PUTTING CREATIVITY AT THE HEART OF LEARNING
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I’m interested in how art can be a force for change and how creativity is fundamental for all our lives. 14-18 NOW was set up to invite contemporary artists to work with audiences to reflect on well-known stories but also little known but important stories of the war in increasingly inventive ways. Images of war, then as now, are compelling in a way that peacetime images rarely are. In war “stuff” is happening, there is pathos, there is excitement. War art is important because stories critical to our humanity are being told. War art is specific; art made during peacetime is ‘everything else’. My 14-18 NOW project, Make Art Not War was its last, taking its inspiration from Franz Cizek, a little known but extraordinary Austrian wood block printer. Before war engulfed Europe, Franz Cizek was running juvenile art classes but after the war, had in his hands what he and many others thought was the ‘antidote’ to war namely ‘creativity’.

He worked with children’s drawings to create beautiful images of everyday life in post war Austria. Housed in the ‘National Art Education Archive’, located in the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, are images made and drawn by children of returning soldiers begging with limbs missing but also interiors of fabric shops, bakeries, normal, joyous, peace coming back to life. It’s a remarkable process and a remarkable collection of images. Cizek inspired a movement. The post-First World War Child Art Movement is little known now, but it became a powerful force. Cizek’s beautiful print work was popularised in Britain in a series of exhibitions.

Artists responded to the First World War in extraordinary ways and what happened next is most famously characterised by the goings on in the Cabaret Voltaire where Duchamp and others created the absurdist art of Dada. Others, perhaps most notably the educator and philosopher Herbert Read joined the followers of Cizek. Herbert Read’s motivations were slightly different. Herbert Read had fought in the trenches. Many of Read’s friends had died. Read thought about the loss of those individual voices. Read thought art accentuated our particular natures. Art was about fortifying children against war by developing their sense of themselves as individuals not as a mass of humanity, ready to go over the top, able to be controlled by sergeants with whistles. Herbert Read was an Anarchist who thought creativity was humanity’s protection. I have long thought art was about peace. During the first Iraq war I painted a painting, now in the Tate Collection, with the slogan ‘Make Art Not War.’ They sell thousands of post cards and prints of it every year. ‘Make Art Not War’ sits in the Tate’s shop next to the Warhol self-portrait and the gloomy Rothko print. It was in part satirical. Listening to the developing Iraq war I wondered was there any point in making my art, closeted away in a studio in Hackney? The slogan is of course a corruption of the 1960’s slogan, ‘Make Love Not War’ an equally seemingly vacuous statement. But over the years since I made the work its message has grown in resonance. If only we could ‘make art not war’.

In a divided Britain it is perhaps important to recapture the idea of a ‘National Conversation’. Art can seem elitist, part of one side’s voice, but the art the 14-18 NOW artists have made is about this ‘National Conversation’. We all feel sadness and loss. It is impossible not to feel a shared grief when coming across a young man dressed in a First World War Uniform representing a soldier who died at the Somme as in Jeremy Deller’s work for 14-18 NOW which is included in the films we made for the Make Art Not War project. Making things is essentially peaceful. Art demands careful, I would say, peaceful concentration and peace too is a process that requires all our attention. Art has the power to heal and bring people together.

14-18 NOW Make Art Not War was created to encourage young people to nurture essential creative skills fundamental to wider learning and matched to future social and economic demands. The programme asked thousands of young people to make creative work in response the provocation ‘What does peace mean to you?’ What happens next is on all our minds just as it was in 1918. This final 14-18 NOW project addressed this question with optimism. What happens next is in the creative hands of our young people.

Bob and Roberta Smith OBE RA
Among the many noteworthy legacies of the First World War is an aspect often overlooked in historical commentaries and retrospectives. Following the conflict, and as a consequence of the dehumanising effect of war, there was a burgeoning interest in the idea of personal growth and this extended to the exploration of more progressive educational ideas, among them a focus on the power of creativity and the developmental benefits of the arts for children.

