

G: Yeah, workshops… just anything. Anything for experience. At this point we are just…

All: Desperate for experience

Top tips from the group:

- Be kind, talkative and acceptive: this will allow those with disabilities to reach out
- Listen to disabled creators and make your industries appropriate for us to work in
- Give us some trust
- Reach out to young people with inclusive opportunities (e.g., work experience)
- Provide opportunities to learn and get experience
- Be more inclusive and open
- Give opportunities to everyone and give us more experience
- More promotion materials are needed on more platforms to reach out
- Passion and interest over 'natural talent' and 'money'
- Be ready to teach people that might not have enough work experiences

Notes

1 *Open Plan* is a project exploring the potential for a dedicated youth-led space in the heart of Wolverton, Milton Keynes. **www.offsetprojects. org.uk/current/open-plan**

2 *Fuelled by Youth* brings together young people to commission a new public artwork which captures a snapshot of youth culture in Milton Keynes. **www.offsetprojects.org.uk/current/fuelled- by-youth**

3 *The Young Creatives* is a programme which supports young people to explore their creative interests to become more confident, better skills and more empowered. **www.offsetprojects. org.uk/current/the-young-creatives**

4 Beatfreeks, 2021, *National Youth Trends: The 2nd Dose.*

5 M. Cambell – 'Shit is hard, yo': young people making a living in the creative industries – 04/05/22 – **https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/ full/10.1080/10286632.2018.1547380? scroll=top&needAccess=true**

6 *themusicroom* **www.gotmr.uk**

Mills and more: inspiring textile futures in West Yorkshire

Julia Roebuck
Freelance Sustainable Fashion Consultant

From clothing to carpets, bandages to bulletproof vests, textiles are used by everyone. In every country, across every sector, textiles keep us warm, heal us, protect us and bring us joy. Yet there seems to be a lack of understanding regarding this importance and reach into our lives. In West Yorkshire, textiles manufacturing has shaped our landscape and industrial history, and the story continues. Textiles is an innovative, creative and practical industry, with the intersection between art, fashion, craft, manufacture and design challenged by each generation.

I struggle to think of any subject so prolific in daily life and cultural capital for Gen Z, yet so lacking in their formal education, as textiles. In a decade, Gen Z will occupy the space of the young workforce, our icons and our industry leaders in training. This essay will explore why more opportunities are needed for Gen Z to engage with textiles in West Yorkshire. How can arts engagement and participation inspire young people with a more comprehensive and contemporary understanding of textiles? What can be done to help Gen Z begin career pathways into such a varied sector?

For this article, I have discussed the different textile career pathways of two recent graduates and interviewed an art and design student group at Kirklees College. The wider context has

also been informed through conversation with others working in varied textile roles across West Yorkshire and with teachers and tutors providing textiles education and training opportunities.

Textiles education in childhood

Learning textile skills in childhood is an experience that most 16-18 year old art and design students at Kirklees College can remember. Being taught by mothers and grandmothers is a common theme, with skirts, tops and dressing gowns made with help from family members who engaged with textiles as a hobby:

"My mum and granny taught me stuff, my mum first taught me how to sew a button onto a dress, and my granny taught me how to knit and crochet, I'm making myself a crochet top now."
— A student at Kirklees College.

Regarding digital opportunities to further explore textiles in their own time, most students would look to learn from YouTube video tutorials, referencing search terms including, 'hand sewing', 'how to use a sewing machine', 'Upcycling clothes with hand sewing', 'hand embroidery', 'fabric flowers', 'how to cast on and how to cast off with knitting', 'general how to knit', 'how to make patches', and 'how to fix a rug'. In addition to learning skills, tutorials are also used to further develop creative ideas. In addition to YouTube, 'random scrolling' on TikTok is used to find inspiration in the form of short video content, which is often followed up with a longer YouTube tutorial for further detail and clarity not provided in the short 15 or 30 second TikTok videos. One student was wearing a black hoodie she had used as the canvas for her own bleach experimentation after discovering a 'bleach craze' tie-dye video on TikTok and followed along at home.

Techniques developed at primary and secondary school including hand and machine sewing, 3D printing, machine embroidery, dying fabric, tie-dye, batik and applique. Textile products were made. These included pencil cases, dresses, bags and beanie hats. Students who chose Textiles GCSE commented that they had limited access to textiles-specific careers information. In further

research at three careers fairs across Kirklees speaking directly with over three hundred 12-18 year olds, I asked students what they knew about jobs in textiles. All students referenced jobs relating to weaving, costume design, making clothes or fashion design.

More than fashion

For young people drawn to making clothing and wanting to pursue a career in fashion design, the equipment and materials available in the textile classrooms in schools and colleges across the country can spark passion. Leeds-born queer designer, Wesley Manners, learned to knit with their nan when they were 7 and had their sights firmly set on Central St Martins (CSM), University of the Arts London, from the age of 12. 'I really enjoyed doing my Textiles A-Level; it was nice to have a lot of time to be doing textiles, I remember the room was really fab, they had loads of rolls of fabric that we could use, however much we wanted'. Wesley Manners graduated from CSM on their Fashion Design with Knitwear degree in 2021 and is now working freelance, forging their own pathway, making clothing for their community and utilising social media platforms such as Instagram to act as an online portfolio.

However, not all textile students have such a positive experience of textiles in a formal education environment, nor any desire to be a fashion designer. Louisa Knapp studies MSc Product Innovation with Textiles at The University of Huddersfield and reflects on her experience of textiles in KS3:

"I didn't necessarily enjoy what we did then… it would have just been a bit craftsy, I mean even now I would never do any of that… I made this hideous '60's patchwork hat, it was awful, you couldn't even get your head in it! It was atrocious, so I don't want to say it made me the designer I am."

— Louisa Knapp studies MSc Product Innovation with Textiles at The University of Huddersfield

Louisa chose to take Textiles as an additional GCSE whilst in Year 10 and completed the full GCSE within one year to improve her opportunities to access creative further education. After leaving secondary school, she became aware of the many non-fashion textile jobs in sectors such as science, research, academia, and product design; she wants this information to be available widely in secondary schools.

"All those talented people you've missed out on, because the vision…that you're showed at GCSE to what you're shown as an undergraduate – that might be where the skills gap is… I've followed a very creative path to get to the technical path, to be showed that view, but if you're techy from the start…you can't see that end goal."

— Louisa Knapp studies MSc Product Innovation with Textiles at The University of Huddersfield

As well as lacking in content that represents the full breadth of the sector, textiles at GCSE has struggled to attract high numbers of students. A literature review by Olexandra M. Solomka, published in 2019, cites the unpopularity of Textiles GCSE in 2019:

Textiles is the least popular mainstream GCSE option in England. Indeed, in a recent report published by Cambridge Assessment, AD:T [Art & Design Textiles] is the least popular subject at GCSE, with 1.1% of students taking it, and D&T Textiles [Design & Technology Textiles] had 3.2% of students taking it at GCSE.[2]

Low GCSE uptake, and the lack of inclusion in the English Baccalaureate qualification, has led to many schools removing Textiles as an option completely. To compensate for this, more must be done by the textiles sector to promote

cross-curricular approaches and resources to teachers, ensuring young people can still access opportunities to learn about textiles. This is also a time to develop opportunities outside of formal education to include a wider scope of textiles in arts participation and engagement, to inspire and inform the textile innovators of the future.

Industry as inspiration

Textile manufacturing in West Yorkshire has inspired many creatives in recent years, including Yorkshire born Edward Crutchley, whose textile experience at Settle High School was quite unique: 'It's not always easy when you want to design dresses and you're going to school with 600 farmers'[2]. Crutchley's connection to textile mills in Yorkshire remains an important aspect of his work, valuing quality and taking inspiration from the materials produced across the region. Crutchley's work is included in the V&A Museum exhibition, Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear[3]. Alongside other contemporary creatives, he provokes discussion and addresses important cultural and social issues for Gen Z: 'In my opinion clothes don't have a gender', Crutchley comments[4]. As Gen Z looks to Millennials for
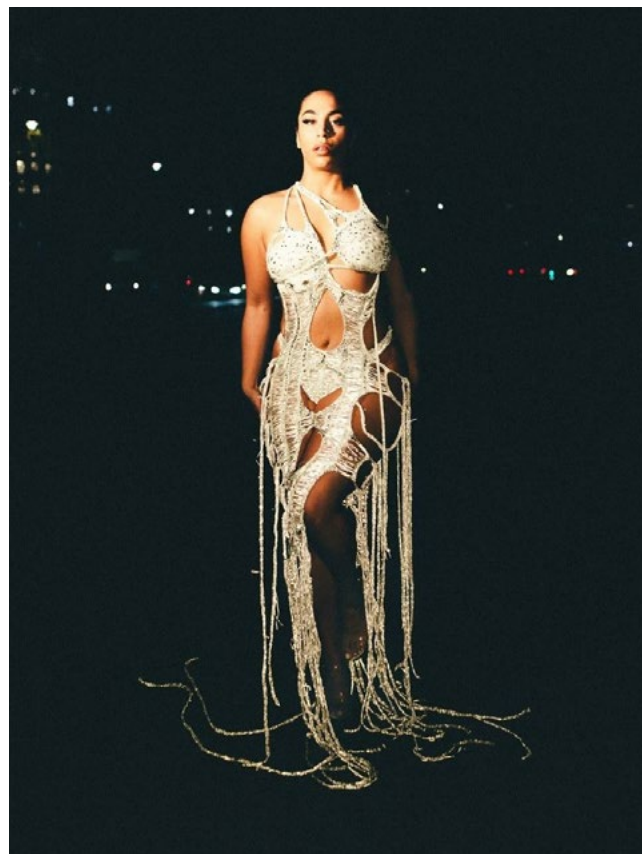
recent examples of career pathways, their stories and experiences are important to amplify.

When asked about textiles engagement outside the classroom, Kirklees College and University of Huddersfield students discussed visits to Salts Mill, Bankfield Museum and Sunnybank Mills. Wesley Manners also recalled a trip that made a lasting impression: 'I remember going to Armley Mills in Leeds as a kid and getting to look at the looms and weaving equipment and getting very excited about it all.' Yorkshire Sculpture Park and The Hepworth Wakefield were also discussed in reference to inspiring textile engagement, giving a refreshing and sometimes surprising contemporary context to textiles in our culture in bright, modern buildings.

The built environment that remains as a legacy to the industrial revolution across West Yorkshire provides opportunities to learn about the heritage and history of textiles locally and see the machinery and historic mills. However, only reinforcing the historical context of textiles in our region undermines the success of current manufacturing, contemporary practice and research taking place at universities in the region. The Technical Textiles Research Centre at the University of Huddersfield brings together a multi-disciplinary team of academics, researchers and students in fields that include chemistry, engineering and textiles. Their research will drive the innovation that is required for many different industries to meet sustainability targets, as international climate policy ambitions respond to net zero carbon targets. Another fundamental shift away from business-as-usual for Gen Z.

The technical textiles industry is flourishing and are used in a wide range of consumer & industrial products with diverse properties, including absorbent hygiene products, agriculture/ horticulture, apparel, composites, construction, electronics, filtration, furnishings, insulation, medical, personal protection, structural engineering, & wipes. A key objective of the research centre will be to address a number of serious global challenges…a desire of our centre to influence the replacement of petrochemical-derived fibres with more sustainable, renewable alternatives[5].

In May 2022, Leeds University were announced as one of four winners of The John Lewis Partnership £1m Circular Future Fund. The winning proposal, Polyester Infinity, sets out to explore polyester dyeing and decoloration technology. A further example of world-leading research in our region,

this work will build on a collaboration between the Wolfson CO_2 Laboratory in the School of Chemistry, University of Leeds and the Leeds Institute of Textiles and Colour.

These important components of our cultural capital should be shared and celebrated to build pride across communities, encourage residents into skills, training and education opportunities, and secure the future for textile jobs locally for Gen Z.

WOVEN in Kirklees

WOVEN in Kirklees is a textiles festival that takes place across Kirklees in West Yorkshire. Established in 2019 and core-funded by the local authority, planning is underway for the next festival in June 2023. An innovative careers programme is one of the key themes of the festival and resources have been developed to help young people, careers advisors, teachers, parents and carers understand the jobs that local textile skills, training and education opportunities can lead to. Natalie Walton is the curator of the festival and understands the struggle for varied textiles engagement to reach a young audience:

 "Not only do we need to fight for a creative arts curriculum in schools, we have to justify craft education as a valid experience and textiles in its widest sense. Working with artists and teachers across the WOVEN festival programme it is clear that textiles aren't an easy fit. It's not promoted by the curriculum and so not given time, and teachers are not afforded the luxury of training or encouraged to do the research into how diverse a

subject it can be, and in so where it can lead our young people."
— Natalie Walton, curator of Woven in Kirklees

Collaboration is fundamental to the festival approach and partnership working has enabled WOVEN to bring unique opportunities into Kirklees. WOVEN is a lead partner for Weaving Together a Story of Place, a two-year action research programme, bringing artists and teachers learning together to learn new skills and explore textiles across all subjects in the primary curriculum. This work is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Teacher Development Fund and aims to support teachers and school leaders to develop the necessary skills, knowledge, confidence and experience to approach textiles in many varied ways in the primary classroom.

Our Biennale is a festival of arts and culture made with children and young people in Kirklees, produced by the Cultural Education Partnership called Evoke, and led by The Children's Art School. In 2021, WOVEN partnered with Our Biennale to engage children and teachers with the Joana Vasconcelos: Beyond exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) to inspire textile work that was then included in the Our Biennale exhibition in the centre of Huddersfield. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it wasn't possible to take the children to YSP; instead the exhibition was filmed and used in online CPD sessions for teachers – also made available to children and their families – with textile workshop delivery in after school clubs and at The Children's Art School.

Whilst places and projects across West Yorkshire raise awareness and opportunities to interact with textiles in different ways in schools and communities, what are the first steps into a textiles career for Gen Z? How can they gain further understanding, skills and longer periods of engagement with the sector, which are necessary in the early stages of a career?

Skills, experiences and participation

There has been a significant reduction in the available opportunities for young people to gain work experience, industry placements and

volunteering opportunities in all sectors following the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020. Whilst factory workplaces re-opened much sooner than offices due to the nature of manufacturing, insurance for those under 18 remains a large barrier. Opportunities for 18-25 year olds to gain short periods of work experience and work shadowing could and should be increased and prioritised by the textiles industry.

For those wanting to engage in longer skills and training routes into the sector, the Textiles Centre of Excellence in Huddersfield works closely with industry partners to train a range of industry apprentices including Textiles Manufacturing Operative and Sewing Machinist. Practical experiences within a workplace are also valuable for those studying a creative academic subject. Nicola Redmore, Subject Lead for Fashion and Textiles at the University of Huddersfield, sees visits to textile workplaces as an integral part of fashion and textiles education: 'We took the second years to Hainsworths to weave six weeks ago… Seeing that manufacturing, smelling it, hearing it; it's really important and you just see people light up.'

Student Louisa Knapp wants more textile workplaces to share their stories and open their doors to the general public, an idea inspired by her favourite museum, The TextielMuseum in the Netherlands, which is part lab, part museum. A range of high-tech machinery is available for designers to rent, whilst the general public can tour the facilities, view the exhibitions and watch a live workplace from a safe distance.

"It is not at all unusual for top designers to use the TextielLab, you might – without even knowing it – witness the computer-controlled production of garments for a royal occasion or the showpiece for a prestigious building during your visit."
— Museum's website[6]

The Bradford Textile Society, established in 1893, is 'the oldest textile society in Britain, if not in the world' and continues to support opportunities for young people to engage with the industry through design competitions, awards, networking opportunities and workplace visits7. The textile industry needs a diversity of events and experiences, it is hoped that other societies and cultural groups plan similar events including open studio trails, factory tours and open archives in the post-pandemic space.

Textile futures in West Yorkshire

Gen Z understands that the rules are yet to be written for the world in which their future career lies. Through researching these ideas, it

seems possible that Gen Z will not only revisit the traditional disciplinary boundaries between the practices of art, craft, design, fashion and manufacture, but also go one step further to redefine how we interact with the built environment that also segregates sectors. Can future collaboration between the design and industrial, or craft and manufacture fundamentally change the way we think of, and want to use, spaces for textiles?

Whilst creativity and resilience will enable Gen Z to adapt to work in a changing world, they need more support at the start of their career journeys than any other previous generation. Every young person has experienced unprecedented disruption to their education and social activity, alongside any number of additional personal circumstances affected by the pandemic and the subsequent cost of living crisis.

Arts engagement and participation has a fundamental role to play in sharing the stories from textile research, science, design, craft, art, manufacturing and more. Collaboration and partnership working across the arts and cultural sector can bring textile stories to life in schools and communities. Imagine including modern industrial practices and manufacturing in gallery spaces, and more art education programmes running in mill classrooms. More opportunities for meaningful textiles engagement and participation must be made available to Gen Z. The time is now for the textiles industry across all sectors in West Yorkshire to step up, open doors and invite young people in. These experiences must also involve and inspire the teachers, careers advisors, parents and carers who also play a fundamental role in guiding career choices.

Alongside the much-needed opportunity, guidance and initial experience for Gen Z, it has the potential to radically redefine how those working in textiles approach careers engagement. The benefits are two-fold; in the short term it will bring immediate benefit for the young people as they gain experiences. In the long term, it will nurture a workforce with a strong range of skills and experiences and in turn, the textile sectors will be rewarded with a diverse set of candidates for future roles as all sectors work to navigate a difficult future.

Images

1   Photo: Studio Bokehgo for Woven In Kirklees

2   Photo: Studio Bokehgo for Woven In Kirklees

3   Photo by Tom J Johnson for Wesley Manners. Custom reflective Dress for artist Tashan, styled by Sachin Gogna

4   Still from video project with Perfect Magazine and Tommy Hilfigur for Wesley Manners. Shot by Lousiane Trotobas. Models Nema Tullah, Jabarii King, Aaron Shakespeare

5   Photo: Julia Roebuck

6   Photo: Studio Bokehgo for Woven In Kirklees

7   Photo: Studio Bokehgo for Woven In Kirklees

8   Photo: Studio Bokehgo for Woven In Kirklees

References

1   Solomka, O.M. (2019), Literature Review on Issues Surrounding GCSE Textiles Courses in English Secondary Schools. Accessed at **https://core.ac.uk/reader/266985480** (Tuesday 10 May 2022)

2   'Edward Crutchley – Son of the Dales' in the Yorkshire Evening Post, 06.02.2016. **https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/fashion-edward-crutchley-son-dales-627446**

3   **https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/fashioning-masculinities-the-art-of-menswear**

4   **https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/fashion-design-edward-crutchley**

5   **https://research.hud.ac.uk/institutes-centres/isiaip/ourcentres/technical-textiles/**

6   **https://textielmuseum.nl/en/textiellab-vistors/**

7   **https://bradfordtextilesociety.org.uk**

What Generation Z can teach us about digital engagement (a conversation)

Adam Stoneman, Leon McCullough, Helen O'Donoghue, Aoife Dunne and Eibhlín Campbell

Taking the lead from younger 'digital native' generations can help us move beyond unhelpful 'analogue vs digital' binaries towards a more fluid approach to arts engagement that recognises the value of digital tools in widening access and participation while taking seriously questions of privacy, exclusion, and corporate control. It is important to open an exchange of expertise and experience between generations, to explore the impact of technologies and find answers together to the questions they raise.

What follows is a conversation between a museum educator, an art teacher, a university student, and an artist, in which they reflect on the ways in which different generations understand the digital and its role in engaging with the arts. The political context for the conversation is Dublin, Ireland, the 'Silicon Valley of Europe', host to a large number of tech firms, and known for its low corporate tax rates.

The text itself was formed with a hybrid analogue/digital process, a face-to-face discussion at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) supplemented by email responses by one of the contributors, who was out of the country at the time. This conversation was facilitated and edited by Adam Stoneman, SPICE Project Researcher at IMMA.

Adam Stoneman (AS): The terms 'digital natives' and 'digital migrants' paint an image of technology as a world elsewhere, a place one can either be born in or move to. With the proviso that even this terminology perhaps betrays a generational perspective, what are your first memories of that moment of arrival into the digital realm?

