

# AN ART EXHIBITION FEATURING ARTWORK FROM 26 SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IRELAND, THE UK AND SPAIN. POSTCARDS



- 03 ..... A message from our sponsor
- 04 ..... Foreword by Constance Short
- 05 ..... Introduction
- 06 ..... Case study
- 12 ..... External engagements
- 16 ..... Schools artwork
- 42 ..... Acknowledgements
- 43 ..... List of participating schools

# A message from our sponsor

Dundalk Credit Union is proud to support the students and their teacher, Mr. Fergal Kilkenny, of St Louis in their International Art Exhibition.

Teachers in Ireland, UK and Spain have come together and offered a channel for students to creatively and visually express their thoughts on global unrest and the impact of war. Their postcards inspire conversations, breaking down barriers and moving feelings and thoughts into tangible artwork.

We wish the students and teachers every success with their exhibition.

Billy Doyle CEO Dundalk Credit Union



#### About Dundalk Credit Union

Dundalk Credit Union is a member-owned financial cooperative that provides a range of financial services to its community.

Established in 1968, Dundalk Credit Union is today one of the largest Credit Unions in Ireland with assets approaching €320m and over 48,000 members. The core purpose of the Credit Union is to deliver financial independence, wellbeing and opportunity for their members and to support the development of a stronger, more sustainable community and economy in the region.

Dundalk Credit Union is a strong and trusted partner for its members, at every age and every stage of life. The Credit Union is very proud of the strong partnerships and relationships developed over the last 50 years. Partnerships and alliances include community/development groups, sporting organisations, charities, DkIT and schools, businesses, and support agencies.

Dundalk Credit Union is proud Community Partner of Louth GAA, Dundalk Schoolboys League and Louth Schoolgirls League and continues to support those community organisations and groups that benefit and strengthen our wider community.

# Foreword

Collins Barracks Forecourt, October, we were celebrating my daughter's birthday. The candles on the cake would not stay lit. My four year old grandchild James said quietly; "The wind thinks it's his birthday Granny." The utter imagination of little children never ceases to amaze me allied to the ordinariness to them, of saying something extraordinary to our adult ears.

I believe children are born with an imagination that knows no bounds. In working with children I have tried to give them the space to let that flow freely. When they said a piece of their work was rubbish I suggested that perhaps it was an experiment that did not go the way they wanted. We were taking the concept of judgement out of the equation. This freed the child up to see everything they began as an experiment. We placed a big emphasis on imagination, so much so that one day when a new child to our little group said: "I am bored". Another genuinely replied: "Did you leave your imagination at home?. And we explained that if you allow your imagination to run free, all sorts of magical things can come into your head, so there isn't time to be bored.

I have taught children in many ways in the exploration of art and creativity in general but mostly in formal settings. It was clear that some children would benefit from being given more time to think for themselves. I called it Studio Art. I would be to these young artists a facilitator. I took 4 children at a time from the age of 6 to 12. Some of them found it hard to grasp the idea that they could do what they liked. The parameter I created was in picking the medium so we could be doing clay, painting, printmaking (Lino), plaster casting and a bit of woodwork, or cooking. After a couple of years, the experienced children could pick the medium as well and often came at the beginning of term with a plan of action in place, as to the artwork they would do.

Parents took their children away who found this approach too free. They wanted a fixed curriculum and their children to go home with a piece of artwork each week. Luckily the majority stayed because my whole approach was the very opposite, to give a child the freedom to think for themselves, to explore their own creativity and that wonderful imagination they are born with.

One quiet little boy who came when he was about six years old, grasped the concept immediately and it was a delight to see what he would come up with next. That little boy, I am very proud to say is the author of this wonderful project, Fergal Kilkenny - Artist, Educator and Intellectual. His views on the nature of art and its contribution to development not only of the imagination but the place of arts in society and its responsibility, constantly keep me on my toes when he comes to visit. My old alma mater St Louis Secondary School Dundalk is lucky to have him as a teacher. But then my exploration of the Arts began there with Sr Edmund, who was hilarious. If she was busy with one of her watercolours, we could do what we liked, our presence an irritation at times. But despite or because of her eccentricity, she instilled in me a passion for the Arts that has sustained me all my life. I love to quote Patrick Kavanagh here; "I dabbled in verse and it became my life".