It was Franz Cisek’s view that orthodox approaches to teaching suffocated creative expression. He was not so much interested in teaching art as nurturing conditions under which creativity could flourish. His belief was such that if schools could become places where creative thinking and spontaneity could thrive then good learning, and good art, would follow. As Laven (2012) notes, considering the philosophy of Cisek:

“Although art could not be taught, the presentation of the creative drive can be very well be seen in its archetypal form as play. However, schools are determined to destroy the instinct to play. A child that is not allowed to play can also not create. Instead it must learn rhymed nonsense by heart. Therefore, for the child, drawing instruction is the beginning of a planned deterioration of the ability to see... it was impossible to have art education in schools, at best it was possible to offer artistic education. In order to have even this it was necessary to first educate the teachers themselves in artistic perception. They weren’t supposed to teach, but rather facilitate. Modern art didn’t belong in the school, also not traditional art, but rather artistic awareness or consciousness.” (p.187) ¹

Of course, teaching has come a long way since the early 1900s, but while a professional discourse around the arts and creativity is far more developed now, it is fair to say that curriculum requirements are sometimes felt to be as stifling as they were a century ago. In an era of the Ebacc and Progress 8, Sixth Forms, FE and HE colleges are welcoming students who have often already made a set of narrow, restrictive choices earlier in their school careers, not through exercising their interests and agency, but through external pressures and expectations such as exams and traditional progression routes. And even where students have remained engaged with arts subjects they may well be socialised into forms of learning which inculcate a mindset whereby study is seen as inextricably linked to testing and assessment in a reductive, closed way. And while this may accelerate knowledge transfer, it very likely impedes skills acquisition and the development of critical and creative thinking.

In this way, and as a rich legacy programme from 14-18 NOW, Make Art Not War aimed to encourage young people to nurture essential creative skills including self-awareness, curiosity, imagination and, crucially, their own voice, critical judgement and sense of place in a complex world.

Renowned artist Bob and Roberta Smith’s interest in the ideas of Franz Cisek, coupled with his own celebrated artwork ‘Make Art Not War’ gave rise to the idea of a new provocation for students to explore: ‘What Does Peace Mean To You?’

The programme produced by ArtsMediaPeople was devised with leading academic Professor Bill Lucas and the former CEO of Creative & Cultural Skills Pauline Tambling CBE. At its core, the programme offered brand new creative materials including short films by inspiring internationally respected artists, vibrant curriculum resources and a bespoke mentoring programme, all designed for inclusion in A Level, Diplomas and vocational qualifications to enable over 45,000 students to engage. The live project ran from September 2018 to March 2019.

The new resources were designed to put the learner in the driving seat. They offered open-ended activities, questions to prompt dialogue, debate and critical thinking and activities that drove an emotional response and included a ‘make and do’ creative task. Examples of 14-18 NOW commissions were made accessible to serve as support and reference. Activities and learning sequences were designed to work as stand-alone ‘units’ and/or as a series to be followed depending on the needs of the learner/tutor.

Of course, to work in this way, to approach this project with the concept of creativity and creative skills at its core, is not a whimsical idea. It is rooted in many decades of rigorous thinking and research seeking to understand creativity and its role in learning and skills development. This field of study is at least seventy years
old and its debates and learnings are leading us to a new consensus about what capabilities are desirable and valued in social, civic and work spaces.

Theory and associated research underpinning creative teaching and learning emerges first in 1950 in the work of Guildford\(^2\). He proposed a measurable distinction between convergent and divergent thinking. This was further developed by Torrance (1970)\(^3\) and his eponymous method of testing creativity.

In the 1990s a new wave of thinking around creativity developed through work by Sternberg (1996)\(^4\) and Robinson (1999). Robinson’s work on creativity struck a particular chord – the counter-intuitive idea that school progressively made young people less creative in blinkered pursuit of exam success. This idea shares principles with Franz Cízek’s work and thinking.

Robinson’s chairing of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education gave rise to New Labour funded initiatives in England such as Creative Partnerships and Find Your Talent. These interventions worked with thousands of schools and over a million young people. Research and further elaboration of themes and ideas arising from these programmes has been taken forward by Lucas, Claxton and Spencer (2013)\(^5\) and now helps creative learning potentially occupy a new territory, one normally reserved for core curriculum subjects.