Helen O'Donoghue (HOD): I'll always remember, this is very pre-digital, but coming into work in this building, and there was huge excitement because a fax came through the machine, and there was a coffee stain on the fax from the other side. It was a particular moment that still stands for me, that moment of us all looking at the fax, and looking at the coffee stain. It was very tangible still. In terms of my role here at IMMA, we weren't even considering the digital in terms of working with groups and introducing them to artworks, even if the artworks were digital. So, there seems to have been a fast forward button in the last two to three years because of the pandemic, when suddenly what we're seeing is that extra, added on aspects to a learning platform, now have become quite central to it.

Eibhlín Campbell (EC): Yeah, there isn't an ah-ha moment where I can remember – it's curious, if we think of the enormity of where we are – we seemed to slither into the embracing of technology. But I do remember the initiatives. And no discussion at that point of how this was actually going to benefit or hinder what was going to happen in the classroom. It was just 'upskill', you needed to upskill.

Leon McCullough (LM): I suppose for me, it wasn't a case of the internet being a new thing, it was just when I was old enough to be allowed

to use the internet. It's always been something that's been integrated in my life. Just a natural part of life, rather than an obstacle that you have to figure out how to use as a tool. It's another part of my communication or the way I interact with the world.

Aoife Dunne (AD): I was first introduced to the internet at age seven. My father worked in IT and so growing up I was always surrounded by computers and new technology, similar to Leon, it was a very natural part of my life. I used the internet as an escape from my day-to-day, allowing me to construct a new identity for myself. I taught myself how to code, use various software programmes and even went on to build a web design business at age 12, along with starting my own online magazines. I remember feeling incredibly liberated and excited about technology, like anything was possible.

AS: It's interesting that young people never need manuals for using technology, they have a way of learning which is more intuitive and autonomous – is that your sense?

LM: Yeah, it's interesting you say that, because I was given typing lessons in primary school. We'd have to play these games, and make sure that the right fingers were on the keyboard. But I'd already figured out how to type in my own way, and it works just as fast for me. I'd always be like, oh, they're not looking, I'll just do it my way to pass the test. Because it's not a case of the correct way of using it, it's just a case of using it in a way that works for you.

EC: Going back to those IT initiatives I mentioned, prior to 2000, I remember the teachers were all brought in, and we were all given a computer and it was very much about the mechanics of it and monkey see, monkey do. So, 'Click on that and then click on this and do that…' But yes, my recent work on an innovative virtual residency by IMMA in a primary school really underscored the ease and creativity with which children can operate with technology and allowed the adults to learn from, and with them.

LM: When I was in secondary school, there was an initiative where students mentored older retired people and taught them how to use technology. So, I was part of that and there was no training for any of us, it was just 'Are you good on the computer? Okay, great, here's Pat and you're going to teach him for four weeks.' It was interesting realising how difficult it is for people who just have never lived with technology and how those steps which are intuitive for young people bring so much fear and confusion when you don't know what you're doing.
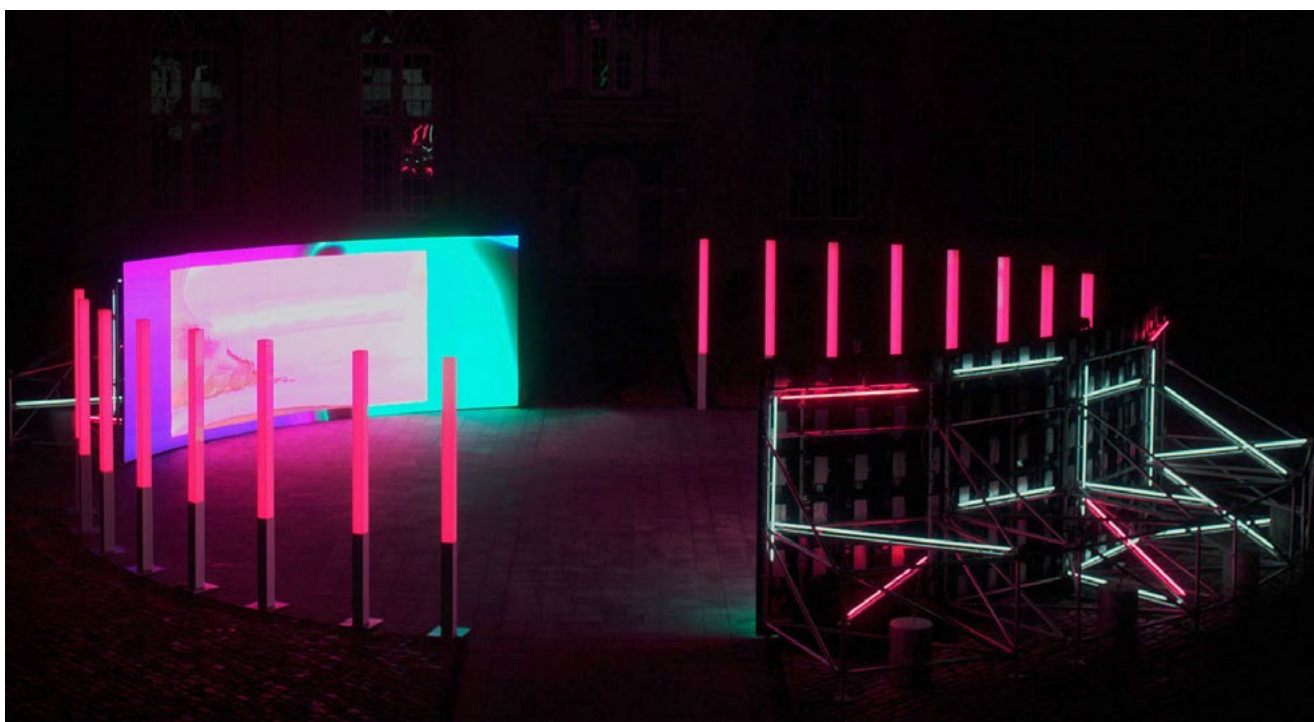
AD: I can't recall having any classes about technology, but I remember being lectured about the safety aspects of being online and nothing about how to navigate digital devices. Children and young adults are very adaptable, they enjoy the trial and error of learning new things, the challenge of figuring things out. It's only as we get older that we lose our patience and have less time for trying something new. It becomes tedious, but it shouldn't!

AS: I'd like to get further into these generational perspectives. Neil Postman, who wrote about technology in the 1990s, described it in terms of its ideological tendencies. He wrote that 'embedded in every tool is an ideological bias, a predisposition to construct the world as one thing rather than another, to value one thing over another, to amplify one sense or skill or attitude more loudly than another.' I want to open that up – what senses or skills or attitudes does technology amplify?

HOD: I think that's been a huge challenge to art teaching, particularly in secondary school. We have fought for years for arts education to be valued in itself, and to value the development that happens for a student participating in art education. But then we have seen the debates between STEAM and STEM. So, the sciences over the arts. And creativity and the creative industries terminology has come in. It's almost like we have to accommodate technology in all its guises as something new rather than something that can be interwoven through everything. Or it's being used to rationalise the economy and the jobs market for people who choose to study art education.

EC: What's been coming up for me is that notion of looking at everything sectorally. So, we look at what's happening in primary school education or secondary school education or in the visual arts or whatever. And yet the enormity of what we're looking at is so huge in terms of the impact of technology on humanity. It's important not to get siloed and not to just be looking at the impact sectorally, but to actually be inserting ourselves as an arts community, as a cultural community into the big discussions. If you believe that art is about your humanity and about expressing yourself,

if you're making art and if you're engaging with art, it's relational, it's about relationships. Learning, exchanging. If we're fundamentally changing something relative to our humanity with technology, then it behoves us to insert ourselves into the bigger questions and not to leave it to social scientists or political scientists or economists or politicians. And that goes to the heart of that question about your right to an arts education as a child or an adult and what that means.

LM: My main takeaway from my experience of still being in the formal education sector, is that those attitudes are built into the structure of education. In secondary school, you choose your exam subjects. I remember being told, 'You have to pick science. And I was like 'Do you have to pick a science? Is this actually a rule?' And then it was revealed, 'No, it's not a rule, you definitely should just in case you want to do something that's connected to science.' Most people felt compelled to. It was an attitude of 'you won't have a back-up if you don't do a science'. It was an issue of values.

EC: We had STEM and STEAM and now this big thrust towards teaching creativity. But there's a lack of debate around firstly what creativity means and secondly is it possible to teach it. When you look at where the thrust for that is coming from, it's the economic imperative in providing the workforce with people who can code and the push from the OECD to develop mechanisms and rubrics for testing creativity in schools, so that you end up with testing not just Maths and English, but also creativity. And again, there's not a lot of debate as to whether that is actually good. Is that a very reductive way of looking at creativity and to what end? Why? I think part of the answer there is in the title 'OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development'; it's an economic imperative as opposed to something with a bigger philosophical underpinning.

LM: Now, my strong Gen Z mindset is coming through. Yes, there are negatives. There are positives and negatives with any kind of change but an example that sticks in my mind is this musician, Steve Lacey, who recorded a song on his iPad on one of these free apps, and won a

Grammy for it, because it gives you the platform to be able to do these things. So, while yes, there is lots of negative critiques of digital, it also allows people to do things that before would have been essentially gate kept by, I suppose –

HOD: Wealthy people.

LM: Exactly. And all my work is digital now in terms of camera and video. Everything is online or on a screen and if I had grown up 50 years ago, I probably wouldn't be able to have the experience that I have now because most people my age grew up with a camera in their hand and are able to access those things, so it allows for people to access opportunities that they wouldn't have had before.

HOD: Yeah, so what I hear you saying strongly there, and you're right, is that in some ways technology is making it far more democratic in terms of accessing the tools to make certain work. There's no doubt about that. But then the same technology is also taking… It's giving on the one hand and taking on the other, and that's the real challenge, isn't it?

EC: That's the real tension. And democratisation is the nub of it. It's that sense of liberation, I can make this artwork and I can share it. You know, you spoke about the gatekeepers that would have prevented that process. But it seems like maybe the gates have just moved somewhere else in terms of who's actually making the money at the end of the day. Big Tech is hoovering up the profits. So, yes, there has been an openness and a raft of opportunities in terms of using the digital to get our work out there initially, but is it real democracy?

AS: We've been discussing art production but I want to turn to engagement. How are new technologies changing how we engage with art?

HOD: The digital has completely changed how people engage with art, how people come in now and do their selfie. They take the image and then they go off. The digital is interrupting so much of how we engage with the arts, it's certainly interrupting the whole experience of being with a work of art, a silent work of art or a moving work

of art. Really being with it. And it's interrupted how human beings are behaving in front of artworks. In some ways, people think, oh, you know, you're being too old-fashioned here, and I saw Aoife's piece, DREAMSPHERE was in the IMMA courtyard all winter. I saw people creating work in front of her work and using their cell phones, and then that was uploaded onto the digital platform. So, there's loads of positives, but in a way, I'm saying, well, it's a digital artwork, so I don't care if they do a selfie in front of it. It seems right to do a selfie or to dance and film, but… The whole moment of being with an artwork in an embodied sense: that has been changed. We are physical beings. We're not just virtual beings. So, that's a huge challenge.

AD: I agree with Helen that it is interrupting how we engage with art. As technology becomes more advanced, I think the interaction increasingly involves different aspects of the user's embodied presence, how the viewer positions themselves within the work. I saw a lot of people interacting with DREAMSPHERE, and to be honest I didn't know how I felt about it. On one hand I think it's great that they are responding to the work so positively that they want to capture and record their experience of the work. On the other hand, I feel the act of selfies really takes away from that intimate experience. It's important to me that the audience can immerse themselves within the piece, but you can't truly experience the work if you are so focused on the image you're trying to capture.

LM: I remember going to a museum with you Helen, and asking 'Is it okay if I take photos of the works?' And you said 'It would be better if you didn't' [laughs] and…

HOD: Múinteoir ('school teacher') [laughter].

LM: … it's interesting, because I think people my age, if you like something that you see, the instinct is 'I want to take pictures so that I can have it whenever I want to look at it' and there is an argument to be made of whether that does affect the actual time you spend looking at the thing in front of you, but I also think that it is a way of engagement that my generation have, and it's not necessarily an inherently negative thing. So, I think

it's a bit more nuanced.

HOD: This is very much the ethical conversation here in IMMA. We went paperless during the pandemic, and now because of climate change we're trying to become a paperless organisation. If you're not going to have paper, and you want any accompanying information, that means having digital access. So, if we go down this route, we're not going to be able to facilitate visitors to museums in accessing the artwork without their phones.

Then there's the other debate, which is how quickly people converted – and converted is the first word I can think of – to the digital platforms, and older people who started to connect with us. We had to think 'Okay, well how do we make their connection as meaningful and as engaging as a real visit?' so we explored the idea of creating slow looking videos. So, there's been some really creative ways that we've created connections, and I don't think we should throw those out now that we are where we are, but neither should they become the dominant force, and unfortunately, again it goes back to economics all the time, the way our numbers are being measured; for years in IMMA, it has been how many visitors, footfall – but what do we mean by engaging? So, again going back to the illustration – the person comes in, does the selfie, and then is gone, or the person who comes in and spends three hours sitting with an artwork. It's quality versus quantity. I think we're in this world, and we should make the best of both, but…

EC: I think the nub of it is are we talking about an enhancement of the engagement? Is that possible? As opposed to a replacement… Can you work towards an engagement which synthesises the digital and the embodied so that we can move things on to something richer? But that's not a given unless you interrogate it, and the interrogation needs oxygen and it needs space and it needs to be done rigorously in the contemporary climate, because you're right Helen, behind all the impetus, the imperative, there is a huge economic push. And as you say, number crunching, footfall…

HOD: Hits!

EC: Hits, exactly. So, that's where I'd go back to at the very opening when I said instead of us just looking at things sectorally, 'Well how does it affect the classroom, or how does it affect your practice' it's about looking at the bigger picture. So, if the engagement with the artwork is relational and it's about your humanity, but it can embrace the digital, then you're onto something in terms of interrogating that, I think.

LM: When I was about 17, I was thinking a lot about technology and how it was affecting my life, being someone who was very online and had grown up online, I was thinking about it in a very black and white way, upon reflection, where time spent online was time taken away from real life. Once I started seeing how much time I was spending online or on screens, I was baffled by it, so I started making an effort to minimise that time and to get back to real life. I got a keypad phone, no connection to the internet, and it was like, when I leave the house, I will take this phone with me and I'll still be able to contact people if I need to but I won't go online. And it did change the way I was interacting with the world. But then, I was trying to get a bus and I had this Blockia with me and I was like, I can't look at the bus timetable, I can't see when it's going to come, and it was actually just impractical!

Now I've stopped thinking of it as having such a negative impact, that if I'm looking at a screen, that that's an inherently negative thing. I was thinking of communication through the digital as taking away from communication face-to-face, but I've come to realise that online friendships, those connections are just as real as those offline. It's something that people of older generations hadn't experienced but I've made friends through my teenage years that lived in different countries. So, there's lots of positive things to be said about digital communication as well, and my mindset has kind of switched.

I went through first not thinking about how technology was affecting me at all, to thinking of it in a negative way. And now I've gotten to a point where I've accepted that it's not necessarily

a negative thing, it's about finding your own relationship to technology.

AD: Developing your own personal relationship with technology is key, and that looks so different for everyone, especially if it's part of your job. I too went through a period where I felt being online was having a negative effect on me, since it's such a huge part of my life both professionally and personally, I felt I had no escape from technology. It's strange to think that not having a phone or social media has a huge impact on your social life and how you interact with the world.

EC: I think the real richness between the generations is the flow. The concept of flow is really important to me. Leon, when you were describing, you said, 'And I came off my phone and I was using the Nokia' you said, 'back into real life', so that was interesting for me to hear you describing the virtual as something separate from your real life, in that moment in time for you. Now you've reintegrated a different version, we'll say, but I hear my own son, who's around the same age as Leon saying exactly the same things, so it's the flow between the generations that the real interesting stuff comes up, you know?

References

1   Aoife Dunne, DREAMSPHERE, 2022. Installation. IMMA, Dublin, accessible at **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMX9IUVIAqQ**

2   Slow Art Series: Klein and Kühne (YouTube video), IMMA's Art and Ageing Series, 2022, accessible at **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjItpglremY**

Image

Aoife Dunne, DREAMSPHERE, 2022. Installation, IMMA, Dublin (Photos: Aoife Dunne)

The future of creative work: GYG's checklist for creative organisations

Isabella Wagner , Nora Aubry , Eden Bø Dower and Alyx Furniss

The GYG are a group of 16-25 year olds working with the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) in Glasgow to host a programme of youth-centred events. Since we started meeting in October 2022, we have spent a lot of time getting to know each other, learning about each other's experiences and talking about the issues in art spaces, especially in more established institutions.

We are Alyx, Isabella, Nora and Eden, four members who got together to respond to the questions Engage posed about Gen Z and the future of creative work. When we met to discuss the questions together, we thought that they were in many ways representative of the problems with creative work that we had been discussing as a group. The questions are difficult to read, overly academic and not designed with a young audience in mind. The questions were also based on basic problems and queries – we feel that organisations should already be aware of issues to do with workforce development, access and the paramount importance of diversity, inclusivity, and identity. We also felt that the questions were repeating harmful structures common in creative spaces, where ideas are plundered from young people for the benefit of the organisation.

Ultimately, we decided to write a manifesto on creative work as a guideline for employers in art galleries, museums and creative organisations to open up job opportunities and make them more achievable for all. All of our thoughts come from our own experiences, learning from each other's experiences and the experiences of our peers and colleagues in the sector. This manifesto is therefore based on the real, lived experiences of young people working in creative spaces.

Image

GYG's checklist for creative organisations: Words by Isabella Wagner, Design and illustrations by Eden Bø Dower from the GoMA Youth Group 2022. Available at **https://engage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GYG-Engage-1.pdf**

THE FUTURE OF CREATIVE WORK
GYG'S CHECKLIST FOR CREATIVE ORGANISATIONS

HELLO

→ Is your organisation's communication clear, accessible and presented in a range of ways?
→ Is your application process fair and equitable, actively respecting and valuing of genuine inclusivity?
→ Is your outreach process active and authentic, celebrating and recognising that everyone has different needs, experiences and ways of communicating?
→ Are you committed to acknowledging privilege and combating the systems that oppress people based on their identity, such as ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, class, disability?

① IS YOUR ORGANISATION COMMITTED TO BEING ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE?

Jobs in creative organisations are scarce, and much of the work that is available is unstable with short term, unpaid work standard among early career professionals. Young professionals are expected to have inordinate amounts of experience and knowledge before they even begin breaking into the industry. These opportunities are then only accessible to those who have the support and means to pursue unpaid work in the hopes that they might secure a job, with the risk that they also might not. If someone is in any way socioeconomically disadvantaged, jobs in arts are out of reach and nearly impossible to achieve. The skills, experience and expectations of an early career professionals need to be lowered to a realistic, reasonable and equitable level. Organisations also need to be doing active and authentic outreach so that those who may have never considered a job in arts feel that it may be a realistic goal for them. For this to be fully achievable, the kinds of opportunities available also need to change – refer to point 3.

Job applications are also designed to exclude. High proficiency in reading and writing skills are required to navigate the complex processes involved, even if those skills are not necessarily required for the role. If you have been economically privileged enough to have access to opportunities to develop yourself professionally, your chances of securing employment could be held back by your ability to fill out the application. Job applications should be simplified and made flexible, so that no one's ability to secure a job is dependent on how well they can fill out an application form.

② DO YOU ENSURE A WIDE RANGE OF VOICES ARE HEARD AND VALUED IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

Inclusivity, diversity and representation are essential to creative work, now and in the future. These spaces must centre around inclusivity, identity, and community or else the work lacks purpose. However, organisations may say they value diversity while failing to do the work to support this. As referenced in point 1, active and authentic outreach is essential in diversifying an organisation. We also believe that where community groups or individuals are being consulted for their work, especially when we consider that this knowledge and understanding is based on a lifetime of experiences and that speaking about these ideas involves a degree of emotional labour, ideas are currency, and particularly young people face their ideas being taken for free to make an organisation appear as though they are inclusive, diverse and representative. Appearance should be met with reality to ensure that diversity and representation is achieved fairly and authentically.

③ DO YOU OFFER PAID OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THOSE LOOKING TO GAIN EXPERIENCE?

→ Are the opportunities your organisation offer paid, and long term?
→ Do they guarantee career development, or secure a job in future?
→ Do these opportunities equip the worker with tools relevant and beneficial to their future and ongoing personal development?