I am honoured and moved that Fergal would ask me to contribute to the catalogue for this wonderful International schools exhibition he has created. I wish it every success for now and well into the future.

**Constance Short** 

Constance Short is an artist, teacher and activist.

She has exhibited extensively. Her 'campaigning' energies have been used in organising many cross-border exchanges and conferences on cultural diversity as part of the peace process, (Co-Operation North 1989-1992) as well as setting up The Arts Office for Dundalk Urban District Council in 1986.

She completed approximately 40 murals in primary schools for the Irish Arts Council. Her work is in the collection of the Arts Council of Ireland, and in many private collections throughout the world.

# Introduction

This project started in March 2022, when I sat down for coffee with a group of friends. One friend read a poem she had written responding to the war in Ukraine and loss of life. Sitting there, in that moment – I started to think, perhaps the arts, and visual art in particular could indeed be a vehicle for creative expression on the subject/ topic. So in a sense, the project was born in that moment, crossing the gap from poetry to visual art, and it expanded rather quickly after that.

As war is a global issue affecting many citizens in a variety of different ways/ forms, I decided to put a call out to art teachers in Ireland and the UK to participate in what has become known as the 'International Creative Postcard Exchange'.

Social media became a great platform to share the project intentions and resulted in my being inundated with notifications and 29 requests to participate.

Each school that signed up was sent 30 blank postcards to design, in a medium of their choice. The theme was to be interpreted by students in whatever way they saw fit – this was key to the success of the project that students could lean of personal experiences and country specific topics. Once all packs were delivered to schools, the students had two months to complete the artwork on the cards. Some schools saw this as an opportunity to engage extra-curricular 'art clubs' in this project, while others ran the project as a scheme of work with students documenting their idea generation and development work in their sketchbooks (see p.06 for case study).

"When we were invited by Mr Kilkenny to participate in the postcard exchange, we very much embraced the opportunity to become involved in this exciting and creative initiative. Our engagement in this project has also afforded us the experience to re-connect with St Louis following our collaboration during the Cross Border project in 2019.

Our year 10 students had recently been working on a Troubled Tales project where war and conflict had been the stimulus for creating individual works of art. Therefore, the postcards provided a canvas for further expression in response to this theme." - Mrs Dawn Clarke, New-Bridge Integrated College.

As the postcards began arriving back to St. Louis Secondary School (the base of the project) it reinforced my initial belief that this was indeed something that needed a public forum. Having told the students participating in our school about the prospect of an external exhibition, throughout the process it became evident that the event itself and not marks or percentages was motivating them most.

What you see today is testament to the hard work and dedication of all participating schools, their teachers and students. This evening's event is an opportunity to engage with and view work and creative processes of the next generation of young creatives. What we have on display are 462 individual responses to the theme of 'War' in a variety of different media; from crochet to etching. Sub-themes explored include mental health, armed conflict and historical connections to the theme.

The project has crossed international borders yet there are common threads that bind all these ideas together. They give us hope in both humanity and the next generation.

Fergal Kilkenny Project coordinator. Art teacher - St Louis Secondary School, Dundalk. A total of 29 schools expressed interest in participating in the exchange from the initial call out on social media (Facebook).

From that initial interest 26 schools fully participated in the project and submitted postcards for the exchange.

Participation rate for this project was therefore 90% of total schools.

# Case Study

Context: the group involved in this case study is from St Louis Secondary School, Dundalk, Co. Louth. The school is an all-girls secondary school in the Republic of Ireland. Students were aged from 15-17 years at the time of this project. A total of 38 students took part in the international creative postcard exchange project, 15 of whom were in Transition year and 23 in 5th year. As this project was being undertaken as a scheme of work it lasted for approximately 5 weeks. Two hours per week was given to this project.

All students began developing ideas on paper for this project (some students used their physical sketchbook and others loose sheets of paper). Initially students engaged in a group based activity where in three minutes they had to create a drawing on the whiteboard responding to the word 'bomb'. The outcome of this activity was that each of the students taking part came up with different visuals that they associated with the word/ stimulus.

