

Promise Me Tomorrow

5 June – 26 July 2024

Curated by Anne-Marie Watson

Promise Me Tomorrow is an exhibition that brings together the artistic and education practices and processes of our two-year national programme CoLab between 2022 and 2024. Taking place at schools across the country, each CoLab project involved artists, mental health practitioners and educators. CoLab created the conditions for students to come together outside the formal constraints of the national curriculum, to talk about current urgent issues. Supported by a therapist, each artist was able to create a climate of care within the space enabling the students to feel free to explore their identity, environment and emotions.

Throughout all the projects creativity was prioritised to support young people to find and amplify their own voice. The aim was to strengthen their feelings of autonomy, their ability to speak out about what matters to them and explore their own identity untethered from the educational context they are in.

Most of the projects used the classroom as a site to reconfigure, reconsider and reorientate, removing the usual hierarchies from the institution by creating a democratic public sphere within educational space. This autonomy allowed students to make informed choices about their work, engage in open dialogue with their peers and take part in critical discussions about societal issues.

Artists used methods and processes from their own practices offering students tools to express themselves. Each took their starting point from a pressing societal issue enabling students to critically examine issues of identity, race, class, activism and climate change.

Roots and Routes

Artist Holly Graham worked with children and young people to consider their identity and sense of the world around them, through critically and creatively exploring the histories and legacies of sugar and slavery. They explored colonial histories of sugar production and exploitative labour, while looking at the contemporary impacts of past events on current lived experience. They made work using themes of movement and migration, culinary culture, racism and the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Embodied Healing

How do we use language to create shared spaces for healing? Can an exploration of the past lead us to a better future? What collective work can help us find a place of care with(in) the institution?

Together artists Fauziya Johnson and Kiara Mohamed Amin explored how creativity can be used to process trauma, build confidence, reduce stress and promote healing. Through different mediums they invited the students to access the sensory and emotional

dimensions of their bodies to access and process hidden feelings and awaken their own capacity for healing and growth.

Kiara says 'Embodied healing is the act of hope-making and dreambuilding, a reality that is not underpinned by white, supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist society.'

You Can't Ignore Us

What kind of work is shown in galleries and museums? Who gets to make that work? Who gets to call themselves an artist? Why do working class artists need to be seen and heard?

Led by writer and spoken word artist Simone Yasmin, students were tasked with creating a zine and exhibition exploring how museums don't always represent the lives, passions and interests of local young people. They chose to talk about how they feel about class, mental health, race, inclusion, disability and other issues creating a series of collages which formed the content for their zine.

Portal

For her workshops, photographic artist Arpita Shah drew on the work of artist Maria Amidu who is currently working with iniva on a Future Collect commission for Towner Eastbourne. Shah took her specific reference point from the colour blue often used by Amidu and introduced cyanotypes, one of the earliest photographic processes known for their intense shade of cyan blue, to the students.

Throughout the sessions students were introduced to different artist photographers and invited to explore their identity through studio photography, drawing and writing. From this process they were invited to create cyanotypes which would express themselves through clothing, objects and drawing.

Carol Major, *Blue Mythologies, Reflections on a Colour*, 2019

Michel Pasloureau, *Blue, The History of Color*, 2000

Angela Chalmers, *Creative Cyanotype, Techniques and Inspiration*, 2023

Selene Wendt, *The Sea is History*, 2019

Promise Me Tomorrow: Notes On Climate Change And Pedagogy

These workshops focused on the climate emergency led by artist Exodus Crooks and Assistant Professor of Human Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Susanne Boerner from the University of Birmingham. Their aim was to enable young people to understand and address the complex issues surrounding the climate crisis.

'Teaching students climate change as a social science issue enables them to engage with the uncertainty associated with the climate crisis and analyse issues such as inequality, injustices and human rights violations stemming from environmental degradation.' Beatriz Lobo curator, iniva

Throughout the workshops students used sound, painting and sculpture to explore eco-anxiety and autonomy. They chose themes to respond to including nature and landscape preservation and food and water scarcity.

James Baldwin, *A Talk to Teachers*, 1963

Harriet Harper, *Outstanding Teaching in Lifelong Learning*, 2013

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 1994

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2000

Mirjam Bayerdoerfer and Rosalie Schweiker, *Teaching for Teachers who Prefer not to Teach*, 2017

Desire Paths, *The Illicit trails that Defy the Urban Planners*, *The Guardian*, 2018

List of works

1

Exodus Crooks, *Promise me tomorrow*, 2024, a biodegradable artwork in collaboration with Holyhead School, Birmingham

2

Lillia, cyanotype, 2024

3

Jakin, cyanotype, 2024

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Shelf L to R CoLab zines

Creative Mapping

A zine for the Youth Rising Programme

Millbank Academy

Roots and Routes

Holly Graham and Nathalie Roset

Northbury Primary School, Eastbrook School and Young People's Creative Makerspace

Embodied Healing

Fauziya Johnson and Kiara Mohamed Amin

Salford City Academy, Manchester

You Can't Ignore Us

Simone Yasmin, Will Jones and Boseda Olawoye

Castleford Academy, Wakefield

Portal

Arpita Shah, Misgana Berhane and Anne-Marie Watson

Eastbourne Academy

Promise me tomorrow: notes on climate change and pedagogy
Exodus Crooks, Karen Dhlamini, Candice Nembhard and Dr. Susanne Borner
Holyhead School, Birmingham

5, 6, 7

Fauziya Johnson and Kiara Mohamed Amin, *freely feeling is a way of being free, We Are The Future, In Validated Feelings We Trust*, A1 posters blown up from Embodied Healing zine made in response to working with students from Salford City Academy, Manchester, 2022 - 2024

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Muriel, cyanotype, 2024

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Simone Yasmin and Will Jones, *You Can't Ignore Us*, learning and support for teachers and educators, film by Jules Lister, 2023

10

Cyanotype portraits by students from Eastbourne Academy facilitated by artist, Arpita Shah, 2024

From L to R

Jakin Masanganise

Jamil Ceesay

Soénia Silva Pereira

Jessica Evenden

Alyx Fry

Evan Hilder

Enya Hendy

Muriel Mosimilolaoluwa Garba

Radu Lincautanu

Lillia Martins-Thompson