Paid work is an essential component to opening up access and making careers in the sector realistic for people of various backgrounds. Unpaid opportunities are rare and when they do appear, they regularly pay minimum wage, or close to it, are part-time and short term. There is no stability or any sense of security. Many opportunities also do not offer a way to secure a job in the future. Competition is fierce and often even opportunities that are open to those with little to no experience are overrun with people who do have experience, simply because there is not enough to go around.

It is also imperative that opportunities provide workers with training and skill building relevant to the industry. Training is empowering – we could change the entire conversation around access by simply equipping people with the skills to achieve what they need/want by themselves.

④ DOES YOUR ORGANISATION OFFER SUPPORT AND CARE TO ENSURE THE WELLBEING OF YOUR STAFF?

→ Do you actively and genuinely promote the importance of well-being?
→ Do you recognise that everyone have different needs, both visible and invisible?
→ Do you provide relevant support to create a work environment where staff feel safe, valued and respected?
→ Do you actively value and celebrate your staff and their achievements?
→ Are you transparent with staff about the terms of their employment, ensuring they feel secure in their job?

The GYG believes that any organisation has a duty of care for their staff. This includes paying people a fair wage, providing job security and providing accommodations that might affect staff at work. The reality is that because of the kinds of work on offer in these spaces – jobs that are inherently unstable, jobs that demand so much from applicants before they even begin working in the sphere, jobs that prevent certain demographics from getting involved – these requirements are not met. Care in creative spaces should not just be care for collections, it should also be care for people. Creating a wider framework of support for staff and improving the well-being of colleagues is essential to an organisation's success.

⑤ ARE YOU TRANSPARENT ABOUT HOW YOUR ORGANISATION OPERATES AND IS STRUCTURED?

→ Do you uphold a no-tolerance policy for bullying/abuse/harassment in the work place, enforcing real consequences for any forms of bigotry, such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism and ableism?
→ Do you act on feedback and strive to improve the workplace for all members of staff, recognising that everyone has different and individual experiences and needs?
→ Do you recognise that emotional labour is work, and guarantee financial compensation for individuals who share their knowledge, personal experiences and time?
→ Do you acknowledge and respect all voices in your organisation, regardless of role, position or identity?

↑ Do you provide clear guidelines of the responsibility and behaviour expected of all members of staff?
↑ Are you committed to holding members of your organisation accountable, regardless of their role or position?
↑ Do you provide training for staff, such as anti-bias, mental health, inclusive and accessible communication etc., and is it compulsory for all?
↑ Does your organisation have a culture encouraging honesty and transparency, and genuinely take all feedback into consideration?
↑ Does your organisation ensure that staff won't experience negative treatment if and when they speak out?

We feel that arts organisations often like to make processes secretive and exclusive, as in doing so, they exclude and evade responsibility. It is important especially for people in positions of power and people in management positions to be held accountable for their actions. Continual training and checks for all employees will ensure best practice and will prevent people from becoming complacent. Change is inevitable and openness to new, fresh ideas is at the heart of creative work. As such, training and development and the requirement of all staff at whatever stage they are in their career. Openness and clarity also creates the opportunity to create an organisation that is a welcoming space for all.

WHO IS THE GYG?

ALYX ISABELLA NORA EDEN

The GYG are a group of 16-25 year olds working with the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow to host a programme of youth-centred events. Since we started meeting in October 2021, we have spent a lot of time getting to know each other, learning about each other's experiences, and talking about the issues in arts spaces, especially in more established institutions.

We are Alyx, Isabella, Nora and Eden, four members who got together to respond to the questions Engage posed about Gen Z and the future of creative work. When we met to discuss the questions together, we thought that they were in many ways representative of the problems with creative work that we had been discussing as a group. The questions are difficult to read, overly academic and not designed with a young audience in mind. The questions were also based on basic problems and queries – we feel that organisations should already be aware of issues to do with workforce development, access and the paramount importance of diversity, inclusivity and identity. We also felt that the questions were repeating harmful structures common in creative spaces, where ideas are plundered from young people for the benefit of the organisation.

Ultimately, we decided to write a manifesto on creative work as a guideline for employers in art galleries, museums and creative organisations to open up job opportunities and make them more achievable for all. All of our thoughts come from our own experiences, learning from each other's experiences and the experiences of our peers and colleagues in the sector. This manifesto is therefore based on the real, lived experiences of young people working in creative spaces.

Rise up! How to radically shift the creative sector towards true cooperation and inclusion

Kamina Walton
Sector leader, artist and creative leadership coach

"I want to hold people accountable to the exclusivity of the arts, hiring etc. especially at a higher level. I want a space to challenge existing structures and leadership without my job and professional future being at risk."
— Rising Leadership Lab, young participant

According to a recent article in Arts Professional, 86% of internships in the creative sector are still unpaid.[1] This is a shocking figure and shows how little progress has been made in terms of ensuring the arts are accessible to all. Young people from all backgrounds regardless of race, class or gender, should be represented at every level of the creative sector, including the strategic. Not just as participants but as core team members, trustees and sector leaders. With pay so low, a lack of diverse representation and also a lack of transparency around the different roles within the sector, it's hardly surprising that for many parents a career in the arts is not seen as a tangible option for their child.

In 2018 the report, 'Panic! Social Class, Taste and

Inequalities in the Creative Industries' found that the continuing substantial barriers for entry into the arts sector for young people – particularly from underrepresented Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and those of working class origins – was ensuring the 'socially reproductive' prevention of any diversification of the workforce[2]. There have been significant initiatives to improve on this situation in recent years, such as the paid internship programme run by Artquest[3], but young people still face major barriers to accessing meaningful work within the sector. Many also struggle to access the technology that is increasingly used in our hybrid forms of working. Yet it is these young people who offer the potential to radically shift our creative industries towards true cooperation and inclusion.

In the past two years we have seen unprecedented change in the creative sector. For some it has been a struggle to survive. For others, Arts Council England Culture Recovery funding has enabled them to strengthen their foundations and continue their important work. For many it has been a period of questioning, soul searching and actively striving for change – both for themselves, acknowledging the privileges they might hold, and within their organisations acknowledging how inclusive, or not, they might be.

"The British arts after the pandemic may need to be rawer, more basic, more plugged into their communities than ever. And that might not be a bad thing."
— Charlotte Higgins, The Guardian[4]

We all recognise the importance and value of having a diverse sector that is accessible to all, however this requires a different kind of scrutiny of the processes that we use around employment, the support structures we put in place for those who are new to the sector, and the assumptions we make around access. For most, the ambition is to uphold Arts Council England's 'Let's Create' strategy in relation to 'Inclusivity and Relevance':

"The sector will create access and career opportunities for people from all parts of society. It will have a workforce, leadership and governance which fully reflects and represents all communities and organisations with inclusive cultures, who value and develop their people."
— Let's Create, Arts Council England[5]

Yet for the majority of the sector the reality is still far from this utopic vision. Despite an awareness of the cultural capital many young people possess, as a sector we still have a tendency for conservative thinking, aversion to risk-taking and non-progressive actions when it comes to their employment. Look around your workplace, meeting room or Zoom screen. How many young people do you see under 30? Assuming there are some, what are their roles? Are they your director, trustees, producers, engagement leads? Or are they your social media managers, assistants or interns? If the answer is the latter group, then what might the space feel like if the young people held the strategic roles and you looked to them for decision-making? Scary? Exciting? Radical?

LIVITY in London is 'a creative business that works hand in hand with brands and the next generation to build the future better'. It measures its social impact alongside its financial reporting, with a focus on boosting young people's social and cultural capital.

"Clients choose to collaborate with us in order to earn their place in youth culture, define the new direction for their brands, and make meaningful contributions on the world's biggest issues."
— LIVITY[6]

As a sector we could learn much from this approach. We need new ways of working, recruiting, and collaborating with young people,

and this requires dialogue with – and genuine attention to – young peoples' ideas and visions. We need more transparency and vulnerability modelled at a leadership level and young people need to be very much a part of this.

"There are new rules being written, new normals being forged, new expectations and desires being unearthed. It is young people who are writing these rules, setting these trends and leading the way."

— Beatfreeks, Birmingham[7]

Now is the time to champion these new voices, embrace risk and advocate for change

For those of you who are already experiencing young people's full potential in your workforce: how does that feel? For me it was a total game changer. In the last five years of founding and growing Rising Arts Agency, I learnt more from the young people in my team and community than from almost all my previous decades of working in the sector. In what became a small team of six I was the only member over the age of 30. Our Development Manager, Engagement Producer, Creative Director, Storyteller, freelance team and board members are all aged between 23 and 30. We have a community of Expert Friends who are established sector leaders, but those we look to for future thinking are the 18-30 year old participants from our transformative leadership programme, BE IT[8]. This was a fully accessible programme for young emerging leaders with an emphasis on supporting those with protected characteristics of race, gender and disability.

We recognise that the best ideas are arrived at through a diversity of thought, and for that to happen you need a diverse workforce. So often I hear those in the sector say that they can't reach the people they're hoping to attract as employees, particularly when it comes to young people. The tendency is to start with recruitment or marketing routes that are known, to use branding and job specs that have been used before. How often do we scrutinise the language, the specific appeal or the accessibility of these documents? With recruitment we often publicise defined roles, but what would happen if we started by thinking

about the kind of people we'd like to engage and then imagine creating roles around those individuals?

"We need to create more fluid organisational models which encourage change rather than fear it."

— David Jubb, theatre producer and ex CEO & Artistic Director, Battersea Arts Centre[9]

I founded Rising Arts Agency in 2015 with the premise that to create an authentic and valuable agency for young people it needed to be genuinely co-created with young people. This meant embedding them in the initial planning and mapping of the agency's offer, then placing them front and centre in all areas from that point on. It meant starting small and growing slowly over the first few years while conversations were held with our community about the support they needed. It meant modelling a method of co-creation that could be replicated through and by the young people we've worked with in intimate groupings, where genuine, slow and embedded relationships and change-making can take place.

It also meant deep interrogation of the emotional labour involved in work around true inclusion. We recognised the vulnerability that can be experienced by those involved in this work and that we need to think differently about our diverse workforce and their individual needs.

When it comes to employment young people benefit from a truly intersectional approach, centring care, reflection and critical interrogation, that embraces risk and advocates for genuine change. Within Rising Arts Agency we have learnt that it takes time to develop mutual trust and understanding by being open to what young people really want and understanding how to empower them to work in the most effective, meaningful ways. Not being tokenistic with your inclusion and co-design means bringing integrity to every interaction and decision, often requiring that we slow down. So often you hear of organisations actively recruiting Black or Brown team members and then being disappointed when they leave after the first year. When no one around you looks like you do or shares your lived experience, the workplace can be an isolating experience. In the same way young people

from diverse communities thrive when working amongst their peers or alongside positive role models.

Mental health is a key vulnerability for young people, one that is not always addressed in the workplace. There are high expectations for them (and all employees) to always be 'okay', particularly if they are new to a team, and this often leads to a fear of speaking honestly about their emotional wellbeing. One of the main anxieties for young people going into strategic roles is the prospect of failure, of doing their team a disservice, or making a big mistake. By prioritising mental health and the wellbeing of every young person that enters the workplace, organisations can build in a key pastoral care framework, to provide everyone with the emotional support they need to take risks, push themselves, and succeed. This approach was core to Rising Art Agency's leadership programme, BE IT.

"BE IT has really helped me to reinforce the idea of self-care and how it affects everything we do, redefining what professionalism is. It's not about not showing your emotions, professionalism

is about making your needs known and understanding boundaries. It's taking that time to reflect and check "Do I have the capacity?" "Do I need to take a rest?" "What is the most productive thing for me now?""
— Rosina, BE IT participant, 2021-22

There are other practical ways to address embedded inclusion in the workplace. For starters when looking to bring young people on to your team, consider flexible working for the role which often suits young people well. When structuring an interview panel, ensure young people are around the table asking the questions alongside more mature members of a team, also taking into account representation of race and class. Once you have appointed someone, invite the new team member to create their own access document so everyone can understand their preferred methods of communication, working pace and any other individual needs they might have. Ongoing support can be ensured for young team members by offering one-to-one buddying schemes or wider mentoring programmes. Ask young team members for constructive feedback about the way you hold staff meetings, to help you understand

more about their learning styles. Talking regularly and openly about anything and everything, avoiding jargon and ensuring transparency can help to nurture a sense of inclusivity.

Within our agency, working together was all about active listening, sharing and deep reflection. We often started team meetings offering the gift of music, books or podcasts that had inspired us. We had reflection time written into our working week – an hour for each day worked. This was protected time for each member of the team to reflect on their learning, dig deeper into ideas through research, or take time to write a blog post sharing their learning with others. The emphasis was not on the more traditional markers of productivity but trusting in each team member to manage their time and work at a pace that complimented their personal needs.

"I think having that time and space is important. A big takeaway from the BE IT programme is about pacing ourselves and not overwhelming ourselves. Trying to resist the grind culture and productivity, feeling like you have to always be showing how much you're doing in order to feel worthy. So, I

think unlearning those internalised capitalist ideas of productivity… I feel like we have to be told that message over and over again… until your brain just unlearns all the years of basically doing the opposite."
— Orla, BE IT participant 2021-22

There are many powerful examples of creative initiatives across the UK empowering young creatives, thinking differently about their place in the workforce and giving them voice. Sour Lemons based in London worked exclusively with young people to dismantle systemic racism in the arts and culture sector. Earlier this year it transitioned to become the 'What If Experiment', whose specialism is anti-Blackness with an ongoing commitment to creating anti-racist and human-centred practices[10].

Beatfreeks based in Birmingham is another great example. One of its current projects, As We Speak, tells the story of ten young artists and community organisers from across the Commonwealth[11]. It is based on the simple premise that young people who have built their lives around creativity and community already know best what they need. Unlike traditional commissions and funding streams, they have decided to support young artists' existing practices, and give them a platform to show them to the rest of the world.

The dominant perception is still that, in order to lead effectively and successfully, leaders need age and experience. The young people in Rising's community and many of the projects cited are proving this wrong. We are placing young leaders in strategic positions across the cultural sector. In Rising Arts Agency, we do this through initiatives such as BE IT, our radical leadership programme, and OnBoard, our governance programme advocating for the recruitment of young people and providing them with training to ensure more diverse boards[12]. We have faith that by giving these young people agency, their voices will be amplified. In this way their visible presence within the sector will contribute towards future systemic change.

"Co-creation is a co-operative process in which people with diverse experiences, skills and

knowledge come together and work in non-hierarchical ways to address a common issue, and which enables people and communities to be actively involved in shaping the things which impact their lives. It shifts power, resource and ownership towards the people the work is intended to benefit, as opposed to the traditional 'top down' approach. It encourages every individual to activate their creative potential and realise their own ability to make change."
— Co-Creating Change[13]

The Rising Arts Agency narrative is one of genuine co-creation, risk-taking and leadership transformation. From the very beginning my vision as Founder was always to lead the agency with young people over a five-year period. During that time, I would help build a team, our community, our resources and our standing in the city. Once established I'd hand on this leadership to young people within the team to take the agency forward. We talked about the transition together for 18 months before it actually took place. Between January and July 2021, I reduced my working days from four to three to two, then took all of August as leave. I returned in September 2021 one day per week, really only as support for team members Euella Jackson and Jess Bunyan who became Rising's new Co-Directors in October. This model of five-year leadership is one that I hope will be adopted long-term, with Euella and Jess handing over the baton again in five years from now and making space for new faces, new voices and new ideas.

In 2020, after the first six months of experiencing a global pandemic, the murder of George Floyd in
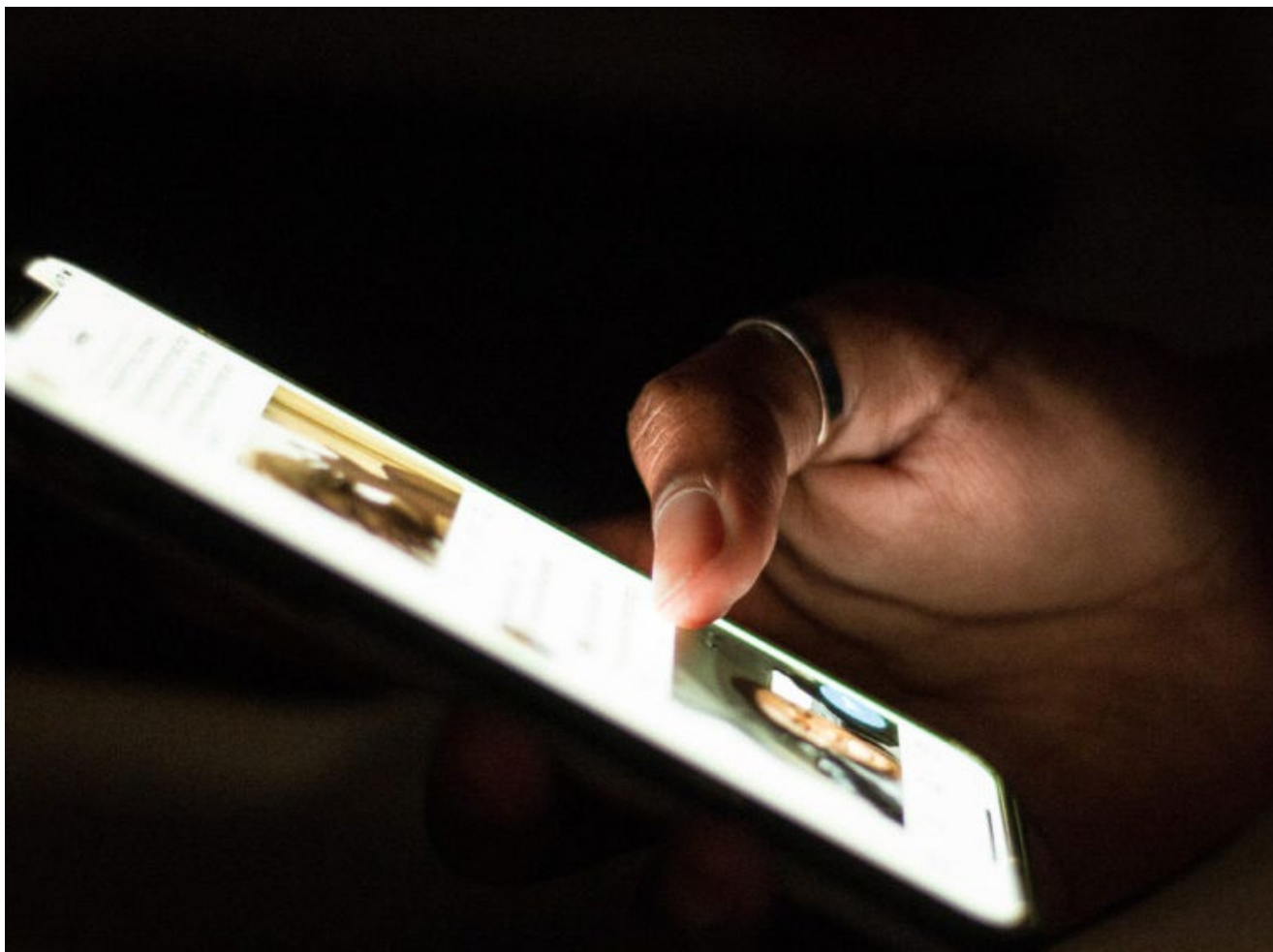
America and the Black Lives Matter protests, there was talk across the sector of the radical change needed to ensure a more just and inclusive world going forward. There have been steps taken, in some places quite giant steps but in other places they have been very small. When it comes to young people in the workforce, whether you are working alongside them in your team as leaders, strategic thinkers or in entry level roles, or if you are considering working with them for the first time, I encourage you to start by asking yourself these questions:

- Across your team can you recognise who is not represented and/or those without decision-making powers and take action to address this imbalance?

- Can you take more risk in your recruitment, looking to appoint young people in leadership posts as well as for entry level roles?

- If you are looking to fill a role with someone with specific experience, would you recognise the equal value of their lived experience alongside any evidence they might have of employment in the sector?

- Can you recruit young people with a heightened awareness of potential power dynamics within the team and how any existing hierarchies might be actively flattened?

- Are you prepared to take criticism from young people on your team or in your community about the work you are doing and act on it?

- Can you embrace co-creation within your workplace?