Significantly creative and critical thinking is a focus for research into pedagogy and assessment in schools by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)\(^6\) and the global testing body, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has decided to make creative thinking the focus of a new test in 2021. Bodies such as the OECD have come to the view that there is significant interest worldwide in enquiry-based learning and the development of problem-solving skills, both from educators and employers.

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All of this is good news for teachers and learners. However, while we are seeing some encouraging levels of agreement about what kinds of learning outcomes are desirable, there is less consensus about the best methods and approaches to achieve them.

The 14-18 NOW Make Art Not War open offer to colleges and schools with artist mentoring, website resources, EPQ and Diploma materials has been generous, inclusive and was a means of enabling participation in a lighter touch manner that was not designed to be closely tracked. Rather, this report focuses on impacts and effects conveyed by participants of early adopter colleges, the approach of ‘positive deviancy’, a strength-based approach applied to problems requiring changes to behaviours and practice.

With this in mind this report set out to follow the energy and to focus on 12 Creative & Cultural Skills National Skills Academy Leadership Colleges and in particular, those who started activity either with a notable sense of momentum or headed in a direction that seemed to be particularly in keeping with the programme aims and concepts. These were:

- Barking and Dagenham College
- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Blackburn College
- Buckinghamshire College Group
- Cardiff and Vale College
- City of Glasgow College
- City of Wolverhampton College
- Gateshead College
- Havering College
- Lewisham Southwark College
- New College Swindon
- North West Regional College

College staff and artist mentors from colleges were interviewed, online assets associated with project – such as blogs, websites and so forth – were assessed for evidence of impacts. Evaluation also includes survey feedback from students, staff and artists.

A smaller number of survey responses were also collected from the University of the Arts Awarding Body annual conference, and at the 14-18 NOW and Sixth Form Colleges Association conference with a special focus on Extended Project Qualifications. Senior staff members from UAL and SFCA were also interviewed for additional background and context.

Interspersed between selected college case studies are short think-pieces by a variety of experts who offer perspectives from a number of sectors and disciplines. These experts represent a wealth of collective experience in arts and creative education and position Make Art Not War in relation to their deep professional understanding.

The report seeks to identify themes common to all schools and colleges which point to some of the generalised benefits of working in this way. It does so in the hope that future projects or units of study which build on the principles of Make Art Not War can be taken up by greater numbers of schools and colleges who see for themselves the impacts and effects creative teaching and learning can have on a teaching culture, staff engagement and the positive disposition of learners.

Dr David Parker

100 years on from 1918 seems a fitting moment to celebrate humankind’s creativity. For war represents destruction, the antithesis of creativity. The end of the war marked the start of the Child Art Movement, a holistic and arts-rich approach to learning championed by educationalists of the time. 1918 was, therefore, a key moment in the deep seam of education that has always concerned itself with what it is to be creative. It was a powerful response to the inhumanity of the First World War. It is why we chose to ask young people to express their creativity by telling us all what peace means to them.

Fast-forward to today and that same creativity is as important as it ever was as an expression of our uniquely human nature through the exercise of our imagination, curiosity and capacity for generating new ideas. But in our deeply uncertain and fast-moving times there are other reasons for valuing creativity. It is, according to the World Economic Forum, with complex problem solving and critical thinking, one of the three most important skills people will need to be employable. Acclaimed psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has shown how exercising our creativity dramatically improves our well-being and happiness. Closer to home, in a large-scale review of the literature, researchers Leslie Gutman and Ingrid Schoon identified a number of key areas that were particularly associated with positive outcomes for young people, one of which was creativity.

Look at education systems across the world and creativity is increasingly appearing on national curricula. Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Scotland and Singapore are just five examples of many countries – the Brookings Institute suggests that there are 51 - which are explicitly specifying creativity as a required curricular element. In 2021 PISA will, for the first time, test 15 year olds on their creative thinking ability and I am currently co-chairing the OECD’s strategic advisory group through this process.

When I read these lines I think of the heaven that is within us all, our creative, peace-loving natures, and I dream of a time in which, alongside all the other valuable things we do in education, creativity reasserts itself and sits at the very centre of school life.