The exercise reinforced to the group how we all think, interpret and visualise in different ways. After this initial visual and word association activity, all students began to create spider diagrams to explore the project theme of 'war'. As expected, the outcomes of this were vast and touched on many topical issues important to the cohort. Some sub-themes identified by the students included; Magdalene laundries, inner battles with mental health, deforestation, human rights and democratization of nations.

While the initial exploration of the theme was on paper – students then crossed over to an online platform to create their first digital sketchbook. Book Creator was a new piece of software for this group and all partaking soon understood the benefits of working with digital technology in this context. Indeed, it was found through grade and percentage comparisons with the physical alternative that this format actually encouraged engagement – primarily through the ease of research process and simplicity of audio clip annotation.

The research conducted by students no longer needed to be printed out and pasted into a physical sketchbook but rather placed on a page of the digital sketchbook. Students became selective about the research they included and started to think about how each piece of research could impact their own creative concepts. Due to the online nature of both the sketchbook and research process it was found that students engaged further with the artist's work through a more comprehensive research process. This extra engagement in the research process can be seen in the digital sketchbooks, where at various stages in the creative process, the students stopped sketching and returned to research further.

The verbal annotation through the use of voice clips enabled students to explain their choices of artist research and how they related to the theme.

The difference between the written and verbal annotation became very clear. The written annotation presented information in a factual way, while the verbal annotation gave students a space to talk about their decision making and offered their opinions in a more natural way (perhaps less thought out and truer to form).

All development work was photographed (quite like the process undertaken at Leaving Certificate level when it comes to making any sort of 3D work). It enabled this group of students to improve general photography skills and begin to think about photographic compositions, lighting and angles. The photographs of the process were then uploaded and placed into the Book Creator 5th year students completed two classes per week of practical art during this time period. Each class was one hour long.

The one remaining class was assigned to 'Visual Studies' where students studied 'Realism and Impressionism' and also looked at one section from Content Area 3: Unit 15 'Art as social commentary or commentator'.

During this time one external trip took place related to the theory section of the course. This trip involved 5th year students visiting An Táin Arts Centre to see 'The Bystander Effect' - an art exhibition by acclaimed glass artist, Alison Lowry. Sketchbook. The process of documenting work outside the sketchbook made students conscious of including the entire creative process in their 'sketchbooks' and aware of things that they might have missed out including in the past.

In terms of the teaching benefits of the online platform, one of the key points to take away from this engagement is the ease of access. Normally in an art classroom there are very few opportunities to take up physical sketchbooks - due to time constraints and the fact that students in general like to take work home. With Book Creator, the teacher has access to the sketchbooks 24/7. They are all in the one space (providing the teacher sets up a library initially) and can be easily looked at for work-inprogress check ins. Settings allow for teachers to limit student access to their sketchbook only. This may be necessary if students are self conscious about their peers hearing their audio annotations.

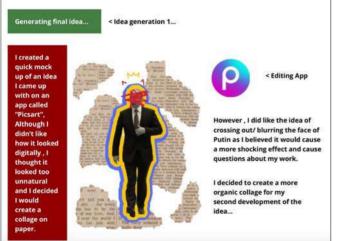
There are a couple of limitations to using Book Creator, and two became evident over the course of the project. Firstly, the sketchbook site is best suited to be used on devices with a large screen size. While the group used Chromebooks in class to work in this format (with a number of students opting to use their own iPads), some students completing extra work at home found that the site was not compatible with mobile devices. Small screen size and inability select editing options, alongside problems uploading from device memory were the main issues experienced by students using a mobile device to complete work at home. Secondly, due to the digital nature of the sketchbook, access to the internet is needed throughout, and therefore intermittent access may mean that work completed is not saved.

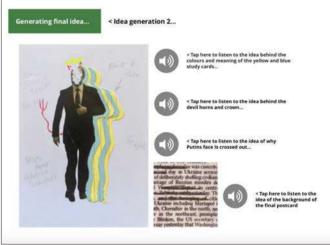
In the majority of cases with this group, the postcards were in a minimalist or collage style, taking clear influence from the artist research conducted. The physical process of making the final cards involved cut out card (various colours), scrap paper, newspaper and photographs taken or sourced with open license.