References

1   'The future of work', Russell Martin. Arts Professional, May 2022. **https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/354/feature/future-work**

2   'Panic! It's an Arts Emergency' report. Produced by Arts Emergency in collaboration with Create and academics from the Universities of Sheffield and Edinburgh. **https://www.arts-emergency.org/about-us/reports**

3   Artquest's paid internship programme has been running for the past ten years. **https://artquest.org.uk/project/awp-hybrid-internships-a-pilot/**

4   'After the war, the arts came back stronger. They can do so again.' Charlotte Higgins, The Guardian, Monday 18 May 2020, **https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/18/war-arts-stronger-covid-19-devastated-theatres-museums-imagination**

5   Arts Council, Let's Create, **https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate**

6   See **https://livity.co.uk/**

7   See **https://beatfreeks.com**

8   See **https://rising.org.uk/be-it/**

9   David Jubb blog post, **https://davidjubb.blog/2019/09/03/not-for-me-not-for-you-but-for-us/**

10   What If Experiment, whose specialism is anti-Blackness with an ongoing commitment to creating anti-racist and human centred practices **https://whatifexperiment.co.uk/**

11   Beatfreeks' project, As We Speak, tells the story of ten young artists and community organisers from across the Commonwealth **https://beatfreeks.com/aswespeak/**

12   OnBoard, Rising Arts Agency's programme supporting young people into governance roles across the creative sector in the South West **https://rising.org.uk/onboard/**

13   Co-Creating Change, **http://www.cocreatingchange.org.uk/**

Images

1   Image from Rising's 'Whose Future #2' billboard campaign. 2021

2   Image from Rising's 'Whose Future #2' billboard campaign. 2021

3   Image from Rising's Leadership Lab. 2019

4   Image from Rising's Leadership Lab. 2019

5   Image from 'Why Are We Not Here' exhibition install. 2019

6   Image from 'Why Are We Not Here' exhibition install. 2019

7   Image from 'Why Are We Not Here' exhibition install. 2019

8   Image from Rising and Integrate collaboration 'Under my Skin' with Spike Island and Imran Perretta. 2019

What next? Supporting on progression routes for young people within the museum and gallery workforce

Rachel Moss
Freelancer for Arts Education and Evaluation

Background

In 2020 I carried out research for Tate's Young People's Programmes team focusing on What next for Routes In? with the backdrop of how the Covid-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter impacted on Generation Z[1]. Last month, I chaired a panel discussion Session 6: What's next? Supporting careers after traineeships for the online Museum Futures Summit hosted by The British Museum, bringing together a panel of seven speakers from a range of museums and galleries including two early career individuals who recently turned 25, so are no longer seen as young people[2].

The recent report Culture in Crisis by the Centre for Cultural Value found that the Covid-19 pandemic has affected workforce diversity. 'Losses of jobs and hours were not felt evenly across all demographic groups and the pandemic has shown the need for major, perhaps revolutionary, changes in how the cultural sector views work and the workforce.'[3] In particular we need to focus on young people who are under-represented in the sector. For example, those who identify as being from working class or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as D/deaf, disabled, neurodiverse, LGBTQ+ and/or non-binary, Black, Asian and minority ethnic; noting that this is not an exclusive list and that intersectionality is significant.[4]

Rachel Noel, Convenor: Young People's Programmes at Tate, spoke at the Museum Futures Summit referring to the nine areas for enabling change from the report What next for Routes In? Rachel highlighted point seven — regular and long-term networking, mentoring, training and development — stating that consistent and continuous work with young people is most successful when providing support. In this article, I will be exploring what we mean by a young person, looking into the recent increase in paid traineeships, thinking about what we can offer as support in the longer term, and identifying ways that we can work better together.

What is a young person?

Generation Z is defined as people born between 1997 and 2012; currently aged 10–25. As a sector we tend to define a young person with a maximum age of 25, often due to funding eligibility. However, many younger people feel like they have lost out on two years of opportunities due to the pandemic, especially those who graduated in the middle of this period of uncertainty.[5]

Tascha Von Uexkull, who spoke at the Museum Futures Summit, works in museums and galleries as a learning facilitator, and is now over 25. She believes that having this age cap 'places pressure on you knowing where you're at by then.' She also feels that young people were overlooked during the pandemic, so answered a need by setting up the Assemblage Youth Collective, an interdisciplinary collective of young creatives aged 18–26 who meet regularly in London and online to collaborate on creative projects. Tascha sees career progression as not just about job opportunities. For her it's about a multifaceted

support system that consists of further skills development, networking, employability and freelance opportunities. Tascha says 'it's key that young people don't feel discarded or forgotten… but more like the exciting next stage of their career journey is about to begin.'

Apprenticeships do not legally have an age restriction and can be employed to upskill at any stage of someone's career. However, apprenticeships are not always popular with young people. During interviews with Tate Collective Producers (TCPs) for the report What next for Routes In? comments included: 'It's not very clear what's on offer for apprenticeships in the arts and also there's a stigma attached' and 'people view them as instead of going to uni'. It is important to have alternative routes focusing on transferable skills as ways into the sector that do not include a requirement for vast experience — often voluntary — and specific qualifications like a Masters degree. Jolie Hockings, Curator: Schools & Young People, runs Develop for ages 14–24 at The Photographers' Gallery. During the Museum Futures Summit she said 'there's a railcard now for 26–30 year olds. Support shouldn't stop after 24…

More should be focused on about how you enter the sector rather than focus on age or boxing people.'

There are some positive examples of organisations working with individuals up to age 30, such as Creative Society, an employment charity that helps young people wanting to work in the creative and cultural sector. It has continued contact with individuals, supporting them through a mentoring programme and offering opportunities for networking via its Creative Jobs Studio. Some young people come to the decision to pursue a career in the arts at a later stage, maybe due to being the first generation to study at university or because they have mental health or additional needs. Emma Middleton, Curator: Artists' Projects & Participation at the Foundling Museum, said at the Museum Futures Summit that:

'Care-experienced young people's routes can be different. A traineeship might be the first step back into education, or even leaving their flat, so it feels wrong to shut it down. You don't stop being a young person at 25. It's probably the first time that

a lot of them have been in a museum.'

Emma runs the Tracing Our Tales traineeships aimed at care-experienced young adults who are currently aged up to 28, and she is considering extending opportunities to age 30. Individuals are paid to attend weekly sessions and come via a referral from virtual schools across London. They gain art, teaching and employability skills to enable them to facilitate the family programme at the museum and beyond.

Paid traineeships

There has been a recent increase in entry level traineeships in museums and galleries including the Government's Kickstart Scheme for those aged 16–24 on Universal Credit, with recruitment ending in March 2022. These traineeships provide opportunities for young people to work in museums and galleries but set up expectations for what comes next.

Creative Access has been working as a Kickstart hub linking the Department for Work and Pensions with employers, providing the advice and support needed for both the trainees and organisational staff. It found that 65% of the trainees were kept on by their employer or returned to study. Challenges of the scheme included traineeships being only six months long; the scheme was short-lived; the government funding only covered 25 hours at National Minimum Wage — or the National Living Wage depending on their age — although some organisations were able to top this up; many trainees had second jobs; and there were so many traineeships on offer later in the scheme that employers found it hard to recruit. The provision of ongoing support has differed depending on the organisation involved.

One of the Tate Collective Producers currently on Tate's internal mentoring programme has

now finished her Kickstart traineeship at a contemporary art gallery in London. There she felt she was seen more as an extra pair of hands, with no support beyond the traineeship. She is frustrated that she has had to return to her previous retail job for financial reasons. It will be interesting to see what impact and legacy the Kickstart programme has. Employers should have been asked to sign up to a commitment to support each young person into future employment. We should not be reliant on the government's next big funding scheme.

Organisations like Curating for Change specifically offer paid traineeships to D/deaf, disabled or neurodiverse young people; Ambitious about Autism provides paid work experience placements for autistic young people, as well as opportunities advising on toolkits and campaigns, developing presentations about autism awareness, and leading training sessions. Young people from Ambitious about Autism have worked with The Postal Museum in an advisory capacity.

What can we offer as support longer term?
Alumni

In museums and galleries there are many examples of young people being waved goodbye without follow up after completing a traineeship or reaching the age limit of a youth programme. Higher and further education institutions are much better at setting up alumni structures and keeping in touch to see what their former students do in the future. The Whitechapel Gallery runs Duchamp & Sons for ages 15–24 but it also has a database of alumni — with no age limit — who it stays in contact with, notifying them about opportunities, finding out what they are doing, and inviting them to events. Duchamp & Sons worked with alumni and filmmaker Ayo Akingbade on a film which then formed an exhibition at the gallery in 2021. More recently, the gallery has developed its Young Creatives Nights. These are co-curated with recent Duchamp & Sons alumni who are paid, and targeted at other alumni and any young creatives aged around 21–28. So far they have run three events, and hope that as well as being a way for new young people

to engage with the gallery, they will become a regular space for alumni to drop in, catching up with staff and each other.

Both the Foundling Museum and the London Transport Museum train young people to deliver workshops and become part of their freelance pool, offering work within and sometimes beyond their organisations. Opportunities available to alumni should be made transparent and open to all, not just a chosen few. For an organisation, the benefits of alumni include nurturing new talent, buddying them with younger members and tracking what they go on to do. For the Foundling Museum there are identified progression routes, with some trainees returning as champions of the programme, museum apprentices or to sit on its advisory board.

Mentoring

There are a number of cross-sector arts organisations which often lead in their sustained engagement with young people, providing mentoring as part of their support. These include Arts Emergency, Creative Mentoring Network, Creative Society and Creative Access. The mentoring varies in duration — often between six and 12 months — and eligibility, in terms of age, location, ethnicity and socioeconomic background. Tate's Young People's Programmes is in its second year of running an internal mentoring programme with Creative Society. This is aimed at Tate Collective Producers (TCPs) as mentees who are paired with a mentor from Tate's staff. This was set up in response to a need from TCPs who were either older and in need of support before going into the job market, had dropped off the TCPs programme, or were struggling to see a pathway for themselves. The mentoring programme includes an opportunity for the mentees and mentors to meet before being paired, training sessions, six mentoring one-to-ones over three months, check-ins, skills workshops, industry networking events and a celebratory event. Some of the mentees from the first year have come back to talk about their experiences with the new mentees. Tate's Young People's Programmes has

also provided mentoring for practising artists via **Beyond Boundaries**, where five young and emerging artists were invited to produce artworks in the Bankside neighbourhood.

Employability skills

Young people need support on their next steps, and employability skills are key. This could include how to write a CV and cover letter, how to fill in a job application referring to the person specification, interview tips like how to use the STAR technique (STAR = situation, task, action, results), mock interviews, and freelance skills such as selling your work, budgeting, tax and invoicing. Sessions offered over the past year as part of Develop at The Photographers' Gallery have included getting your CV right, working to a brief, how to network and build a profile, and monetising your creative practice. A number of Develop participants have provided feedback that employability or business skills were not covered at all on their university courses. One participant even said, 'no need to go to uni when you have Develop.'

Next step roles

There are many entry level roles on offer, like the Kickstart traineeships, but a lack of next step roles. This means that individuals might become perpetual trainees or have to return to their previous jobs. In the appendices of Tate's report What next for Routes In? there are proposed early career role definitions to be used as a starting point for discussion within Tate and across the sector.[6] Next step roles should bridge the gap between roles like internships or traineeships and those that currently exist, like Assistant Curator, that tend to be advertised with the requirement for a relevant Masters qualification and many years of experience in the sector. Instead of creating new roles, when the current roles — like Assistant Curator — are re-recruited for, their essential criteria should be rethought. Roles should be for longer than a year if fixed term, but ideally permanent, and could be offered in partnership across organisations. These roles should be paid at above Living Wage and include some training, and possibly a qualification such as a higher level

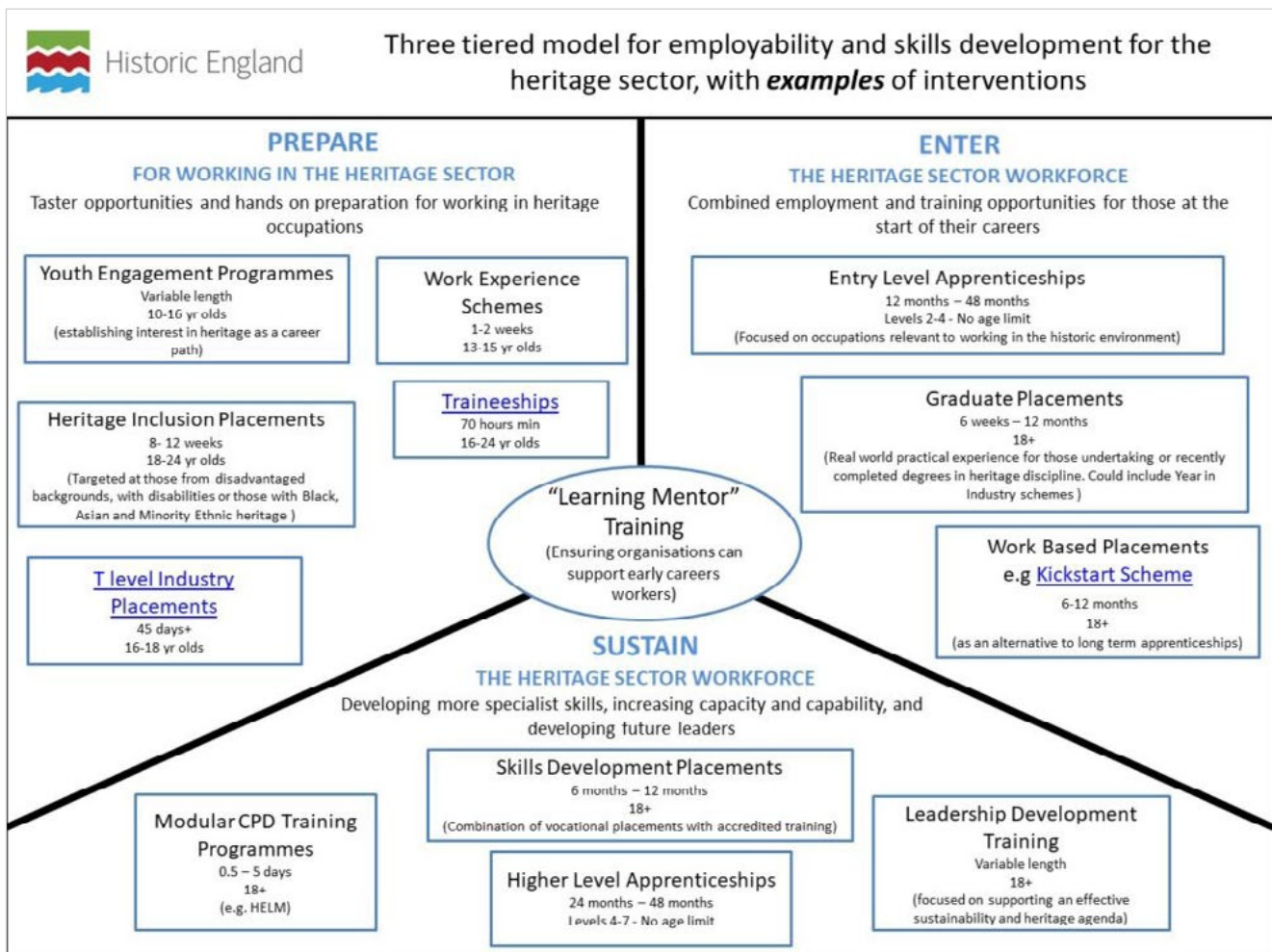apprenticeship, while providing networking opportunities and employability skills for career development.

One example of a next step role is the Genesis Young Curator led by Create London which ran from 2016 to 2019, and in the third year expanded into a partnership with Tate and the Chisenhale Gallery. This developed from the research report PANIC! It's an Arts Emergency commissioned by Create London in 2018, which revealed that those from BAME backgrounds made up just 2.7% of the workforce in galleries, museums, and libraries[7]. Hadrian Garrard, Director at Create London, wanted to employ someone in his team with the ambition to become a curator but came from a background under-represented in the sector. The aim of the role was to support and aid the individual's development as they embarked on their career by building professional networks, developing their knowledge of contemporary art, and providing them with a practical insight into the curating process, with the opportunity to produce ambitious art and engagement projects in a range of settings. Hadrian thinks the role was positive because it was more like the other fixed term contracts offered by Create London rather than a training programme[8].

Retention

At the Museum Futures Summit Aya Bolt, National Management Graduate Trainee at Waltham Forest Council, talked about her experience of progression within the cultural and creative sector, in particular the lack of employment sustainability and retention which means she has shifted to working within local government. Aya believes that:

'Retention of trainees and apprentices after they complete their training should be a really high priority for creative sector employers, but it seems to be forgotten about surprisingly often. Instead, the appeal of cheap labour and government subsidy seems to triumph where organisations would rather take on a new apprentice rather

Historic England — Three tiered model for employability and skills development for the heritage sector, with *examples* of interventions

PREPARE
FOR WORKING IN THE HERITAGE SECTOR
Taster opportunities and hands on preparation for working in heritage occupations

Youth Engagement Programmes
Variable length
10-16 yr olds
(establishing interest in heritage as a career path)

Work Experience Schemes
1-2 weeks
13-15 yr olds

Heritage Inclusion Placements
8- 12 weeks
18-24 yr olds
(Targeted at those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with disabilities or those with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage)

Traineeships
70 hours min
16-24 yr olds

T level Industry Placements
45 days+
16-18 yr olds

"Learning Mentor" Training
(Ensuring organisations can support early careers workers)

ENTER
THE HERITAGE SECTOR WORKFORCE
Combined employment and training opportunities for those at the start of their careers

Entry Level Apprenticeships
12 months – 48 months
Levels 2-4 - No age limit
(Focused on occupations relevant to working in the historic environment)

Graduate Placements
6 weeks – 12 months
18+
(Real world practical experience for those undertaking or recently completed degrees in heritage discipline. Could include Year in Industry schemes)

Work Based Placements
e.g Kickstart Scheme
6-12 months
18+
(as an alternative to long term apprenticeships)

SUSTAIN
THE HERITAGE SECTOR WORKFORCE
Developing more specialist skills, increasing capacity and capability, and developing future leaders

Skills Development Placements
6 months – 12 months
18+
(Combination of vocational placements with accredited training)

Leadership Development Training
Variable length
18+
(focused on supporting an effective sustainability and heritage agenda)

Modular CPD Training Programmes
0.5 – 5 days
18+
(e.g. HELM)

Higher Level Apprenticeships
24 months – 48 months
Levels 4-7 - No age limit

than creating roles within their departments for their current trainees to move into. This, in my opinion, is a huge mistake as employers are losing high quality and passionate employees to other organisations and even other sectors as a result of the lack of opportunities to progress.'

In her local government role Aya is focused on working towards securing herself a permanent position. She is shadowing different roles, shaping the projects she is working on, engaging with senior staff, and is seen as a valuable asset. It is a fixed term two-year role but she is not worried about her prospects on completing the scheme: it is giving her the confidence and security to know that she can progress into a role within the organisation if she chooses to, as there is a high retention rate of trainees on completion of the scheme.

Phil Pollard, Heritage Apprenticeship Manager at Historic England, talked at the summit about its three-tiered model of employability and skills development (see diagram). To ensure organisations can support early careers workers, it prepares, introduces and sustains individuals into the heritage sector workforce through embedding learning mentor training at its core. Identifying staff training and clear progression routes should be the aim of every organisation or hub of smaller organisations working in partnership.

How can we work better together?

Robert West, former Director of Partnerships & Delivery at Creative & Cultural Skills, said at the Museum Futures Summit that 'you shouldn't just be thinking about your organisation but holistically about how it sits within the sector, and most importantly in terms of the young people.' Robert has been working with apprenticeships for the sector since 2008 as alternative routes into employment. He said that 'the aim of a traineeship should be what next?' and that outcomes should be planned from the start. He also stated that museums and galleries should be more closely linked to higher education, with partnerships being key so that work does not happen in isolation.

The Routes In Network launched in 2017 as a legacy project to Circuit, hosted by Tate's Young People's Programmes team. It aims to share knowledge, skills and expertise about creating progression routes into the creative and cultural industries for young people, incorporating digital routes. The network encourages an ongoing dialogue between a range of arts, education, training and youth organisations who are committed to creating opportunities for young people currently under-represented in the creative and cultural industries. The network includes over 100 individuals, representing 40 organisations, who meet regularly to share and learn from others, as well as inform best practice.