Professor Bill Lucas

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Scale and Reach

This project has engaged large numbers of students nationwide.

- Creative and Cultural Skills leadership colleges have worked in-depth with over 1,200 students. 12% of these students (n.148) responded to online surveys to give a sense of the ways they valued this work and/or were challenged by it.
- The University of the Arts Awarding Body (UAL) Diploma study option was rolled out to 213 FE colleges and 44,000 students.
- The Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) engaged with the Make Art Not War Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) thereby facilitating connections 103 Sixth Form colleges and 180,000 students.
- EPQ training offered as part of the SFCA conference reached 52 teachers.
- UAL Tutor training related to the MANW brief reached 147 tutors.
- Twitter impressions (MANW posts to twitter timelines) have reached 4.3M.
- Twitter reach (MANW connections to individual twitter accounts) has been 1.3M.

Students engaged from a range of courses at different levels as illustrated by survey responses, with an emphasis on Art and Design and Photography students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extended Diploma</th>
<th>Level Extended Diploma</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graphic Design</td>
<td>Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Production UAL Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>HND Photography</td>
<td>Diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Art Design</td>
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<td>NC Portfolio</td>
<td>Music</td>
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<td>Photography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Art</td>
<td>UAL Level Extended</td>
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<tr>
<td>NQ Portfolio</td>
<td>L3</td>
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<td>Graphic Design Illustration</td>
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National projects help local ambitions

It was widely recognised that there was value and significance rooting this project in a conceptual vehicle that marked a commemorative historic moment. For many students it sparked personal learning journeys that linked to family, history and politics, reaching back to both World Wars and forward to future challenges of Brexit. Varied and rich responses from such a stimulating brief suggest that similar links to future historical events and exhibitions would be worthwhile.

A consensus emerged across colleges that the national profile of the project was an important factor in engaging artists, tutors and teachers, senior managers and students. The strategic partnership between 14-18 NOW and Creative & Cultural Skills and the care and skill with which the artist films had been put together was valued by respondents. Make Art Not War offered a sense of common purpose and was anchored to a significant and high-profile concept, arising from the broader 14-18 NOW programme. It was implied by the majority of college respondents in interview that national reach and media profile do help cement learning opportunities and retain strategic interest within organisations (and partners) to such an extent that they arguably safeguard some of the curriculum space and local resource that make high quality delivery possible.

“The collaborative element of the project was important to me as creativity for me is rooted in the exchange and free giving of skills and knowledge. The students felt strongly about the theme and showed a commitment to the process. I believe the input from our artist made them feel ‘special’ in a way. They looked forward to their meetings with her and receiving her views about their practice and ideas. My college management were supportive of the project because it was high profile and part of a wider national initiative, and may educate them too about the importance of creative skills.”

Partnerships

The importance of external partnerships with creative professionals and the value they add to the educational offer.
Particularly from the point of view of students and colleges, there was felt to be real value in working with external partners. The reasons for this related back to pedagogy to some extent. New and different ways of working were explored, and there was an openness to the learning process which encouraged personalised responses and, in turn, created room for experimentation, space for failure and less pressure to avoid mistakes. These pedagogical elements were supported by the values and ethos of the artist mentors who were naturally encouraging students to work in this way. However, there was also an important element of modelling work behaviours through partnership, too. Artists were bringing to the project their professional skills and sensibilities which largely conformed to ways of working they adhered to in their studios and other creative spaces. Teachers observed in their evaluation responses that this brought a different energy and approach to learning which students appreciated.

Reflecting on learner behaviours, students were more switched on by this project than is normally the case

1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree

Many of the artists who shared reflections as part of this evaluation were also conscious of the benefits and opportunities arising from partnership working, observing that it helped students shift between theoretical and practical modes of learning.

“I have been inspired by the broad range of reactions from learners, to the project stimulus. Not only did this enable some fantastic pieces of work to be created. It also sparked many interesting conversations and healthy debates amongst learners. Students were confident to show their inner selves through their work and felt comfortable with trying new techniques and experimenting... essentially, they were happy and open to ‘get it wrong, in order to get it right.’ I have been very inspired by the enthusiasm of learners to take this work into the outside world, in order to connect with the larger community.”