As the creative process was underway two major elements influenced the quality of work achieved across the board; the introduction of the digital element and the fact that work was going to be put on public display at the end of the project. We already mentioned about the influence of digital technology. In terms of the physical exhibition of work, students began to understand that the artwork they created was no longer solely for exam purposes or summative assessment but rather that there was a different type of value being placed on it. A value in student voice, and their ability to represent their own views in a professional setting to a professional standard.

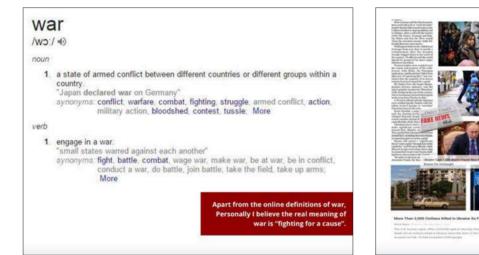








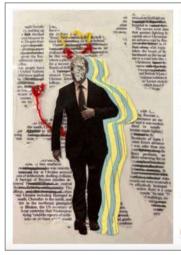
Example 1: Digital sketchbook created on the Book Creator platform. Credit: Zara Woods (student from St Louis Secondary School).



As the theme was "war", I decided to focus on a conflict that is very topical in the world right now, the war between Russia and Ukraine. Although being possibly the most "predictable" topic due to this being one of the only experiences of war my generation has lived through . I am interested in the use of propaganda on Russia's behalf and the different perceptions people have on the president Vladmir Putin, Therefore I wanted to include this in my post card whilst raising support for Ukraine!



I gathered as much information on the war as I wanted to be as educated on the topic before I began working on the project to ensure I wasn't being insensitive to anyone being affected by the crisis



#### **Final Piece...**

I was extremely happy with how my postcard turned out, I believe I represented my vision for the art quite well. I really enjoyed this project and will hope to use the development skills I learned in further graphic design projects!

By Zara Woods





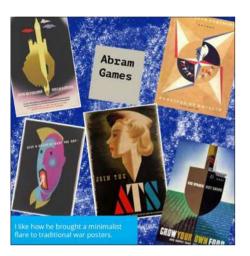


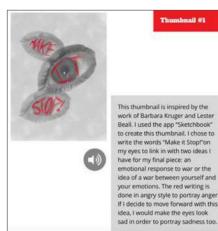






Example 2: Digital sketchbook created on the Book Creator platform. Credit: Ellie Sullivan (student from St Louis Secondary School).





Thumbnail #1

This thumbnail is inspired by the work of Barbara Kruger and Lester Beall. I used the app "Sketchbook" to create this thumbnail. I chose to write the work? "Make it Stopf"on my eyes to link in with two ideas I have for my final piece: an emotional response to war or the idea of a war between yourself and your emotions. The red writing is done in angry style to portray anger. If I decide to move forward with this idea, I would make the eyes look add in order to portray address too.









# External Engagement

Two trips took place during May and June 2022 which were linked to the 'International Creative Postcard Exchange'. Links were established with politicians north and south of the border in Ireland, and as a result teachers and students involved in the project were invited to visit government buildings in Dublin and Belfast.

Due to funding received through the Creative Schools programme (associated with The Arts Council) no cost was incurred by students for these trips. The Creative Schools funding covered the cost of buses to and from Leinster House, Dublin and the Northern Ireland Assembly, Stormont.

The visit to Leinster House came about through communication between Mr Fergal Kilkenny and Labour Party leader Ivana Bacik & Ged Nash TD.

The group went on a tour of the building, sat in the public gallery while the Dail was in session (Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney was briefing colleagues on the N.I protocol), and visited the Seanad Éireann chamber to hear discussions on online safety including input from, amongst others, Senators Alice Mary Higgins and Frances Black. The focus on art and architecture of the building was of great interest to students and teachers present.