The National Producers Taskforce, convened by Poet in the City, was initiated in Nov 2020 at a meeting attended by representatives of 40 organisations in response to issues faced by producer training programmes. These included a lack of sustainable pathways into employment and leadership roles for young people, challenges faced by institutions in the recruitment of young producers, and ensuring that young people — especially those from under-represented backgrounds — don't fall through the gaps. Both of these networks are open to new members to sign up and get involved.

It should be noted that most of the work with young people in museums and galleries is rooted in their learning departments; to make change we need to rethink what we do as organisations from senior management downwards.

Conclusion

In summary, as a sector we need to focus on supporting young people in the longer term beyond age 25 by creating multifaceted support systems that include forming alumni networks, providing mentoring, developing employability skills, devising next step roles and retaining new talent. We should work more closely together within the sector, forming networks like the National Producers Taskforce and the Routes In Network, as well as look outside the sector at positive examples of young people being

supported on their workforce progression routes. For example, within local government, higher education and cross-sector organisations that we could learn from and form partnerships with.

As a final thought, Generation Z includes young people currently aged 10. A focus on career development generally develops from secondary school upwards, but we could begin thinking about careers in primary school as stereotyping about career aspirations can begin from an early age. The Drawing the Future report, by Education and Employers in 2018, asked pupils aged seven to 11 to draw a picture of the job they wanted to do when they grew up. They found that children's career aspirations only marginally differed between ages seven and 17, and that both socioeconomic background and gender influenced children's decision-making[9]. Organisations like I Can Be open up possibilities by setting up work placement visits for primary school children. So as well as supporting those aged 25 and over, why aren't more museums and galleries offering careers development at a much younger age?

Images

1   Creative Job Studio Drop-In, Somerset House, 2018, Photo: Eva Ruschkowski

2   Tracing Our Tales trainee supporting on a family workshop Foundling Museum, 2018, Photo: Foundling Museum

3   This Glittering City, Ayo Akingbade x Duchamp & Sons Whitechapel Gallery, 2021, Photo: Darragh Sodden

4   Late at Tate Britain programmed by Tate Collective Producers Tate Britain, 2018 Photo: Dan Weill © Tate

5   Portraiture Workshop with Laura Pannack DEVELOP Programme at The Photographers' Gallery, 2021 Photo: The Photographers' Gallery

6   Sector Employability and Skills Development Model Historic England, 2022

Notes

1   What next for Routes In? Tate Young People's Programmes, 2020 **https://www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/routes-in-report**

2   Session 6: What's next? Supporting careers after traineeships, panel discussion at the Museum Futures Summit, hosted online by The British Museum, Monday 8 March 2022 **https://www.museumfutures.co.uk/summit-session6**

3   Culture in Crisis, Centre for Cultural Value, 2021 **https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVIresources/culture-in-crisis-impacts-of-covid-19/**

4   Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: a Data Report 2018–19, Arts Council England **https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/equality-diversity-and-creative-case-data-report-2018-19**

5   Take the Temperature: A National Youth trends Report Understanding the Impact of Coronavirus on Young People in the UK, Beatfreeks with National Youth Trends, 2020 **https://beatfreeksyouthtrends.com/reads/take-the-temperature/**

6   Proposed early career definitions from the appendices of What next for Routes In? Tate Young People's Programmes, 2020 **https://www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-learning/routes-in-report**

Pre-entry level role: This should be an employee's first job. It should offer insight into what it is like to be in a workplace. It should help build the employee's confidence by offering lots of support without the expectation that individuals will come to the role with transferable skills or experience. These roles should be more like work placements or short term paid contracts. If someone has already done a pre-entry type role outside of the sector, they should be able to move straight into an entry level role. An example of a pre-entry level role is the Lead Tate Collective Producer.

Entry level role: This could be an internship or traineeship. It requires passion and some experience or skills that are transferable but not specific to the sector. These roles should include some on the job training and support for the individual, such as focusing on employability skills and providing networking opportunities. These should be paid at (London) Living Wage for a fixed term such as six months to a year to give a number of individuals the opportunity. Ideally support would continue beyond the terms of the role in the form of an alumni group. To avoid individuals becoming a perpetual intern or trainee they should then be encouraged to move onto a next step role. Examples of entry level roles are the Residents' Programme Assistant and Heritage Programme Assistant at the South London Gallery.

Next step role: A job beyond entry level that bridges the gap between roles like internships or traineeships and those that currently exist, like Assistant Curator, that tend to be advertised with the requirement for a relevant Masters qualification and many years of experience in the sector. Instead of creating new roles, when the current roles – like Assistant Curator – are re-recruited for, their essential criteria should be rethought. Qualification and vast experience are rarely real requirements. Next step roles should be for longer than a year if fixed term, but ideally permanent, and could be offered in partnership across organisations. These roles should be paid at above (London) Living Wage and include some training, and possibly a qualification such as a higher level apprenticeship, while providing networking opportunities for career development. An example of a next step role is the Genesis Young Curator led by Create London.

7   PANIC! It's an Arts Emergency, Create London, 2018 **https://createlondon.org/event/panic-paper/**

8   From an interview with Hadrian Garrard at Create London for the research What next for Routes In? Tate Young People's Programmes, 2020

9   Drawing the Future, Education and Employers, 2018 **https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DrawingTheFuture.pdf**

Tackling the Blues: enhancing Mental Health Literacy with Generation Z through looking and making

Alison Jones , Emma Curd and Phil McClure

Introduction

'Everyone has mental health.'

This is just one example of the simple, yet powerful messages promoted by Generation Z student-mentors delivering *Tackling the Blues* (TtB), a schools mental health awareness programme supporting children aged 6-16 across Merseyside and West Lancashire.

In 2021 it was reported that the number of children with poor mental health or a 'probable mental health problem' has grown from one in nine, to one in six[1]. This equates to an average of five children in one classroom – a huge jump from the one in three reported in 2017, no doubt impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to these figures, recent research focused on the wellbeing of students reported that two thirds of students have frequently 'felt isolated or lonely since March 2020'[2]

With these contexts in mind, schools and universities have identified holistic approaches to mental health – also known as whole school approaches (WSA) – to develop cultures where

learners feel safe and supported around their mental health and wellbeing. By making it the priority of all school and university stakeholders, including learners, staff, SLT (School Leadership Teams), parents, internal and external services, they seek to adopt a positive and universal focus on student and pupil wellbeing. Aspects of these initiatives include enhancing social/emotional learning about mental health – otherwise known as Mental Health Literacy (MHL) – as well as developing learner voice and promoting learner resilience.

In this article, we will explore some of the methodologies of the TtB programme to empower students to develop pupil MHL and awareness. Underpinning some of this work is the New Economics Foundation's *5 Ways to Wellbeing* (5W2W) – connect, keep learning, be active, take notice, give – used on this programme as a practical set of tools to enhance wellbeing. We also discuss emergent uses of arts-based methods such as 'slow looking' and 'zining' to improve MHL by looking and making. Knowledge of these methods were cultivated and developed with students during training and professional development, discussed in this paper.

Tackling the Blues

TtB is a mental health awareness and literacy programme supporting children and young people (CYP) aged 6-16 who are experiencing, or are at risk of developing mental illness, using education, arts and sports-based approaches. The project is developed and delivered in partnership

between Tate Liverpool, the Faculty of Education and the Department of Sport and Physical Activity at Edge Hill University and Everton in the Community, with students working in partnership across these sites.

Tate Liverpool joined the TtB in 2020 to develop an arts-based offer for the pre-existing sport and education-based programme started in 2015. The aim of the partnership was to provide opportunities for Edge Hill University students to improve their knowledge, understanding and experiences of mental health in education in local communities, whilst also contributing to local agendas to enhance the wellbeing of CYP in schools.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the arts-based methods and approaches of TtB during the first year of Tate Liverpool's involvement. It is our aim to bring attention to the development and delivery of a creative learning approach between November 2020 and September 2021, during a time when the Covid-19 pandemic prompted several periods of national lockdowns and when self-isolation rules were enforced. With student-mentors entering the project in November 2020, this period comprises recruitment, training and delivery through blended online and offline approaches. During which, the learning team at Tate Liverpool prioritised developing an online community of practice to enhance MHL with student-mentors, with a particular focus on creativity, self-awareness and reflective practice. It was our intention to co-create a programme informed by Tate's collection to explore research-informed mental health topics; isolation, identity, anger, anxiety and loss, to promote engagement with art across groups.

Learners and training

The term *Generation Z* is most appropriate when used in relation to our engagement with 53 Edge Hill University student-mentors. This group of students are typically aged between 26 and 19 and are also known as mentors. Across the programme, it is the role of mentors to role model skills for discussing, understanding and challenging stigmas around mental health. Since

Tate Liverpool's involvement in the partnership, we have engaged 28 primary and secondary schools and engaged 2231 CYP in mental health awareness sessions, most of which are delivered by mentors.

Mentors currently study on undergraduate and postgraduate courses from faculties including Education, Health and Social Care and Social Sciences, as well as Counselling and Psychotherapy. Once recruited, mentors are trained via certified mental health training programmes; *Mental Health First Aid* delivered by MHFA England, and *Ambassador of Hope* training delivered by mental health charity, Chasing the Stigma. Not only do these training programmes equip mentors with skills for delivery, but they also develop the MHL of students themselves.

Mental health training is scaffolded through paid and development opportunities offered by Tate Liverpool, with a focus on practices of social art, arts education and facilitation, run by staff and freelancers online and at Tate Liverpool. Creative learning workshops feature arts therapists and practitioners such as Cut Out Collage (Catherine Rogers) and printmaker Colette Whittington, where the focus is on the use of art to support creative reflection on programme learning outcomes. Another by-product of this method offers space for students and CYP to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions in alternative ways. Tate's collection of contemporary art is also explored with the aim to empower mentors and develop their confidence in artworks to start conversations about mental health and wellbeing with school-aged learners.

Improving Mental Health Literacy using art

As a team, we use the term MHL to describe the development of awareness, knowledge and beliefs about mental health, which has been evidenced to improve both individual and population health. For TtB, improving MHL requires that we develop programmes that promote; (1) understanding of how to obtain and maintain good mental health; (2) understanding of mental health conditions, ill health and their treatments; (3) decreasing stigma against mental illness; and (4) enhancing help-seeking efficacy and promoting selfcare[3].

For the Learning Team at Tate Liverpool, looking at, discussing, and making art provides a safe space for engaging CYP in conversations about feelings, emotions and experiences of mental health. Looking and making is used to 'press pause' on everyday school and university life where mental health and wellbeing can be overlooked, especially in a time where 'catching up' on missed learning over the pandemic is prioritised. As a practice, we use art to reduce stigma around discussing mental health and its specific conditions, with the view to promote positive mental health messages for all learners. This takes place through the appropriate use of language to describe conditions, but also through the articulation of stigma associated with conditions.

One way we might do this is through discussing artists and their experiences of mental health and ill health. For example, through facilitating a discussion about Tracey Emin's *My Bed* (1998), an artwork made in direct reference to a period of mental ill health, we might kickstart an awareness session with the objective to destigmatise depression. Facilitation of this kind requires mentors to gain a fuller insight into their own understanding and recognition of conditions like depression, achieved through accredited training in Mental Health First Aid.

Methodologies

When developing arts-based methodologies for the programme we sought to prioritise voice-centred and relational approaches to learning. These methodologies manifest within the

programme differently for different learners. For example, mentors are encouraged to co-produce learning resources for school sessions with staff and other mentors, as well as contribute to session plans by drawing on their learned skills in mental health and learning theories cultivated through their courses. Similarly, school-aged learners are given opportunities to interpret, articulate and make artworks in exploratory and creative ways using approaches such as slow looking and zining to develop interpersonal and communication skills. These approaches are underpinned by WSA and 5W2W models but are also deeply embedded in an 'arts-based' approach. This approach asks learners to express ideas, perceptions, views and experiences in ways that go beyond language[4].

The practice of looking at and making art offers alternative ways to begin conversations about mental health and consolidate learning. Both methods outlined in this article: 'slow looking' and 'zining' offer physical and metaphorical spaces for creative reflection often lacking in traditional education settings.

Over the last ten years, methods of slow looking have gained traction in galleries and museums as a powerful strategy for looking and learning, but also because of the importance given to 5W2W where 'taking notice' is identified as a key strategy. Described by Tate as an approach that 'is not about curators, historians or even artists telling you how you should look at art'[5], slow looking is defined as 'the practice of observing detail over time to move beyond a first impression and create a more immersive experience with a piece of art'[6]. Because of these capabilities, slow looking is also a key tool to developing creative learning, empowerment, confidence and self-esteem with CYP using art as a tool.

On the programme we use slow looking to unpack mental health messages that can be interpreted by pupils and mentors through selected artworks. When used purposefully, slow looking promotes several of the 5W2W to 'take notice' of environments on a deeper level, 'keep learning' about art and the self, and to 'connect' with others – particularly enhancing the connections between mentors, pupils and staff at Tate Liverpool. Away from the confines of the rigid structures and rules of the gallery, it also develops inclusion in conversations around art that may otherwise prevent communities from using Tate Liverpool as a site of wellbeing. Similarities between practices of slow looking and mindfulness can also be drawn to encourage learners to undertake grounding exercises in and outside learning spaces.

We used slow looking practices with mentors during periods of training during lockdown and online recruitment to encourage their thinking about learning and pedagogy in an alternative way. By asking students to select an artwork from Tate's collection that speaks to them of mental health, we encouraged them to move beyond their first impression of an artwork and to make connections between different methods of communication. This method introduced mentors to use art as a tool for MHL and enabled them to reconsider the importance of art in this area.

Students were additionally trained by Tate Liverpool facilitators to unlock the potential of artworks to have conversations about feelings and emotions. In classrooms, we prompted mentors to feel empowered to use provocations with children such as:

*   How do you feel when you look at the artwork?
*   Is this an emotional artwork? Do you feel calm, happy, sad, excited?
*   How do you think the characters in the artwork are feeling?
*   Does this artwork make you think of anything else?

*   What do you think the artist is trying to say?

Questions like these are used when exploring emotions in classrooms at primary age with an abstract artwork such as *Cossacks* (1910-11) by Wassily Kandinsky to engender discussions about the relationships between colour and emotion. In secondary schools, we might use an artwork selected for its perceived relevance to a mental health topic such as Paul Winstanley's *Woman at the Window* (2003) to initiate a conversation

about loneliness and isolation. In some instances, these provocations aided discussion on significant topics such as seeking help and suicide.

'Zines can help provide a voice to someone who might feel voiceless.'[7]

Zines (pronounced *zeens*) are self-published, DIY booklets, magazines or publications that can be made quickly and easily. They were chosen for the TtB programme as a device for creative learning, for their accessibility – all that is needed to make a zine is a piece of paper, a pen and a pair of scissors – and for their capacity to facilitate ownership and personal creativity in almost any learning or community setting. A small enough object to take away and carry around, zines can be taken home by CYP and mentors to send positive mental health messages out into communities. Emergent arts-based research additionally promotes the capability for zines to be used as participatory research tools and aid empowerment. These competencies fit well with WSA models to provide ways for learners to use their voice and express themselves creatively.

Notably, zining was used in the first year of delivery of TtB to promote experiential learning with mentors about zines and how to make them. The practice of zining was introduced initially through an online workshop facilitated by Merseyside-based youth organisation Comics Youth in January 2021. Learning from this workshop was then developed via the co-creation of a digital zine to demonstrate how zines can be facilitated online, offline, individually and collaboratively. During a period of lockdown, these workshops created time and space for mentors to learn about something previously unknown to most of them. Additionally, via the use of online conferencing systems, connections were made between mentors in breakout rooms with the themes of zines (i.e. sports, pets, music, poetry, etc.) becoming fodder for relationships to begin to form.

The online zine – fondly called a 'mentor mega-zine' – was created via online design programme Canva. To create pages for the zines, mentors were grouped thematically into teams and tasked to interpret one of five evidence-based BLUES themes of delivery: (1) Boosting your mood, (2) Loneliness, (3) Uncertainty & dealing with it, (4) Emotions – anxiety and frustration, and (5) Self-care. Some mentors chose to interpret this task practically and offered activities for CYP to undertake if they were experiencing low mood. Alternatively, some mentors chose to represent emotions and what they feel like using text and images.

For example:

- Boosting mood: 'If you want to get out of your head, try looking up at the moon instead'.
- Loneliness: 'Remember, if you are feeling sad or lonely, always reach out (to a trusted adult). We are all in this together!'
- Uncertainty: 'The opposite of uncertainty is presence. Focus on what is going on right now.'
- Emotions: 'Anxiety is carrying tomorrow's weight on your shoulders.'
- Self-care: 'Write a gratitude list; list five things every day that you are grateful for.'

Activities from this zine were honed and distributed to mentors, many of whom chose to integrate activities into session plans and activity booklets for schools. Outputs of these works made an appearance in the gallery during a six-week summer programme called *Creation Stations* in 2021. *Creation Stations* was broadly themed around mental health and promoted key messages of TtB with families and young visitors. Here, zining and displaying zines became a covert method to avert some of Tate's more rigorous communication strategies and to physically represent CYP and mentor voices in the gallery.

Since this period of exploratory work, we have also found zines to be useful to mentors outside the TtB programme. In particular, trainee teachers and mental health practitioners recognise their potential to be used as tools for learning about curriculum topics, but also to guide CYP through processes of mental health safety and recovery.

Conclusion

This period of TtB delivery was a deeply exploratory time for the learning team at Tate Liverpool and for mentors. Through looking and making, we enhanced MHL through the use of blended and online approaches via training and community building. This included the cross-pollination of students between different cohorts, courses and levels whose paths would not normally cross in unexpected and creative ways.

Since returning to face-to-face delivery of projects and university life, undertaking co-creative, transformative work as discussed in this article has proved more difficult. An observation of ours is that Generation Z students are under more pressure than ever to recommence life 'as normal' and yet there is much to catch up on in terms of academic work and work placements, but also in rebuilding relationships with peers. This means that mentors are limited by building and competing demands on their time which could ultimately lead to an impact on their wellbeing. However, TtB mentors have benefitted from developing skills in MHL and 5W2W to look out for warning signs within themselves and others to identify when they need to take additional care for themselves, and importantly, if they need to seek professional support.

Lastly, throughout the TtB programme, signposting to mental health services is imperative. For Generation Z students, ensuring that we signpost to internal services such as the Wellbeing team at Edge Hill University is an everyday practice and contributes to the whole institutional approach at the university. Secondly, by ensuring that we use relevant signposting to external and local services (such as Papyrus, Childline, The Samaritans, etc) in each learning resource we create – for example, PowerPoint presentations used in classrooms, activity booklets and even zines – we promote them to CYP, but also with mentors further contributing to WSA.

Ultimately, through arts-based practices of looking and making, we promote key MHL messages as the core aim of TtB. By equipping Generation Z mentors with these skills to take into the workplace, we also empower the next generation of young minds to have agency around their mental health.

References

1 Lifestyles Team, online report, NHS Digital, Tuesday 1 October 2021, **https://digital.nhs. uk/data-and-information/publications/ statistical/mental-health-of-children-and- young-people-in-england/2021-follow-up-to- the-2017-survey**

2 N. Frampton, N, /& D. Smithies (2021). 'University Mental Health: Life in a Pandemic' in, Student Minds, August 2021. **https://www. studentminds.org.uk/lifeinapandemic.html**

3 Y. Wei, P.J. McGrath, J. Hayden et al., (2015). 'Mental health literacy measures evaluating knowledge, attitudes and help-seeking: a scoping review' in BMC Psychiatry, 15, p.291.

4 S. Goopy & A. Kassan, (2019). 'Arts-based engagement ethnography: An approach for making research engaging and knowledge transferable when working with harder-to- reach communities' in International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 18, 2021. p.4.