Learning Dispositions

College work as purposeful and personal, not abstract and performative. A sense of relevance, fun and enthusiasm as drivers for learning and student participation.

The majority of students found this project stimulating and motivating. This perception was not a superficial response to a novel project but more an acknowledgement of the ways the project had operated differently from other forms of learning. Students definitely appreciated the openness of the process and they found working with artists fun. They clearly signalled in their feedback that there were aspects and qualities of the way this work was undertaken that drew them in and improved their sense of personal capability.

73% students agreed or strongly agreed that the project had given them opportunities to express themselves.

‘What Does Peace Mean to You’ allowed me to express myself

1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree

13. All charts in this report reflect responses to attitudinal questions using a 1-5 scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree
Professional Development

While the project’s primary aim was delivering new learning opportunities to young people, there were also professional development opportunities for tutors and artists which arose as by product of creative brief and these were noted and valued.

College staff liaised closely with artists and reflected that planning together and observing different ways partners worked with learners was illuminating and inspiring.

The role of the teacher as a learner is a big shift in education paradigms, particularly those that are focused on meeting targets and reaching standards. In broader educational research the work of John Hattie (2009) is particularly important in this regard, reminding us as it does of the vital importance of reframing the role of the educator. From Hattie’s review of evidence worldwide he shows us that good teachers are:

- Doing something innovative or new in their practice
- Looking at what is working and what is not
- Looking for contrary evidence
- Making changes as needed
- Being aware of the effects of innovations: both intended and unintended consequences
- Finding ways to capture feedback
- Sharing their learning with colleagues

Make Art Not War offered a valuable lens through which teachers and other educators within the college context were given a chance to reflect on the affordances of external partners who worked with students in different ways, instinctively manifesting many of the attributes listed above.

As one college tutor stated:

“We weren’t exactly team-teaching or co-planning. I worked with the artist to make sure they were aware of the classroom dynamics and I was there when the sessions were taking place to offer any additional classroom management required. Looking on while someone else is teaching and coming at it from a different background is an eye-opener; it reminds you of what you do yourself that is already effective in some ways, but it also freshens your ideas up too. I think the main difference I noticed is that as regular teachers, we tend to jump in more quickly to correct and adjust when students are working. The artists give them a lot more time, often time to get things wrong and to learn from it. The artists were good at talking those aspects through with students.”

Tutors responding to the online survey suggested—67% agreeing or strongly agreeing—that the project had helped them develop their own skills.

The project helped me to refine my own skills and practice

1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree

Artists also attested to the professional development opportunity the project had afforded them:

“There has been an extraordinary amount of learning in this for me. It has felt a bit like a residency opportunity, where I’ve learnt as much from the students as they have from me. From a curatorial point of view, it is easy to forget the processes and struggles of being a practising artist and being there for the students throughout research and development phases of their work has been a great opportunity for me to acquire a broader understanding of the processes of creating. I feel I am now more equipped to support artists with their practice and realise that this can improve my curatorial skills, and potentially open up different opportunities for me. I have also been inspired by the lecturers at the college and have been able to get back to my art historical roots too, which has led me to apply to teach an evening art history appreciation course there.”
Pedagogy

Creative teaching and creative learning are valued as richer, more active educational processes, ones which colleges are keen to develop further. They need tools and frameworks to do so.

There is no doubt that the participating students, teachers and artists were on board with the concept and aims of the project. The idea of more open-ended learning, space to make mistakes and reflect on them, and the chance to follow through with ideas in ways that deepened and extended learning were all explicit in the thinking and discussion around the project. There was definitely an appetite to work in this way and a broad acceptance that it was an effective approach to inculcate skills and knowledge.

Of 148 students who responded to the online survey 66% either agreed or strongly agreed that working with an artist helped develop new skills.

Working with an artist was a productive way to learn new skills

1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree

However, there was less clarity about how to define best approaches in educational terms. Artists worked in ways which were instinctive and natural. Often these happened to be excellent instructional modes, too. But there was no evidence of a defined or shared language which helped demarcate effective pathways toward creative skills. Therefore, in terms of embedded and shareable practices this limits legacy work or future CPD opportunities.