Afterwards the group got the opportunity to meet Ged Nash TD, who took time out of his schedule to speak to the students about topical issues and answered questions. The students got the opportunity to explain their work on this project with Deputy Nash. All students on this trip gained real insights into government during the visit to Leinster House and in meeting with public representatives there. There was great engagement from all participants who gave up their free time to come on this trip. This external engagement trip took place on a Wednesday afternoon outside of class time.

Students were asked to join the trip based on the standard of their creative work and their ability to communicate concepts/ ideas.

The trip saw international students from Germany, Italy and Spain (who were in St. Louis Secondary School for the academic year) join with their St Louis classmates to visit government buildings.



Mr Fergal Kilkenny and Ms Aine McEnaney with students from St Louis Secondary School.

Photograph taken in the entrance hall of Leinster House, Dublin.

# External Engagement

The second trip associated with the exchange took place on Tuesday 7th June 2022, once all creative work was completed. Naomi Long, leader of the Alliance Party, invited St. Louis Secondary School for a tour of Government Buildings, Northern Ireland.

In order for this trip to truly embody the aims of the project (in bringing together students from different schools and offering opportunities for interactions between young creative minds), an invitation was made for participating school, Newbridge Integrated College (Co. Down Northern Ireland), to join St Louis Secondary School for the trip to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Three teachers accompanied the group, Mr Fergal Kilkenny and Mrs Orla Drumgoole from St Louis Secondary School, and Mrs Dawn Clarke from New-bridge Integrated College.

Here, students representing both schools had the opportunity to sit in the government benches (as there was no government sitting on the day due to a stalement in electing a speaker after recent parliamentary elections). Students had the chance to propose a mock law change and complete a mock vote following the voting processes that all MLA's undertake on a daily basis.

The tour given by Anne-Marie Fleming of the Education Department, looked at symbolism, portraiture and associations for this cross community, cross border group.

This trip offered students an opportunity to share their experiences working on the project and provided a space for all to discuss their shared history. "The visit to the Parliament Buildings provided our students with the opportunity to gain an insight not only into Northern Ireland's heritage but it's historical, political and legislative background.

We were also able to witness first-hand the building's wonderful architecture and artwork collection which our students found very impressive.

The tour guide was informative and her anecdotes were fascinating. Our students found this trip to be very valuable indeed, it provided them with a better understanding of the Northern Ireland Assembly and it prompted discussion and debate.

Our collaboration with St Louis most importantly has led to students making new friends and sharing experiences with a diverse group of young people. As young citizens, the visit will hopefully provide them with the opportunity to make an impact on decisions made in the future and give them the confidence to have a voice of their own." - Mrs Dawn Clarke. These trips took part towards the end of the creative process. This timing was as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

On both occassions, the students and teachers were amongst the first external groups welcomed back to Leinster House and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Had these restrictions not been in place the trips would have been staggered with one taking place at the start of the project and one in the middle of the development stage. This would have provided the ideal stimuluss to enhance the progression of the students through the creative process.



Ms Dawn Clarke and Mr Fergal Kilkenny with students from New-bridge Integrated College and St Louis Secondary School.

Photograph taken in the Great Hall, Northern Ireland Assembly, Stormont. Image credit: Orla Drumgoole.

# Ireland

#### **Participating Schools:**

Colaiste Dun an Ri, Co. Cavan. Colaiste na Toirbhirte, Co. Cork. Collinstown Park Community College, Co. Dublin. Edmund Rice College, Co. Cork. Loreto College Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Mungret Community College, Co. Limerick. Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra, Co. Kerry. St. Louis Secondary School, Co. Louth. St. Mary's CBS, Co. Wexford. St. Mogues College, Co. Cavan. St. Peters College, Co. Wexford. Wexford CBS, Co. Wexford.