5 Tate webpage, 2019, **https://www.tate.org.uk/ art/guide-slow-looking**

6 Boudreau, E. (2020). 'The Art of Slow Looking in the Classroom' in Usable Knowledge, Harvard Graduate School, **https://www.gse.harvard. edu/news/uk/20/01/art-slow-looking- classroom**

7 Butterwick, C. Happiful, Friday 24 August 2021, **https://happiful.com/what-is-a-zine-and- how-can-it-support-mental-wellbeing/**

Images

1 TtB mentors facilitating an arts-based session at a secondary school. Image credit: Robin-Clewley

2 Two mentors focussing on Louise Bourgeois' 'Spider I' (1995) in Tate Liverpool's 'ARTIST ROOMS: Louise Bourgeois in Focus'. Image credit: Gareth Jones

3 A mentor undertaking the practice of slow looking with Pacita Abad's 'European Mask' (1990) Image credit: Gareth Jones

4 Front page of the 'Mentor Mega-zine'. The page depicts an artistic illustration of the connections between mental health and belonging. Image credit: Celina Flores

5 A page of the mentor mega-zine depicting what loneliness and isolation can feel like. Image credit: Alex Rosin

6 A page of the mentor mega-zine with useful hints and tips for dealing with feelings of uncertainty. Image credit: Mike Quinn

Being a part of things: celebrating art between three artists (a conversation)

Tracy Morgan , Heather Marshall and Bea Makan

The Fruitmarket wants to change how contemporary art galleries engage with and represent young people. *Celebrate Art, Celebrate You* is a weekly youth project providing trauma-informed creative sessions for NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people aged 16-25, with the focus on working with participants who have experience of mental health issues, Asperger's Syndrome, ADHD (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or Autism. Included in this project are mentoring and portfolio review sessions for young people interested in applying to either further education or degree courses.

The following conversation explores three artists' experiences in regards to their identities and how that impacts on the art they create and their creative engagement.

Tracy Morgan (T): As a starting point can we look at the question: 'If you're from an under-represented background, how are the odds stacked against you working in the cultural sector?'

Heather Marshall (H): I would say for me, I identify as working class, queer and disabled. So that's a lot of barriers there straight away. I work on the social model of disability, which I don't know if you've looked at before but it's about the fact that your disability, including your mental health, isn't the barrier to doing something, rather it's the barriers society puts in place. If you were in a wheelchair and there was no ramp to get into a

building, that's a barrier that the building has put in place.

Bea Makan (B): I hadn't heard of that and probably a lot of other people haven't either, so they might think, it's my fault I can't do this.

H: It was mind-blowing when I learned about the social model of disability and I was like, [excited voice] 'that's true, that applies to me!' I began to think about the things that I needed to make good work and to be able to physically come into work. One of those things is to have a quiet space to use as a breakout space. And that's quite a normal thing. Because actually, it's hard for anyone to be around people *all* the time; it impacts your processing and your sensory needs. I use an access statement, which is basically a 'disability rider', which states what I need, things like I don't tend to work before 11am because my medication makes me drowsy in the mornings and it takes my brain a wee while to wake up. It's really important to me that organisations understand who they're working with. I think in the arts we're slowly getting there; the Fruitmarket's definitely a bit faster than some organisations!

T: I hope so! What about class?

H: It's an interesting discussion. First of all, how do we define class? How do we define who is working class and who isn't? It's more than just what you earn, it's about your cultural experience growing up and your family.

When we discuss class, a lot of people define that

you're not working class if you went to uni. But we're in Scotland, where fees are paid for us. So actually, that changes things. Being Scottish we're incredibly lucky that we have access to higher education. That's one barrier that our government has taken away.

T: Similar to you Heather, I'm from a working class background. Neither of my parents went to uni. As a child I never went to art galleries. I didn't go until I was about 16 and was introduced by my history teacher at school.

H: Aww wow!

T: He took us on a trip to Edinburgh and we went to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, that was my first experience of being in an art gallery. The only reason why I went to uni is I got a full grant, which now seems incredible. That was 1986. My fees were paid. So, my parents didn't have to be involved in any payments around my education. I really blossomed at that point – the world opened up to me.

H: That's amazing. Bea you haven't done that traditional route either…

B: Everyone's different. What you were saying about people's needs, that's one of the reasons I didn't click with secondary school. I remember you're put into a box. If you have these grades you're in this group and if you get these grades you're in that group. But what if you're only in this group with the lower grades because of the teacher or because of your classmates or because you're having a bad day. None of that is taken into consideration.

I really did not like art in high school at all. It's because they didn't even… [gets a little frustrated] Something like art is meant to be so open! So creative. I feel like your imagination gets put away as you get older. Almost like it's a bad thing to imagine.

H: You're not encouraged to play.

B: Yeah, you're not encouraged to play. Exactly!

That's what I really loved when I did *Celebrate Art* when I was younger. I was splashing about like when I was a child but in school it felt like my imagination got stifled.

H: I don't think I knew what visual art could be until I was in my late 20s, early 30s. At school I couldn't draw very well, so I wasn't considered 'good at art'.

B: That's all schools care about, your drawings have to be almost like a photograph.

H: I loved when we got to do clay work and photography but I just couldn't draw. I remember getting in trouble once, we had to draw a plant and then paint it and I painted the leaves orange and purple. The teacher said, 'That's not what the plant looks like! You can't do that!' But why couldn't I?

School isn't designed for 16 to 18-year olds, it's not designed for you to have opinions or be an individual and I really struggled with that. I pushed against it.

But then I was also balancing being a carer for my mum and my mum being in and out of the Royal

Edinburgh Hospital. I was going between living with aunties and back to live with my mum, back and forth and trying to deal with that whilst also being at school. So almost being an adult and then going to school and being told I wasn't an adult, and I wasn't allowed to have adult, independent thought processes. I was used to having to fight for my mum to get care and speak to consultants and psychiatrists, which was a very adult thing to do. When I went to school I struggled. I was literally taking care of an adult woman who had really complex mental health needs, who's hearing voices and visualising things. So, I'm going to paint the leaves purple and orange if I want. I think that's probably why I do what I do now because I recognise that formal education systems don't work for everybody.

T: Absolutely. The traditional system that's in place in schools pushes pupils towards exams and the content of the exams is all so traditional. I'm thinking about drawing and use of paint. We haven't enabled the school system to move forward and to actually be creative. However, when you work in a contemporary art context and you look at how artists are working now, you realise it is really playful and it isn't about drawing, it's about experimenting with materials and leaves can be orange. Art can be about splashing paint around and you can express your emotions.

Why is there such a disconnect between school and what you do when you're out of art college and you're an artist?

H: It must be so frustrating for artists who have gone to art school, studied art and realise actually they need a secure income, they train to be an art teacher and then get themselves into an oppressive system where they've got to teach what's on the curriculum. They've got to tick boxes. They've got to get kids through exams. The teachers are being stifled but they are also stifling young people to enable them to obtain exams.

T: It's interesting and I think you've hit the nail on the head because I trained as a secondary school art teacher. Two years after leaving art college I was thinking about art therapy and I got accepted onto a teaching course in Glasgow. Prior to that

I'd worked in community arts as an artist. I was not ready to be a teacher in a school so I didn't go into teaching. I went back into community arts, because I thought that's where my passion was. I thought that's where I could enable creativity. I could be creative myself and the young people that I worked with, they could be more creative as well. I got frustrated with the school system.

H: So understandable.

B: It's been the same for so long, it just feels ridiculous. It's not just art, it's other subjects as well.

H: That's why it's so exciting for me that *Celebrate Art* exists. Young people can see that there is a totally different way of creating art and that there is no wrong way of creating.

T: I like how you brought that back to *Celebrate Art* and what we do with the project is – we play don't we? Heather, you introduce lots of different new materials to the group and it's really playful. But crucially we also have a studio space, which is important because you're working in a space where you feel like an artist.

B: It is so good to have that space because I don't have it at home. I live with my mum, dad, brother and cat in a very small flat. It doesn't feel like my space and there's all sorts of family clutter. It is hard to get into a creative mindset. Having the studio space feels so calm. It helps so much, mentally, to have that space. When I was doing the project when I was younger, just having that space felt like a safe space. I remember being introduced to all these new materials and no one said that's too much or no, that's not enough. I was having fun!

T: Heather brings in materials or techniques that I haven't even heard of or tried. I'm like, 'spray paint marbling, wow!'.

H: That was so much fun!

T: I've been working in the arts for 30-odd years and Heather, you're introducing me to new materials!

H: I feel like we're always learning, I think it's really important as an artist. I want to keep learning, especially from other artists. Being based at the Fruitmarket is great; as a group we can keep revisiting the exhibitions and work out how

the artists have created certain pieces, then experiment with techniques ourselves and then come back to look at the work, explore it a little more and then head back into the studio to keep experimenting. You can learn so much from immersing yourself in the work.

B: Exactly! People learn from feeling and being a part of things. Instead of reading about something, if you're put in an environment you learn so much faster. It's like learning a language; people always say you should go to the country to learn it properly because you'll be surrounded by

that language and have to speak it.

T: I'm thinking back to what we've had on in the Fruitmarket over the last eight months. Karla Black and working with powder paint and smearing makeup on mirrors and Howardena Pindell's use of hole punches and Jyll Bradley inviting people in to perform in the space that she created in the Warehouse. In our creative workshops we don't always follow the context of the contemporary artists that we're showing. We're not saying 'we're going to make work like Howardena Pindell', but she might inspire us.

H: I really like that we spent a lot of time making stencils and using paint but we hadn't thought to use the scraps from the stencils until we saw Howardena's hole punch dots. They taught us so much about texture!

B: They did!

H: We learnt so much from that exhibition, not just art techniques. I feel like it showed a real shift in who the Fruitmarket wants to engage with and how they're going to do that as an organisation. That felt big for me as an artist, knowing that the gallery wants to programme work from diverse communities.

T: I'm wondering, does that relate to one of our questions 'how are institutions diversifying the workforce and removing barriers for generation Z, and where does the responsibility lie?'

Are institutions removing the barriers?

B: I would say some are, some aren't.

H: I think that there's a lot of talking about it, but I don't always see it happening.

B: I think it needs to start in school.

H: One of the participants was talking about that last week, about how school is designed to teach you to be a good employee and wear a uniform and do what you're told!

B: That doesn't work if you want to be an artist!

H: There's some schools that are going against that way of working; they're called destination schools and they focus on practical skills. Craigroyston (in Edinburgh) is one of them. They offer hairdressing classes and cookery without the traditional focus on exams.

H: I took a nail art workshop in one school and what was lovely was that myself and Amber, the nail artist, were both from really similar backgrounds to the kids in the class and so Amber spoke about how when she was at school she never thought she'd ever be able to own her own business. But as she got older she realised that she could slowly make it happen. So, each time she got paid from her waitressing job she bought a

nail polish. When she got a tax return she used the money to book into a nail art course. She started by visiting clients in their homes or doing pop ups in the restaurant she worked in. It took some time, but she built her business. That route felt so much more accessible to the students we were working with. I think it's important to show people that there are other ways to get to where you want to go.

T: I suppose that's what we have created with *Celebrate Art*: an alternative route. Some of the young people are struggling at school and receive support from Access to Industry [AI]. Working in partnership with AI enables us to engage young people who are referred to them. They have the opportunity to come to the Fruitmarket and participate in workshops and develop skills. What we see is participants who have attended for a while progress, but it's not an 'academic career progression', it's a build-up of self-esteem, creativity and confidence in new skills.

H: Bea you're the shining example of that, you found that alternative route!

B: Thank you! It's important for people to be aware that there are different things you can do, different groups you can try. I feel going down this route has helped so much. I left high school at 15, a very young age, and I don't have any qualifications. But I've already been accepted by one art school and I think that's because of my experience here.

T: I'm also interested in identity in terms of your creative work. I know that's a really big thing for you, Heather?

H: A big part of my identity is rooted in accessibility. Work has to be accessible – socially and financially accessible. I think that comes from growing up with just my mum, who is disabled. We lived on disability benefit, with no input from my dad. We didn't have a lot of money. I don't think I knew that we were poor; I just knew there were things that I couldn't do that other people could. I just accepted that was part of life. When I was eight or nine my mum discovered that there were dance classes starting at our community centre for only 25p!! My mum still says that she thinks there was a misprint with the prices on the poster. That's how I got to go to dance classes. I liked contemporary dance because there was more freedom, I could do what I wanted and be in charge of what I created. So much so that when I didn't like the routine for the showcase I told the teacher and she said 'Ok, you make your own dance up'. I did. I created a piece with two of my friends. It was such a big thing being given that ownership at that age. That's always stayed with me; projects have to be financially and socially accessible and participants must have ownership of what they create.

H: The impact different communities have had on me has also shaped who I am as an artist, especially the Disabled and Queer communities. So, identity, to me, is huge. It impacts my work in regards to audiences I engage with as well as the work that I create. I've created work that challenges government systems. Work that elevates and celebrates voices that are often unheard in communities. A lot of my work is about things I, or my communities, experience every day.

T: That's what I love about your artistic practice – you're a good advocate for yourself. I think that inspires other people to also be outspoken and to be strong in their own identity as well. In terms of Celebrate Art, I think we enable people to find their own identity and give them space and the freedom to be able to do that.

B: Like when we did the *Purple Friday* to fundraise for LGBT Youth Scotland.

H: Absolutely. And actually, it wasn't that we were doing *Purple Friday* because we know that some people on the project identify as queer. We did it because it's important to support a community that is adjacent to us as well as one that some of us are a part of.

B: It opened up interesting conversations and people could ask questions.

H: It showed that we were a safe space. We often think because we're in the arts, it's automatically a safe space, but it's not. We have to work to make it safe, so things like *Purple Friday*, that signify that this is a space for you to be yourself are hugely important.

T: I agree with you there. It was also an opportunity to explore identity and to open that discussion and to lead us into a project that explored Jyll Bradley's work as well.

B: It was very important to me when I was a participant, to have that space where I could be myself and explore, if I wanted to, how I felt about myself, like my sexuality or my mental health because I didn't always feel like I could at home.

T: I have some insight because I have the experience of being a parent of a trans boy, who's just recently come out and I'm learning as he is learning. I'm able to reflect on a lot of that learning and take some of it into our group work.

B: Everyone's stories are different but there are similarities with certain things and that's how we can relate to each other. I like that Celebrate Art gives us that space to connect.

T: I like to think of *Celebrate Art* as offering something complementary to the traditional system, where young people can come in and

can do a creative project in a safe space, alongside agencies that can support them. You get to stay in the project as long as you want. I'm just thinking back to you, Bea; that's three years that you've been involved with us as an organisation and look at where you've got to – it's amazing!

B: I know! I started as a participant who was so anxious I barely spoke and now, three years later I'm the trainee on the project, being paid to do what I love and I'm about to go to art school after the summer. It really is amazing.

Images

Fruitmarket, Celebrate Art Celebrate You, 2022. Photographs by Chris Scott.

Creative connections: Caring and Creative Learning for Young People through, and beyond, COVID-19
(Part 1: Four provocations)

Jess Blackledge , Ronda Gowland-Pryde , Ingrid Skeels , Gem Smith , Kim Wide MBE and Thomas Goddard

A two-day event – Caring and Creative Learning for Young People through, and beyond, COVID 19 – took place in February and March 2022. The event came out of the delivery and learning of core projects and partnerships in Plymouth: Centre of Excellence In Creative Education at High View School in collaboration with Take A Part CIO, and With Flying Colours developed in collaboration with Plymouth Cultural Education Partnership.

An open call was sent out for participation, and the two days began with an online event chaired by Kim Wide MBE of Take A Part and Dr Ronda Gowland-Pryde (Creative Education and Engagement Consultant). The event started with these four provocations.

Kim Wide (KW): The first provocation is from Tom Goddard of Gentle/Radical, an artist and others led project based in Cardiff, Wales since 2016, working across different disciplines, socially engaged practices, healing justice and interfaith work, conflict resolution, and community development. Their remit manifests as an emergent and responsive curriculum centring questions that help rethink systems of living. Their curatorial frames emerge out of the attempts,

and goes through slow emergent processes, to answer, together, some of these questions. Gentle/Radical's activities include pop-up events, performative sharings, community film screenings, sung works, grassroots symposia, walks, talks, meals, readings, gatherings, celebrations, rituals, and other actions that bring people together.

Ronda Gowland-Pryde (RGP): Gem Smith is the lead producer on the Centre of Excellence in Creative Education Programme. She has worked in the arts in Plymouth for over ten years, and over that time, Gem's work has crossed many different disciplines, and involved a range of projects as diverse as community radio, public art, theatre, sculpture, mass dance, stone carving, tool guiding, and orchestral outreach. In addition to Gemma's work with High View, Gem also works with Take A Part as the Creative Education Director, and is the forum coordinator for Plymouth Cultural Education Partnership.

KW: Room 13 is an independent artist studio run by children and adults working together, based in a primary school in Hartcliffe in South Bristol. 18 years later, the collective is still going strong, a creative hub where transformations, materials, ideas, personal and community take place. Room 13 is now recognised as a centre of expertise around children, creativity, collaboration and voice, working in an area of extreme disadvantage.

RGP: Ingrid Skeels is a development worker, and activist around children's freedom, and creativity in education and in play. Ingrid has been part of the Room 13 collective since 2006, collaborating on ideas and supporting the studio team with everything external from fundraising to communications to projects.

Jess Blackledge is a creative producer at With Flying Colours; Jess leads the team by liaising with key stakeholders, and steering the long-term strategy. Jess' background is in performing arts and arts education, and for the past decade, Jess has been living and working in North and South-east Asia, managing educational non-profits and arts organisations in the literary and performing arts fields.

Tom Goddard: When we were originally approached to participate today, we anticipated we'd by now have embarked on an exchange project, supposed to start last autumn between young people in Riverside, the community in Cardiff where we're based, and young people in Beit Safafa in East Jerusalem, as part of a collaboration with Ahmad Nabil and his *Fiction Council* project with Palestinian youth. In reality, as a result of finding ourselves having to sharply shift focus last year, and put everything on hold, in ways that we could not anticipate, we are only now just beginning this project. So with that in mind, we don't want to speak, and try to speak to work that is not yet happening, but instead maybe offer up some questions, and some questions around world building.

What does it mean to build a world in which young people could actually flourish? What is involved in that task? What is the work of resistance needed to do it? Where are those spaces of resistance within existing cultures, institutions, and practices? And how do we find space to do this work of transforming systems that so profoundly harm young people – when we are so busy ourselves, firefighting? The thoughts we offer are perhaps more than anything, questions to ourselves, that we're in a continual process of trying to answer.

In her by now famous article *The pandemic is a portal,* Arundhati Roy reminded us that historically, pandemics have forced us to break with the traditions of the past and imagine our world anew[1]. How many of us are convinced we took up this opportunity, and did we? How in practice do we reimagine the future? We are so overwhelmed by dealing with the crisis in front of us. Where are the spaces for thinking, for dreaming, instead of reacting, responding, doing, and delivering? How do we disrupt our processing if we know things aren't working? If we're trying to imagine a different world for young people in the future, when and how do we get to imagining? And how do we do that with them? What are the ways in which we need to practice imagination? We're immersed in cultures of deep violence yet caught up in ways that normalise harmful ways of living. Harmful to young people's lives, their emotional and mental health, their present and future chances to thrive and flourish. Cultural engagement work in the arts has historically been extracted. Equally, so much of our work with young people. How do we retune our self and [our] attention, to solutions that focus on care first and foremost? Acts of care are the opposite of using people as a means. What is the young person's story? How do we get to the root to provide support that genuinely reflects their needs? The most anti-social young person still has needs and requires our care. No one is disposable. We need to have time and passion, to find out about a young person's story. The current systems ask you to make quick judgements, and to put young people into categories based on often flawed criteria. Maybe it's not possible to truly offer care in this system, so we need to find ways to have time to know the whole story, and put together personalised support, that embraces differences and similarities.

So how do we cultivate slowness? How do we do this with young people? At Gentle/Radical, we're trying to figure out how to move more slowly. It feels counterintuitive, so we have to practice it. Taking the cue from activist and organiser, Adrienne Maree Brown, she asks, how do we move at the pace of trust? What does it mean to move at the speed of a young person?

To listen and empathise with where they are at, and respond with time and honesty to remove pressure from situations, from our needs for things to be generated? The timing of work is often centred around deadlines, which are connected to publishing an event, or using a budget in a certain timeframe. Rarely does it follow the needs of the individuals involved, or the pace that they can really go at. We are permanently in relationships of power to others; adultism is the power adults have over children, and young people, but we rarely talk about this kind of systematic power, the way we talk about racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia. We rarely talk about how society is structured to discriminate against young people. So how do we become intimately aware of these power dynamics? How do we express vulnerability as adults? How do we dismantle the need to be the one with knowledge, with authority? It's shifting power dynamics – and working with young people is key. Together we can move forward towards the de-centring of power, and place an importance on giving young people the opportunity and freedom to exercise their will and ideas. So, I've offered up a lot of questions; the real difficulty is how we commit to and enact change, in the face of so many systematic barriers. At Gentle/Radical, we want to imagine a future differently. Our pledge is to restore power to young people, but how do we do this? Where are our places of resistance, and how do we slow down processes, so we can show up for this work?

