

At the Scottish National Gallery – The Art of the Future

The results of an ambitious learning project – which posed the question ‘What is the art of the future?’ to young people from across Scotland – is brought together in a fascinating new display which is now on at the Scottish National Gallery .



The exhibition will present the imaginative responses of 16 groups of young people from communities around the country – from Selkirk to Inverness, Alexandria to Edinburgh – who took part in this experimental ‘mail art project’, in which they were asked to make art from random materials they received by post.

Between July 2017 and January 2018 each of the groups was sent a box containing an art ‘tool-kit’, the contents of which were kept hidden until the moment of opening. The boxes had no agenda or set themes, but were designed to encourage invention.

The objects inside ranged from traditional artists' materials to masks, a megaphone, banknotes and other everyday items; all were inspired in some way by the artworks in *NOW*, a series of contemporary art exhibitions currently running at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (SNGMA).

The young people got a bit of direction from this film.

We spoke with artists Sophia Somerville, Neva Houston and Momina Younis all from Drummond Community High School about their art and asked what it was all about.

Neva told us : "It has lots of different things about religion, the media, mental health and lots of other things that we think are important"

Momina commented on her input. She said : "It is about feminism. We wanted young people to discuss it and its importance. I think women should be equal."



Sophia then explained to us : "I was also concentrating on feminism. I concentrated on including some objects that women will use on a daily basis to show that these are not something

we should shy away from. Some people can't talk about things like the Pill and we wanted to make them to represent something we should not shy away from."

First of all the young women made The Green Head which was constructed in the first two lessons. They said they were pretty quick at that point. They stuck pins in his eye sockets which looks fairly gruesome. Sophia said that this was to block his view of the world. She continued : "We took out our frustrations on it because we think that as teenagers we have a lot of things to be angry about and so this is our representation of it." They were given green paint so that is what they used, so otherwise the colour has little significance. But Sophia said : "Actually it is quite good that he is painted green. We think it may represent the jealousy we feel for him that he does not have to see what we see. It is quite deep about what teenagers feel.

"I feel like not enough people take what teenagers say seriously enough. Our opinions on what should be happening are not really taken into account because they think it does not matter as we are so young."

We proposed to the young women that in these days of social media they do have a voice which is heard. They agreed but Sophia pointed out : "Sometimes social media can be very 'painted'. It is all about who is popular and who is not so you only really have a voice if you have a lot of followers or likes on posts. So not everyone has a voice."

[Art of the Future](#) from [The Edinburgh Reporter On Vimeo](#) on [Vimeo](#).



The Art of the Future exhibition will reveal how the groups taking part reworked the contents of the boxes they received to create insightful drawings, sculptures and performances, which have been captured on video and are presented here on screen. Some of these will make visitors laugh; others will ask the viewer to see things differently. All have come from the participants themselves, and provide a powerful sense of the issues that affect young people in Scotland today, including fears about our divided society, global conflicts, technological dependence, and the invasive pressure of social media. The participants have been spontaneous and candid, 'telling it like it is' from their own point of view; the works on show are sometimes challenging, but always heartfelt.

In total, over 100 young people from across Scotland took part in *the Art of the Future*, which was devised and facilitated by the NGS Learning team. The project targeted areas lacking in cultural provision, particularly in relation to contemporary art, and a combination of rural and urban groups were engaged to create a national reach. It also sought to raise participants' confidence by giving them the means to articulate their hopes and fears for the future through art, and by establishing a network of peers with whom they could share their concerns and their responses. Participating groups

exchanged their boxed artworks with each other at a sharing event at the SNGMA in December 2017. The groups were are intrigued to see what the others had created and were encouraged to find that similar concerns were being explored.



All the boxes created on the project will be displayed to a

wider audience still through the *Art of the Future* exhibition at the Scottish National Gallery.

Richie Cumming is an Outreach Officer at NGS. He explained what that job entails. He said : "It means that we go around the country working with different groups of people, predominantly young folk, trying to engage them in looking at a collection of art and making art based on that.

"There is not really a common theme. We took materials that contemporary artists use. Those who have exhibited in the National Galleries in the NOW Exhibitions and we packaged up the materials and sent them around Scotland. Some of the art they have produced is really vibrant and energetic. They have also produced short films that go with it. There are lots of experiments and social commentary on employment and mental health issues."

Clara Glovier, Head of Charities, People's Postcode Lottery, said: *"We are delighted that the support of players of People's Postcode Lottery has enabled the National Galleries of Scotland's Art of the Future project. To be involved in a creative project which uses art to encourage courageous conversations between young people is very special."*

An additional part of the project involves groups of girls from four Edinburgh schools, who have created the 'Games of the Future', which were inspired by sports boxes sent out by NGS.

The project will culminate in a performance to be held on Saturday 10 March 2018, when the all four groups will present the games they have invented on the lawn in front of the Modern Two building of the SNGMA.

This event is a partnership with the Action for Children Heritage and Inclusion Project, which is helping to reduce levels of isolation felt by young ethnic women in Edinburgh, and the creation of the games will help the girls achieve the

Physical requirements of their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

THE ART OF THE FUTURE

10 February – 29 April 2018

Scottish National Gallery, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL

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