### Colaiste Dun an Ri, Co. Cavan, Ireland

Teacher: Ms Olwyn Stewart



# Colaiste na Toirbhirte, Co. Cork, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Eilish Wilcox



# Collinstown Park Community College, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

Teachers: Ms Deborah Strumble



# Edmund Rice College, Co. Cork, Ireland.

Teachers: Ms Jessie Malone



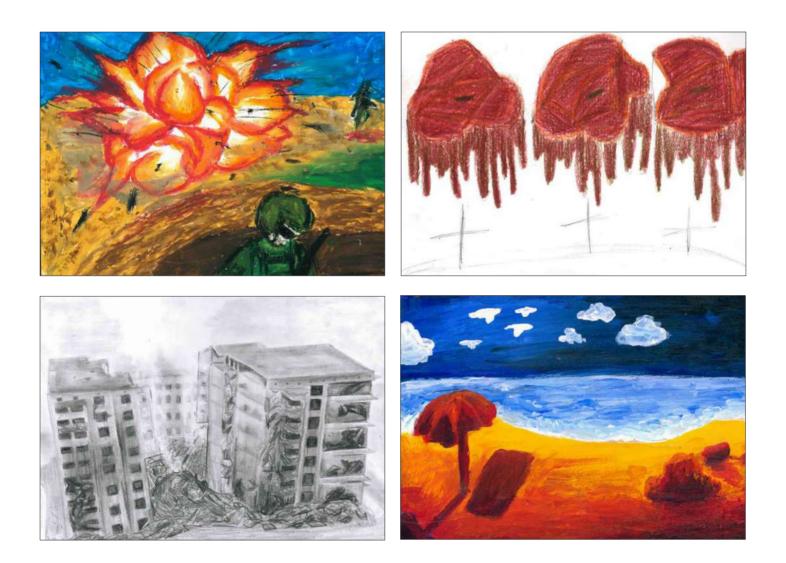
### Loreto College Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Amy Foran



# Mungret Community College, Co. Limerick, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Ciara Wall



# Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra, Co. Kerry, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Kate McCarrick



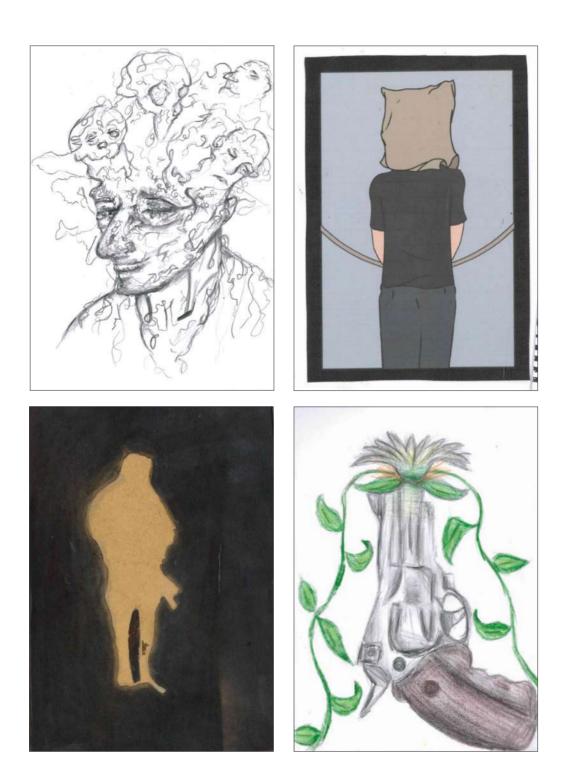
# St Louis Secondary School, Co. Louth, Ireland.

Teacher: Mr Fergal Kilkenny



# St Mary's CBS, Co. Wexford, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Rhian Foley



# St Mogues College, Co. Cavan, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Amanda Fay



# St Peters College, Co. Wexford, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Nessa O'Sullivan



# Wexford CBS, Ireland.

Teacher: Ms Erin Whelan



# United Kingdom

#### **Participating Schools:**

Durham School, Durham. Eden Park High School, Beckenham. Leicester Grammar School, Leicestershire. Lord Grey Academy, Buckinghamshire. Merchants' Academy, Bristol. New-Bridge Integrated College, Co.Down, NI. Plympton Academy, Plymouth. St. Benedict's Catholic College, Essex. The Campion School, Essex. Trumpington Community College, Cambridge. West Kirby Grammar School, Merseyside. Wetheringsett Manor School, Suffolk. Winifred Holtby Academy, Hull.

#### International school:

Morna International College, Ibiza, Spain.