Gem Smith: Why does creativity matter? That's always something I'm thinking about anyway. How can creative learning aid 'catch up' post Covid? How can creative approaches sit alongside the 'core' subjects? In terms of value and priority – so it's so difficult, the pressures on catch up, and on those core subjects – but where can art sit alongside and support that? And why should art be a priority subject at this time more than ever?

The Centre of Excellence in Creative Education (a partnership project led by High View School and supported by Take A Part celebrating, testing and exploring creative models of working within the school and community) was awarded funding at the beginning of 2020, and then Covid

happened, so the first thing we did was try to find a way to support art to continue to happen with our families in the school. We collaborated with Plymouth Play Scrapstore and Real Ideas organisation to create art packs that were sent home to support families that didn't have access to materials, to still be doing and making. Our lead artist on our first project that we were delivering, planned everything to be delivered at home. We planned worksheets, online videos that could be accessed, and prepared packs with the school, again with materials that families might not have to enable the children to take part in the activity. And then, just as we were getting going, the school re-opened, so they decided that the schools were going to open again, and we were suddenly able to go in and deliver, which was amazing, but also challenging. We put in very safe working practices, and then started our project. And art and creativity really remained a priority during this time, despite the challenges, and the need for catch up. It was literally the first week back in school, and we were delivering a programme of work, which was incredible. And they saw it as something that could aid that catch up, and aid children and staff.

The collaborative approach on this programme was shared then with our two partners schools. We had to do a Zoom Q&A, because we couldn't do an observation in person, but we still pushed on, and we still saw the value of sharing this way of working and using arts as a tool to support learning in the school. And the two partner schools were amazing, because they still also made time for that, which is great. The different techniques that had been prepped for home learning, we actually carried on with. So, the videos, for example, that were going to be used online, they were a really great learning tool in the classroom, because it meant children weren't crowding round a desk to see a demonstration, we could show them up on a screen, and everyone had their own resources, because we prepped all of those things. In terms of being able to deliver during Covid and keep safe, it was incredibly useful and not a waste of energy. And alongside the curriculum linked projects we'd intended to develop, we also ended up, in response to Covid, delivering a lot of projects looking at mental health and wellbeing, and that also translated to the staff in the school where we did some CPD

around that, with one of our artists, which was amazing.

During Covid and delivery we saw an increased level of confidence from staff and children, an excitement to be in school and be learning, strong levels of engagement, the value of time taken to slow down and re-connect, and an opportunity to try new things and grow new skills. So, this project is built on a long time of working together, 12 years of collaboration, creative approaches, risk taking, trial and error, failing well and learning to trust. And that's something that we've had the capacity to do; we've had funding, we've had support from an organisation – it's almost a place of privilege, and it shouldn't be. You know, most schools don't have that; it should be standard, and I don't understand why we're not in a position where more schools can be accessing things in this way.

How can we support schools to value, embed and fund creative approaches to education, so that they are standard, and art isn't ever a bolt-on, it's something that's always there, and is always alongside everything else. And then what role can arts institutions and organisations have in supporting or lobbying for this. Take A Part is a tiny organisation, and they've done so much support work for this school, and so I'd like to know how we can do more.

Ingrid Skeels: Where is creative education, arts and culture for the most 'in need' children and young people? We've worked with children in Hareclive school in Hartcliffe, one of the most disadvantaged communities in England, for nearly 20 years now. And we've seen that, outside of our project, there's very little creative education, arts and culture for children, and it's been getting less and less over the time that we've been working in Room 13.

Art and making have been squeezed out of the curriculum, creative approaches to learning have been getting less and less, funding has been squeezed or gone for cultural trips and experience and there's very little art and culture happening in the community. Some families have very little money for creative resources at home and at the extreme end there are children with no paper or pens at home, and in some classes, up to 50% of

children had no online access at all. Even beyond that, you have children who only have online access through their parent's phone, and when there's a bit of data free.

And then, Covid came, and during lockdowns for over 18 months, families in Hartcliffe were thrown into a huge extended crisis situation, basically. It felt like an absolute emergency to reach out to children with support in any way we could, and there was a bit of a sense that we… we felt a bit on our own in that. Not at the grass roots level, where people were going with food and art packs, and all of those things. But it felt somewhat like arts and culture nationally kind of shut down, other than online. It just disappeared in a way.

Then as children and young people returned to school, we've seen really the appalling impact of this time on their physical and mental health. Their ongoing need for recovery and support is probably going to take years, so it's a very serious situation. Again, we see very, very little space being made for creativity, art or making, even within that need for recovery. So, we come back to the question, where is creative education, art and culture for those most in need?

Room 13 is in a position to give an important perspective on this because, from our own long experience as an artists' studio in Hareclive, and in a very disadvantaged community, we know how deeply children in need benefit from time and space for creativity and the arts. So, Room 13 is a space, built in the playground of a primary school, co-run by children and adults working together. And for three days a week over breaks and lunchtimes, and arranged sessions during class time, and for over 19 years, children have been given the space, time, freedom, trust, materials and support to think, explore, have ideas, collaborate, make and create, all at their own pace. And we know the deep positive impact this has on children's learning, confidence, aspirations, life chances, lives and on their happiness and wellbeing.

How can we get to where creativity, art and culture are valued and supported for all children in education, in communities, in cities, including

during times of crisis? Much of the change needed is systemic and political, and we can all call for these changes together. And we must! And we'll talk more about this today, of course. But as well as calling for that change, at Room 13, we are also pragmatic doers, finding ways in the 'how it is now'. We know that a lot of the good things that have happened for Hareclive children over 19 years have been through individuals in their roles, rather even than institutions themselves. So, our call to action is, what can each of us do now, in our roles and in our work, to bring some of the gold of creative education and the arts to all children and young people?

Jess Blackledge: With Flying Colours is a new performance and play making programme for children and young people in Plymouth, and we're one of five national youth performance partnership programmes. We work with 11 schools, primary, secondary and SEND schools, and we work with a pool of local artists who deliver on the ground in these schools, and we engage partner organisations across the city. And we are a co-creation project, which means that we work to engage our young people in a way that enables their ideas to be starting points, that gets rid of any hierarchies, and we work as equals in a space. So artists, teachers and young people can contribute their own specific skills, ideas and experiences equally.

How can co-creative practice in the arts empower young people in a post-pandemic world? Our collective role in society, when it comes to creative education, young people and their development is to give them a voice. And in order to do this, we need to provide young people with time, space, agency, opportunity, freedom, and permission. And the pandemic has given us an opportunity to re-focus ourselves around this, and hone in on the empowerment of young people through their own voices. And by doing this, we are allowing ourselves to democratise the arts by giving access to more people, and to voices of the unheard. To demystify creativity and enable young people to realise that they too can be creative. To support their own goals, and to provide a place for community engagement, and dialogue.

During Covid, we wanted to engage with the young people, despite having limited access. So we sent out some creative activity packs to reassure them that, we are still here, even when the world is changing, and your school is closed, the project is still going, and we're offering consistency. And it also gave the young people a sense of agency, and ownership over this small gift that they'd received. And it pushed the notion of 'theatre starts at home', so they believe that they can make it, and they don't need to wait for us. Just like the project, they have something they can own and shape based on their needs and wants. And it was a chance for them to make these small puppets or stories, or small ideas, which is just how a professional rehearsal and development process starts. So it gave them a small taster of how to create theatre from the seeds of ideas. And we also found that there was a therapeutic effect in the creation of these small stories and puppets. The young people seemed to be playing out their worries, emotions and traumas from the pandemic.

When in-person delivery wasn't always possible, many of our artists chose to create work in other formats; one group created an illustrative text, on the left there, so young people wrote themselves as their own superheroes; and other groups chose to make films or audio plays. Many of our groups continued with in-person delivery, but they had their sessions outdoors during Covid, for each

session. So that did provide some consistency and expectations, as it was the same each week, in a very difficult and changing time. And both the teachers and the young people were taken out of their regular classroom environment, and into a different headspace, so it was allowing them to step out of regular teaching and learning mode, and into a new type of collaborative work. Many of the young people and their families have rarely, if ever, seen any live theatre before this project. The pandemic made that obviously even more difficult, and what we realised was that often they had no context for their ideas and weren't aware of what they could be creating. So as a solution to this, we commissioned four local companies to work with some of our school groups, to take their ideas, to turn them into short professional pop-up performances, and these were then toured around our 11 schools, and the young people were able to see their ideas live on stage, in four different formats.

And this year, saw the introduction of our youth steering group, the With Flying Colours co-pilots. This is made up of two representatives from each of our schools, and it's a chance for the young people to network across the city and share their experiences on the project. It's also an opportunity for our project team to hear what young people want to see, and to feed that learning back into the strategy of our project. They also have opportunities to work with professional theatre makers, in professional spaces, and to develop a piece of work of their own. One of our schools decided to specifically focus on community engagement, and the concept of community. So they created a map of their local area, using QR codes to create a trail of pieces of art. And we found that using their familiar community as a central theme gave them a sense of grounding, in a very changing and unsettled time. They could localise their ideas when the world was seeming like a very scary place. They were leaning on their community, and brought themselves back to the locality, so prioritising the feelings of safety and trust. They then felt pride in their community, and then the arts suddenly become something much more tangible and accessible for them, and their families.

So by asking them, 'Where is your favourite place in Whitleigh?' 'What would you like to see change in your community?' It shows them that the starting point of reference for this project is them, and the development of ideas always begins with them, and then, again, they feel empowered and safe. So, we can all take action I think by emphasising youth voice, not only conceptually and holistically in our practices, but also practically through youth panels, committees and groups, nationally and locally, having young people's voices feed into our decisions made in creative education… and communication is difficult for all of us, particularly in a pandemic. Figuring out what we like, want and need can be a very hard thing, and sometimes expressing ourselves through a different format is the way forward. And with our project, we want to give children and young people a vehicle for a voice, and my call to action today is for us to listen intently to what they're saying.

This event was delivered by Centre of Excellence in Creative Education, With Flying Colours, Plymouth Cultural Education Partnership and Plymouth Culture.

References

1   A. Roy, (2020) 'The pandemic is a portal' in *The Financial Times.* **https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca**

Images

1   Credit: Gem Smith for Take A Part

2   My name is recovery, Credit: Room 13 Hareclive

3   Credit: Gem Smith for Take A Part

4   Credit: Gem Smith for Take A Part

5   Studio recovery 21, Credit: Room13 Hareclive

6   Credit: Gem Smith for Take A Part

Creative connections: Caring and Creative Learning for Young People through, and beyond, COVID-19

(Part 2: A conversation and a manifesto)

Shani Ali , Jess Blackledge , Thomas Goddard , Ronda Gowland-Pryde , Ingrid Skeels ,
Gem Smith and Kim Wide MBE

A two-day event – Caring and Creative Learning for Young People through, and beyond, COVID 19 – took place in February and March 2022. Following the four provocations of Part 1, this contribution is an edited version of the conversation and the final version of the collective manifesto produced. The provocation panel is also joined by Shani Ali of Room 13.

Kim Wide (KW): What do you think is the most important or urgent piece of learning in and through Covid, for your organisations and the relationships that you have with young people?

Gem Smith (GS): For me, just being there, and being consistent, ensuring that you are there, and that the young people that you are working with, whether that's in a school context or a community context, still felt that they could connect with you, and that you were consistent and reliable in a time that was very turbulent. The work we've done with both High View and Take A Part and with young people, we've always found that being a young person is never easy, and it's just been made even

more difficult now. For me it really brought home that need to be around and use creative tools as an approach, and a way to do that, so you felt you could be in their home, but it wasn't invasive.

Tom Goddard (TG): I agree with that, also I think slowness is the thing, I think the pace. We were always told that things couldn't stop, and then they stopped. And, you know, going back to Arundhati Roy's 'the pandemic is a portal' idea, is that it forced us to break with the world that we knew, and, as adults, that we have the power to continue that change.

KW: There's this whole thing about artists becoming social workers, because there's such a lack of care and support in the social work system, or the education system, and how much we should be solving things, or disrupting them; it's a really salient point. Shani, do you have some thoughts?

Shani Ali (SA): First of all, contact was really needed, and being consistent, and… I mean, having worked for 19 years in the same community with generations of children, we weren't prepared for the huge impact that Covid would have where children couldn't speak and couldn't check in with us. We realised that the arts were really important as a way to start recovering. We are lucky enough, as Tom said, we can work to pace, and there's a lot of catching up to do around emotional, social, and all sorts of things, not just the academic. And I think what hit us in the studio, is that if we weren't there, if Room 13 wasn't part of Hareclive Academy, what would have been there for those children? We know the arts are extremely important, but what's there now for children, not just at Hareclive, but everywhere?

RGP: What do you think that we need to have in place, to sustain and develop best practice, and to get more agency from young people in shaping their educational experience?

Jess Blackledge (JB): It's about giving the young people the chance to have a voice, and to be a part of the conversation that we're all having with each other, when it comes to creative education and the strategies of our work. And I think what we've found is that because our project is working in a co-creative way, we've found that a lot of the kind of objectives of co-creation, really feed very seamlessly into the effects of the pandemic. Things like meaningful engagement, and valuing the contribution of young people, and giving them agency. And I think practically we can make steps to make sure that they are heard: heard but also then actionable things happen from that, so they don't feel like… they feel like they're sharing, but also they see the outcomes of what they're sharing. So not only can things happen from that, and we can take their voices into account, but they also have that feeling of empowerment, which is probably the most powerful thing, for them to feel that. Because, again, going back to the pandemic, it's a time of feeling powerless.

SA: There's a level of frustration, because I'm getting older, and it feels like we need these enabling spaces, we need our relationships and partnerships to work. How do we get our schools to understand, let's create a space where our children, as Jess says, have voice, or agency… and we've had this conversation about 20 years ago. I mean it's very cyclical, because politically things are always changing, and the landscape's always changing, it feels that we're back there, we need to get these things in place, for us to create these amazing, enabling environments for our children and young people to be heard, to be creative.

TG: I think also there's a sense of, because of the pandemic, restoration… there's a restoration of humanity and integrity and dignity to young people that, I think, has been eradicated on a daily basis, and how do we change those systems of coercion and constraint on young people? And I agree with Shani, you know, we have been having these conversations for a long time, but it… you know, I don't mean to tell anyone on the panel that it's particularly bad, you know, South Wales where I am is heartbreaking.

IS: How can we actually make a difference? I think it does come back to the two things. There's the policy level, that we have to keep pushing at, and then how can each person in their role do what we can in that, and then shout about what we're

doing, so that it's good practice, so that other people can learn from it? It's really important to keep finding those positive things to do, otherwise it can feel despairing at times, like 'when is something going to change?'

KW: I'm wondering if, in this Covid period of time, we can talk about the positives and the surprises that came out. I wanted to find a little bit of joy, I wondered if anyone could comment around some of the good?

SA: Absolutely, children really wanted to re-engage with other humans, and we noticed children wanted to talk, wanted to show what they could do, we were back having our doorstep conversations. You know they vote with their feet, so children come to us, because they wanted to, no one's telling them to come to Room 13. So really amazed, no matter what had happened… children had ideas, even though skills, certain skills, have been lost, or not developed, children were wanting to come into a creative space where they could talk to others, and to make and to try, so that human nature is still there, of wanting to imagine and explore, and be together.

GS: The energy, and the kind of desire to be back

together, and to be creative and take risks, it was like their first few days back in school, and they were just like, 'Yeah, I want to throw paint on that, that's great.' You know and really up for trying new things, and engaging really well, and that was super lovely after kind of feeling like you almost had to be afraid of people and being away from people. I think for me those real, practical on the ground examples, were really joyous things that happened for us.

RGP: A question from the chat is about sustaining long-term engagement with children and young people after the initial enthusiasm, so how might we go about that?

GS: As part of the work we do at Centre of Excellence we have a model called *crazy glue*, which is our parent and child based art group, so we work with up to about ten families in a school, and we meet once a month, and we try different artists and different art forms out, and it can be really challenging, the engagement on those projects, particularly post-Covid where people are kind of scared to come into school. But what we have found has worked well, is this thing of trying out different artists, trying different approaches, and then listening to the group and seeing what

kind of things that they'd like to do, so if they particularly enjoyed something, maybe bringing that back, or pushing it further.

SA: Responsibility is a big thing. Children are coming back wanting to take on responsibilities and exercise their muscles. So, we're going back to our ways of Room 13, where children help run the space. Outside of that, we've had people offer us free tickets to go to the theatre, which has been really important, you know, in terms of getting our children out, so creeping back out into the world. And the cost of transport was covered, very important for us.

Also, within Room 13, we're talking to school staff a lot more, and we've got a staff session coming up to talk about creativity, and introduce Room 13, and its ethos again, just to remind people. Teachers themselves have been really, really, really busy, especially at Hareclive, on the front line, battling with so many different things, so for us, we're just trying to make pockets of space to have conversations, to remind teachers and staff about creativity, and we can actually say, 'Well actually, did you know, children are showing an interest in this, or really struggling with that?' Talking about the positives and the negatives with staff, so they can go back and really think about that creativity and creative education.

IS: When we've tried to do sessions outside of the school day, even with really, really engaged children and young people, it… it can be a real struggle for them to come, and people don't turn up. One of the things we've found is the fact that Room 13 is within the school day means children are there. If people can do an intervention or a project, or work with a school, and the space is within the school day, and children have the opportunity to come and go from it, that often means that they do choose to come to it, and there's that sort of sustainability. It's a bit obvious to say that, but it's more just to reassure people: we've done all this work with families for so long, and yet still when we do something a bit at a different time, it's very hard to always get people to come along.

TG: One of the projects I've been working with

young people on through the pandemic is with that age group who left school without any fanfare. They've developed a way of working and thinking around basically walking to the other neighbourhoods, so walking from Llanrumney down to Splott, and having an older young person lead that walk. What they wanted to do is go into spaces that they're told are theirs, but maybe they don't always have access to. So that's been a really generative, really exciting thing, and then spaces that really are open to them. Bringing three groups of young people together, from, you know, different areas in Cardiff, the age group is 15 up to 21, you know, and there's been some really beautiful moments of how they're supportive, and there's a lot of music being made, there's a lot of recordings being made. And they're managing the budget; I always like children and young people to manage their own budget. I was a bit scared with this one, because it was quite a bit of money, but they've done fantastically well, much better than me.

JB: I think going back to listening to what they want is kind of the solution, because they're going to be engaged in something that they came up with. And also giving them the freedom to know that they can change those ideas at any point, and they don't have to stick with something. And there's a lot of freedom in that, and flexibility, and just like I think several people have said, giving them the responsibility of different roles. So they are not necessarily following a figure of authority who is their teacher, or who is the leader of this space. They're all working together, and if they come up with something, then okay, they can go ahead with that.

RGP: Another question is around the importance of young people's personal development, catching up the curriculum, academia kind of side of things, and how that works with having a creative space for play?

SA: It's about creating a space that allows children to talk about where… what they're feeling, and their anxieties, and some of the triggers, but also aiding them in their own projects. And what we found around play and imagination is children just making a bit of space, for children to come in. We've noticed there's been a real link to play as well, and they're not just playing with the materials, as children quite often come into the studio, but also there's something about, when we say 'catch up', we noticed children have really missed out on a collective play, being together, and we've had children just coming in and making things, so they can go out and play with other children.

IS: Schools are being pressurised to focus on 'catch up', and maybe if arts and culture organisations and opportunities can describe the things they're offering as kind of recovery or catch up opportunities, that might help them to happen. Because we know that arts and making and culture are about healing and recovery. They are about resilience, and they do help with learning and engagement with school. And so, getting in touch with schools, and describing it as such, probably might have more chance of them saying 'yes, let's take this opportunity'.

