

Delivering The Promise through art

PITCURE OF EOGHANN AND JAYDEN



Since March 2022, Promise Participation Leader, Eoghann MacColl, has been leading weekly art workshops at the Dick Institute. The sessions offer a safe space, in a historic civic building, in which care experienced young people can express themselves creatively through a variety of media, be that drawing, painting, digital imaging, sculpture, creative writing and poetry.

In the early sessions, care experienced young people were encouraged to engage with Grayson Perry's touring exhibition ['The Vanity of Small Differences'](#) presented by East Ayrshire Leisure. Comprising a series of six tapestries which tell a story about class, taste, aspiration and identity, the young people were encouraged to think through and create their own worlds reflecting their own favourite things, places, landscapes, services and currency.

Working collaboratively across services, staff from East Ayrshire Council's Intensive Support and Social Work Teams and Vibrant Communities Home-link Workers encouraged the young people to take up the artistic challenge. Geraldine Greene, Visual Arts Development Officer was able to support access to the galleries as well as workspace for the sessions.

Eòghann said, "Getting young people engaged in this project has been a challenge. There are multiple barriers to participation but, this project is a template of how we can use existing resource, in this case the Leisure Trusts excellent Visual Art Programme, to look at the delivery of The Promise meaningfully and engage our care experienced young people through the lens of contemporary visual art, within their own context with their wellbeing in the core.

This is empowering young people's creative voices and widening their understanding of the visual arts. The ways this can manifest itself through The Promise are infinite and can be young person led. It enables reflection and incorporates elements of play and fun to enable larger difficult subjects to be embraced within a safe environment. After the pandemic and due to austerity we really need to be innovative at how we can support and empower our care experienced young people and giving them the very best of contemporary visual art is one way we can do that."

One of the young people who participated is Jayden who said, "I think it has been fun and I have learnt to take my time. I can't do this (art) wrong and I look forward to showing my work." Supported by Ruairi Hunter of the Intensive Support Team at East Ayrshire Council. Ruairi said,

“Jayden’s involvement has been a joy to watch. I have not seen him so engrossed in something for quite some time. He has really immersed himself in it and you can see that from the artwork. The artwork itself is as fascinating as it is bonny. It has had a huge impact on Jayden’s self-esteem and confidence and he is rightly very proud of his work. All of this is just lovely to witness and I am so proud of him.”



Jam MacKay is another young person who has attended the weekly sessions. Inspired by the themes in the exhibition, Jam decided to document her own experience of living in Kilmarnock from her own lived experience and perspective. She had a really clear idea of her own creative practice and chose to approach this project using Polaroid and video cameras which she was supported to source from Irvine based charity *Input* (www.inputcw.com). Jam said,

‘I want to capture my locality and my life in my hometown, I want it to show people what goes on for young people in the town. It will help raise awareness around issues like poverty, substance abuse and addiction. When I see a person with addictions I want to help them, I want to take their photo as a means to start that conversation so I can help them. I see the same people all the time. I want my work to last forever. I see my work in an exhibition and in a catalogue. It won’t be a nice aesthetic but it will remind people of the realities of here’.



Jam reflected that she failed art at school, however, through this project Jam has shown a strong creative vision and an ability to address contemporary issues through the work she produces. Jam intends to build on the photos she has taken to create a video piece. She also hopes to work with resin to take the Polaroids into three dimensions, creating a tower, using the less successful images to upcycle them with ink, aerosol paint and pens.