# Durham School, UK.

Teacher: Mrs Lauren Thompson Participating students: 34



## Eden Park High School, Beckenham, UK.

Teacher: Ms Lauren Watts



# Leicester Grammar School, Leicestershire, UK.

Teachers: Ms Jennie Knight



# Lord Grey Academy, Buckinghamshire, UK.

Teacher: Ms Kate Palmer



# Merchants' Academy, Bristol, UK.

Teachers: Ms Katy Ford



# New-Bridge Integrated College, Co. Down, Northern Ireland.

Teachers: Ms Eimear McKeown & Ms Dawn Clarke



# Plympton Academy, Plymouth, UK.

Teacher: Ms Donna Hawkshaw



# St Benedict's Catholic College, Essex, UK.

Teacher: Ms Lolly Stewart-Thomas



# The Campion School, Essex, UK.

Teacher: Ms Alexandra Giesen



# Trumpington Community College, Cambridge, UK.

Teacher: Ms Karina Quigley



# West Kirby Grammar School, Merseyside, UK.

Teachers: Ms Emma Portbury



# Wetheringsett Manor School, Suffolk, UK.

Teacher: Ms Caitlin Cochrane



# Winifred Holtby Academy, Hull, UK.

Teacher: Ms Paula Mitchell



# Morna International College, Ibiza, Spain.

Teacher: Ms Carly Moffitt



# Acknowledgements

For actively participating in this project:

Students and teachers of all participating schools (see list on page 45).

For their contributions to this catalogue:

Constance Short Artist. Ms Dawn Clarke: New-Bridge Integrated College. Billy Doyle: Dundalk Credit Union.

#### For facilitating the external engagement opportunites:

Ged Nash TD (Labour Party). Ushers: Leinster House, Dublin. Naomi Long MLA (Alliance Party). Education Services: Northern Ireland Assembly, Stormont.

For funding transportation to and from these engagements: The Arts Council via Creative Schools funding.

For supporting this creative initative: Ms Michelle Dolan (Principal, St Louis Secondary School, Dundalk).

For sponsoring this project and supporting arts education: Dundalk Credit Union

For providing the venue for this exhibition: Kay Webster, The Oriel Centre, Dundalk Gaol.

For assisting with the set up of exhbition:

Ms Aine McEnaney: St Louis Secondary School, Dundalk.

© Copyright for all artwork remains with individual artists.

# Participating Schools

#### IRELAND

Colaiste Dun an Ri, Co. Cavan. Colaiste na Toirbhirte, Co. Cork. Collinstown Park Community College, Co. Dublin. Edmund Rice College, Co. Cork. Loreto College Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Mungret Community College, Co. Limerick. Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra, Co. Kerry. St. Louis Secondary School, Co. Louth. St. Mary's CBS, Co. Wexford. St. Mogues College, Co. Cavan. St. Peters College, Co. Wexford. Wexford CBS, Co. Wexford.

#### UNITED KINGDOM

Durham School, Durham. Eden Park High School, Beckenham. Leicester Grammar School, Leicestershire. Lord Grey Academy, Buckinghamshire. Merchants' Academy, Bristol. New-Bridge Integrated College, Co.Down, NI. Plympton Academy, Plymouth. St. Benedict's Catholic College, Essex. The Campion School, Essex. The Campion School, Essex. Trumpington Community College, Cambridge. West Kirby Grammar School, Merseyside. Wetheringsett Manor School, Suffolk. Winifred Holtby Academy, Hull.

#### **INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

Morna International College, Ibiza, Spain.

Ibus rersped que sit, nos et modipsuntiae quissercim qui offic te pa conest perfers pereptatiunt repres asperum quae sinvendus ullestrumqui inci beatur, nuscia quam que sus ressed min ellis arum quas eniminv elenet etur audipient am rest enectem

asperum quae sinvendus ullestrumqui inci b

Ibus rersped que sit, nos et modipsuntiae quissercim qui offic te pa conest perfers pereptatiunt repres asperum quae sinvendus ullestrumqui inci beatur, nuscia quam que sus ressed min ellis arum quas eniminv elenet etur audipient am rest enectem

asperum quae sinvendus ullestrumqui inci b