GS: A project we did with an artist called Nick Fogarty was all around play, songs and drama games, and a real focus on mental health, and emotional empathy and kind of listening to each other and telling stories, and just three whole days of having time to just play and make. And there was an intention at one point to have a performance at the end, but the young people didn't want to do it, so we didn't. And I'm really aware that that's a real luxury to have had that, but that's something that at the time in the school, just felt so needed, and to have the opportunity to explore that, was really valuable, it was amazing.

JB: It's about prioritising the process, and not really putting too much pressure on what comes from that, the outcomes of that, or even trying to… I think sometimes, if we start to think about play in a therapeutic way, and how it can help young people, then there can be a lot of pressure to try and analyse that and what it means. But actually, it doesn't really matter if they're doing it, and we have evidence to show that it's going to help them, then if we take the pressure off ourselves in trying to unpick it too much. Then just allowing it to happen, then I think, could be really important, and just, yeah, knowing that it's… it's difficult for any of us, never mind young people to verbalise how we have felt during the pandemic, and to communicate things, and I think we're all kind of still trying to reflect on the past two years, and the impact that that has had. And it probably won't hit a lot of people for a long time, and so just not having expectations of anyone to be able to communicate this and just… and a kind of collective understanding that we all have this stuff, that we can use, arts and culture and creativity as a vehicle for that to come through.

The event goes into breakout spaces with the presenters to produce a collective statement on the question: What would you pledge to do in your practice, school, group or work to support more creative and sustainable creative education opportunities in schools and communities? What do you want to say to policy makers and funders?

TG: One of the reflections we had, was that funding changed really quickly during the pandemic. I can… you know a lot of things started to free up, I know structures became a bit more agile, so our first one was building that flexibility and agility into the funding model, to work for communities and people. Then holding space, so offering the space, and holding the space that people need, and to work at their speed. And finally, community involvement across the age groups, and within that the speeding up of bureaucracy and processes, so that people can come together more. You know so spaces aren't just for this group, you know, so schools are a good example of that… they're community hubs at their best aren't they?

JB: We talked about trust, and giving us opportunity for flexibility in delivery and in funding structures. Having room for a more responsive or learning based approach rather than having to meet specific deadlines and outcomes in a changing time. For funders and policy makers to facilitate that conversation in a way that allows smaller projects or organisations to feel more confident in communicating their needs, and to not feel so under a lot of pressure, and under a lot of stress to meet outcomes.

IS: One strong point from the group was about how important it is to really listen in lots of different directions. So what children and young people want, what they're saying they need, what they're saying they're interested in. And also, you know, what schools need, and just really listening before rushing, in a way, to put stuff out there that may not fit. And that also links to the pace comment that's come up a lot today: to just take time to really listen to what's needed, and then put offers out there, and that particularly will help with schools that are incredibly busy in all the ways that we know.

Also with schools, another point from the group was that it's really important that we strongly make the case for art and culture for its own sake – we don't have to justify it with lots of other agendas. At the same time, pragmatically, it does help with healing, and it does help with learning, and actually making that case, probably to the top of academy chains and decision makers, is where we might be able to then get more funding for projects on the ground. Because people find that at a local level, schools don't control the budgets, and they have less money to make anything happen, so there's something about reaching those decision makers at the top. People are taking away from today the need to create a kind of regular space, where people can come and go, and they know that it's happening, and there's not this rushing of a one-off kind of space, where we have to get people along to it.

Finally on policy, we just got to this right at the end. But an important point around access to arts and culture is by supporting the call for free bus travel for children. Obviously, there are still cultural barriers outside of cost, but think what that means in terms of accessing all the free arts and culture

in the city. All children in Scotland now have free bus travel, and all children in London have long had this. But in England and Wales, they don't, and actually, in terms of the 'levelling up' agenda and helping arts and cultural organisations to reach the children they want to reach, and helping schools to get children to things, free bus travel is really key. We want to do a bit of a campaign on that with other people in Bristol.

GS: Creativity needs to be an essential part of the curriculum in all subjects, and support teaching creatively better please. Value creativity and its impact on other subjects, and allow it to be better recognised and funded, so that schools aren't choosing between resources.

The manifesto: Creative Education and Support for Young People – Call to Action!

What we want to share and say collectively to funders, policy makers and those in positions of power in terms of supporting more creativity for younger people in our society.

Made by Gentle/Radical, High View School, Room 13 and With Flying Colours with 50 national and international artists and organisations on 28 February 2022 as part of a collective evaluation and call to action by the group.

1   Build flexibility and agility of the funding model to work for communities and people – less barriers, more doing. Make it easier to get resources together.

2   Hold space more. Create the space that people need and work at their speed. Build time into your work. Support conversations, give things more time.

3   Honour all ages and welcome them into the process. Community involvement across the age ranges quickens decision making and makes collective decisions happen faster and stronger. Don't let adults decide for children.

4   Trust in us (the teachers, creatives, and deliverers). Allow us to give accessibility and opportunity within funding structures – less deadlines and outcomes and more process and approaches. We know what good looks like because we are at the coal face.

5 Help smaller organisations have a space in the conversation – give them the tools, support and resources they need to be part of larger conversations and have more lines of communication open – let grassroots in more, they test and are on the frontline!

6 Evaluate more richly! Less about numbers and more about stories and richness. A balanced approach that isn't 'results' driven.

7 Really listen before doing – to schools, to children and to people. Listen to what is needed and put out offers that answer to them. Don't innovate for others. This will particularly help with schools who are really up against it now.

8 Value arts and culture for arts sake but also acknowledge that it does support mental health, diversity and inclusion, wellbeing, and learning – we need to share and shout this to decision makers.

9 Create frameworks of regularity. This sets a pace and a trust of continuity. Don't experiment and leave.

10 Give children access! Support the call for free bus travel for children. Think of the reverberations of this and of 'levelling up' if all children could access culture equally.

11 Creativity should be an essential part of the curriculum in all subjects as policy. Do not make schools choose between creativity and other forms of accessing education. Break down the hierarchies of subjects.

This event was delivered by Centre of Excellence in Creative Education, With Flying Colours, Plymouth Cultural Education Partnership and Plymouth Culture.

Images

1 Woodfield With Flying Colours, Credit: Dom Moore

2 College Road 8 With Flying Colours, Credit: Dom Moore

3 Credit: Gem Smith for Take A Part

4 College Road 6 With Flying Colours, Credit: Dom Moore

5 Credit: Gem Smith for Take A Part
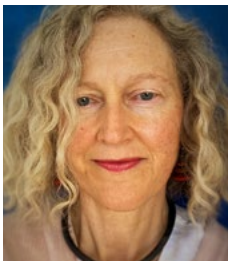
6 Credit: Gem Smith for Take A Part

Contributor's details

Shani Ali is a socially engaged artist and experienced artist educator, co-founder of Room 13 Hareclive.

Nora Aubry, contributor

Jess Blackledge was the Creative Producer for With Flying Colours, leading the team and steering the long- term strategy.

Eden Bø Dower, contributor and graphic designer

Eibhlín Campbell has worked as a primary school teacher, a Creative Associate on the Creative Schools Programme with the Arts Council of Ireland and works as a freelance consultant in arts education.

Dr. Emma Curd (born 1990) is an artist-facilitator and participatory action-researcher. After undertaking a practice-based PhD in community interpretation and user-led approaches to museums at Tate Liverpool titled 'The People's Glossary' (2015-20), she specialises in projects focusing on co-production, voice and empowerment across galleries, libraries, archives, museums and universities. Currently, Emma facilitates research and learning projects with communities including young people and vulnerable groups to explore issues such as mental health, identity, self-esteem and belonging. She is also a visiting lecturer at various universities across the Northwest on History of Art, Fine Art and Curatorial Practices courses.
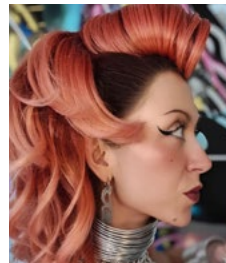
Aoife Dunne is a digital installation artist creating large-scale immersive environments fusing sculpture, video, sound, performance, technology, and costume.

Bella Emrys is a current 6th Form student at Radcliffe School, Milton Keynes. She has previously played a central role in projects Open_Plan and The Big Make. A current member of Offset Project's Board she brings her experience of being a young carer; home schooling; and interests in sociology, law, and wellbeing to the leadership of the organisation.

Alyx Furniss, contributor

Thomas Goddard is an artist, activist and part of Turner Prize 2021 collective nominee with Gentle/Radical.

Ronda Gowland-Pryde is an Engagement and Research practitioner, Creative Education specialist and leader of the Max Literacy Prize.

Victoria Gibb comes from an arts education background specialising in socially engaged practice and working with 'people and place' to explore commonalities and difference. After graduating in Illustration, Victoria enjoyed 20 years developing her practice through Gallery education. Former Head of Learning at MK Gallery her practice encourages critical thinking, creative discovery, and curiosity in order to inspire independent thought, child-led enquiry, peer exchange and leadership development.

She has previously been a Council Member and South East Area Rep for Engage. She plays an active role in MAKE, MK's Cultural Education Partnership, and received a Marsh Award for excellence in gallery education in 2015. She is an Extend Leadership alumni, and current trustee for Arts & Heritage Alliance MK and The Educational Wealth Fund.

Alison Jones has worked as an artist educator in a variety of educational and community settings, with a diverse range of audiences for over 20 years. As Arts Manager at DaDaFest for 13 years she played a pivotal role in establishing their international biennial festival of art, showcasing the work of Disabled and D/deaf artists.

Alison has worked at Tate Liverpool since 2011, playing an integral part in developing and delivering socially engaged, participatory, collaborative projects. Currently, Alison works with local communities to co-create learning programmes exploring new ways of thinking about art, society, the museum, and its relationship with the public.

Bea Makan (she/her) is a young person aged 21, who has worked as a paid trainee on the Fruitmarket Celebrate Art Project since June 2021. Bea's specialises in fine art and painting and she has explored diverse themes such as art and identity and multimedia performance.

Heather Marshall (she/her) is a queer, disabled, multi award winning, socio political artist and writer. She often works under the company name Creative Electric where she creates theatre, street and live art with and for people that may not traditionally engage in the arts due to social and/or financial barriers. She is currently artist educator at the Fruitmarket where she works with the Celebrate Art Project as well as facilitating workshops for LGBT Youth Scotland.

Phil McClure has worked across children and youth services since 2002. Starting out as a volunteer mentor with Doncaster Youth Service, he moved onto working with young people at risk of involvement in the youth justice system with Greater Merseyside Connexions where he worked for eight years. A two-year period followed at The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace, delivering an alternative education programme focussing on conflict transformation. Phil spent eight years working in the borough of Halton with Catch22 and then We Are With You where he led on Youth Voice and Participation.

Leon McCullough is currently in the third year of a BA in Media Studies at the Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT), Dublin, whilst working as a freelance cinematographer.

Tracy Morgan (she/her) is the Fruitmarket, Community Engagement Manager. The Fruitmarket is a contemporary art gallery in Edinburgh, Scotland, which programmes, develops and presents world-class exhibitions, commissions, publications, performances, events and engagement activities.

Tracy is an arts project manager with over twenty years' experience designing and delivering gallery education programmes and community arts projects. She aims to inspire and encourage a diverse range of audiences to engage with contemporary art including: young people, adults, older people and people with disabilities.

Rachel Moss is a Freelance Arts Educator and Evaluator who previously set up the Young People's Programme at the National Portrait Gallery. Her work focuses on supporting young people, especially those who are under-represented, on their progression routes into the arts sector workforce by setting up paid traineeships, evaluating creative careers programmes for young people, and being a mentor. Her current clients include Tate, Freelands Foundation, The Photographers' Gallery, Art on the Underground and the Foundling Museum, as well as a number of individual young people.
www.particip8tion.com
@particip8tion (Twitter)

Helen O'Donoghue is Senior Curator, Head of Engagement and Learning at IMMA. Helen has worked at IMMA since its inauguration in 1991 as Head of Engagement & Learning. In 2019/20 she spent four months on a Fulbright Scholarship in MoMA, New York and is currently a Fulbright Ambassador.

Tara Page has over 10 years' experience in educational settings responding to the needs and aspirations of children and young people. After graduating in Fine Art, Tara developed an artistic practice designing playful, participatory projects for children and young people. She went on to train as a teacher, teaching in primary schools in Cambridge and Milton Keynes, before becoming Learning Manager at MK Gallery.

She has managed a range of cultural projects and events working with children, families and schools. She has previously been a trustee at MK Gallery and a visual arts assessor for Arts Gateway MK. Tara is a member of Clore Leadership alumni and is former Vice Chair of Governors for Boulevard Primary Partnership.

Sarah Perks is an international curator, consultant and writer and Professor of MIMA School of Art & Design. One of Creative Review's 50 Creative Leaders in 2017, Sarah has led many major engagement, participation and curatorial projects with international artists including Rosa Barba, Phil Collins, David Lynch, Noorafshan Mirza & Brad Butler and Qasim Riza Shaheen. Developing her career in education at Cornerhouse, Manchester, she became the inaugural Artistic Director (Visual Art) of HOME and Professor of Visual Art at Manchester School of Art. Sarah has published over twenty essays and books, the most recent Artists Moving Image in Britain Since 1989 is co-edited with Erika Balsom and Lucy Reynolds (Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art & Yale University Press). Sarah is also senior research curator of Asia Triennial Manchester and Chair of Islington Mill Foundation in Salford, Fellow of the RSA and Programme Advisor (Artist Moving Image) for the BFI London Film Festival.

Julia Roebuck is a freelance sustainable fashion consultant and the founder of Upcycle Fashion, a Circular Clothing Practice. Upcycle Fashion was established in London in 2010 following Julia's graduation with the world's first sustainable fashion Masters Degree from the London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London. Now based in Kirklees, Upcycle Fashion brings together textiles, education and sustainability to deliver projects that explore new approaches to engagement with textiles for the benefit of people and planet in a circular economy.

It was in a university lecture theatre in 2006 that Julia heard the words 'Made in Huddersfield' for the first time. Despite growing up in the town, Julia had no idea there was a textiles industry on her doorstep until hearing about how an upcycled clothing brand, Junky Styling, were repurposing donated cloth for their collections.

17 years later, and through her work as Careers Project Manager for Woven in Kirklees, a festival celebrating textile innovation in Kirklees, she is able to tell the stories to inspire and inform the next generation of industry professionals whilst increasing the deserved pride in the industry and innovation taking place across the region.

Jane Sillis has worked in the arts since the 1980s and has a particular knowledge of contemporary visual art, education and working with adults and young people new to the arts. Since 2005 Jane has been Director of Engage. Before working with Engage Jane was an arts consultant.

Her clients included: Tate Modern, Tate Britain, the National Gallery, Turner Contemporary, Ormeau Baths Gallery, the Clore Duffield Foundation, the British Council, the Department for Education and Look Ahead Housing and Care. Jane was Head of Community Education at Whitechapel Gallery 1994–99 and Education Officer at IKON, Birmingham 1986289. She was a trustee of Chisenhale Gallery 2000–2005, Magic Me 2000–2008, Iniva, the Institute of International Visual Arts 2008–18 and a Vice Chair of Engage 1999–2005. Jane has a Masters in Cultural Studies from the University of Birmingham 1994. She has published on gallery education and the visual arts

Dr Nicola Sim is a freelance researcher and evaluator who works with arts organisations across the UK to support critical reflection and meaningful change. Specialising in collaborative and inclusive practice she has worked with Wellcome Collection, Chisenhale Gallery, Somerset House, Freelands Foundation, South London Gallery and many other spaces, as well as adventure playgrounds and youth organisations.

Nicola completed a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership with Tate and The University of Nottingham in 2017 and is the author of *Youth work, galleries and the politics of partnership*, (2019, Palgrave Macmillan). She was previously Curator of Public Programmes at Whitechapel Gallery.
www.nicolasim.co.uk

Ingrid Skeels is a writer and freelance strategic development worker and part of the Room 13 collective.

Gem Smith is the Creative Education Director of Take A Part and Lead Producer on the Centre Of Excellence in Creative Education programme, working in the arts in Plymouth for over 10 years.

Adam Stoneman is a Researcher on the SPICE Project at IMMA, an EU Horizon 2020 funded initiative developing digital tools and methods of Citizen Curation. His writing on culture and technology has appeared in Jacobin, Open Democracy and Culture Matters. He leads the Irish Museum-Technology Working Group.

**Isabella Wagner**, contributor and author

Kamina Walton is a sector leader, artist and creative leadership coach. In 2015 she founded Rising Arts Agency CIC a genuinely youth-led social enterprise empowering Bristol's under-represented young people to affect radical social change through the arts. She's been Special Interest Rep for Diversity on Engage Council for the past four years.

Kim Wide MBE is the founder and CEO of Take A Part and an expert in socially engaged arts practice.

Engage Journals

This journal can be read online by engage members and subscribers at **https://engage.org/journals/**
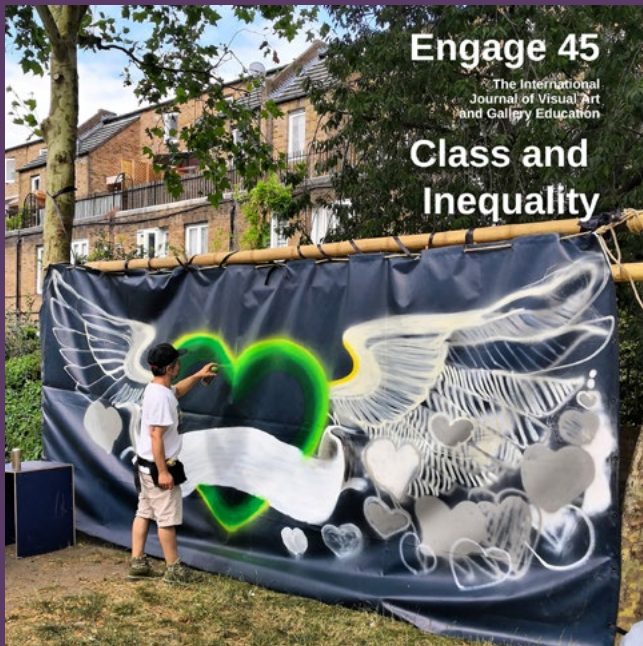
Engage 45: Class and Inequality
Editor: Sarah Perks

Issue 45 of the Journal explores issues of class, socio-economic disadvantage and inequality in relation to gallery education and engagement programmes and the related sector.

The articles in Engage 45: Class and Inequality, although different in terms of their scope and focus, are consistent in demonstrating that class not only has a significant impact on the visual arts education workforce and its practice, but it is often ignored. Readers will feel a call to action as the responsibility to play a role in changing that falls on us all.

Class and inequality is divided into three sections: What to change? is a series of essays and conversations that articulate the current situation; Ways of seeing suggests alternative methods to approach and understand where we are; Spaces and places is detailed analysis of specific locations and projects that explore social class in visual art education.

Contributions cover a vast geographical landscape, including Cape Town, South Africa, rural Portugal, rural Norfolk, Greater Manchester, the Midlands, London, the Welsh Valleys, Dundee and China, with articles either being focused on or influenced by their surroundings.

As well as place, this issue considers the intersection of class with concepts such as race and sexuality.

To complement the launch of the Engage Journal and to extend the discussion beyond the written articles, we hosted a panel discussion. The panellists were asked, what needs to change in the current institutional context to actually address class and inequality for educators, artists and curators? The event was chaired by Professor Sarah Perks with guests Kenn Taylor (creative producer and writer), Amani Mitha (freelance curator and postgraduate student) and Karen Eslea, Head of Learning and National Programmes, National Gallery. Introduced with a provocation by Skinder Hundal, Director of Arts, British Council. **Watch the launch of Engage Journal 45**.

Back issues available online.
Visit **https://engage.org/journals/**

About Engage

Engage are the leading charity for promoting engagement and participation in the visual arts. Through advocacy, research, and training we help ensure the quality, inclusivity, and relevance of engagement and participation opportunities across the UK. Engage is a UK-wide organisation with Wales and Scotland-based activities led through Engage Cymru and Engage Scotland.

For details about membership please visit **https://engage.org/membership/**

Engage is supported by Arts Council England, Arts Council of Wales and Creative Scotland and by charitable foundations.

Donating to Engage enables us to continue bringing the visual arts to new audiences. For more information or to make a donation visit **https://engage.org/support-us/**

Engage is committed to equality of access. Should you need the Journal in another format please contact Engage on +44 (0) 20 7729 5858 / **info@engage.org**

Engage

Bringing people
and art together