Existing research shows us that creating the right kinds of classroom condition is key if creative learning is to flourish (Lucas, Claxton and Spencer, 2013) and there are useful basic frameworks which help capture the co-created experiences Make Art Not War generated through artist-teacher collaborations. Time-limited projects may find some initial challenge in incorporating such frameworks, but there is a strong argument to be made for ensuring attention is paid to pedagogy, particularly with a view to legacy and professional development within colleges. If the artists embody the practice, and the principles Make Art Not War seeks to explore are made visible by that practice, it is also the case that they are rendered invisible when the project is over unless frameworks and materials keep such ideas in circulation. One good example of defined pedagogies showcasing the continuum of methods which can be drawn upon when building creative approaches to learning is suggested by Lucas, Claxton and Spencer (2013):

Artists’ descriptions of planning with college lecturers suggested that in the case of Make Art Not War much of the practice was operating toward the left side of this framework and perceptions of impacts were such that these pedagogies opened up learning in ways that felt authentic and purposeful.

The challenge here is to ensure that participants’
evident appreciation that something different and
valuable occurs as a result of interventions such as
Make Art Not War is provisionally captured as a form
of described pedagogy, perhaps through frameworks
such as the one above, rather than disappear when
the project is over. It is important to ensure that the
affordances of a specific project have a greater chance
of forming part of a repertoire of teaching practices that
build a learning environment conducive to creativity.

Discourse and Language

Importance of discourse and common definitions
around creative skills to acknowledge their value and
maintain visibility for learners, tutors and policymakers.

Through the evidence that this project has shown, it is
telling that there is no agreed common language artists
or educators use to confidently describe this type of
creative practice in education.

Talking about the way creative projects work and
the effects they have is often caveated by a tone of
 provisionality and uncertainty. Yet, at the same time,
everyone involved is clearly impressed by what they
perceive to be tangible impacts.

This points to the need for a more developed discourse
around creative learning, and for educators to use
that language as a means of fixing more precisely
expectations and outcomes. There are ways of describing
learning spaces that incorporate artists and other creative
professionals that map very well onto nascent discourses
in education. Make Art Not War was a great opportunity
to share and cement such discourses more widely.

This is important because without agreed definitions
and concepts assessment is more difficult. Most
schools and colleges do not assess creativity. Their main
preoccupation, understandably, is to measure knowledge
in specific subjects or disciplines. And there is also
some scepticism about measuring skills and capabilities
that offer a counterpoint to the assessment dominated
curriculum, in the belief that creativity and arts-based
methods of teaching will lose the qualities that make
them special if they are reduced to a series of stark
levels and descriptors.

However, there are ways to avoid assessment pitfalls
while at the same time being more precise about
the attributes projects like Make Art Not War are
inculcating. On an altogether larger scale the OECD are
beginning to explore rubrics for a global test designed
to assess creative and critical thinking. So, there are
models emerging and they are rooted in determining
agreed concepts with common definitions around
creative habits and capabilities. Make Art Not War
opens up opportunities to trial and refine concepts and
language professionals can use to plan their intentions and
understand their impacts.

Awarding Bodies and Assessment

There is a need for sympathetic and nuanced
frameworks from awarding bodies in which work of this
sort can operate. Room for flexibility in qualification
rubrics to express and explore is vital to offer the richest
creative learning experiences.

Following on from the challenge of establishing
professional discourse and the challenge of skills
assessment, there is the question of how both aspects
relate to specific subject assessment.

What we are hearing from colleges is that qualifications
designed in ways that invite creative approaches to
learning, without diluting rigour and robustness, offer the
best of both worlds:

“Initially I saw this as an enrichment opportunity but
because our college awarding body is UAL we were able to
make this project work in the context of assessable work.”

UAL were often mentioned as an example of an awarding
body that designed qualifications in ways which opened
up productive spaces for creative work, with time
for the evolution of ideas, a trial-and-error approach,
recursive opportunities to develop skills and which were
still recognised as robust and highly respected. Not all
participating colleges were using UAL awards, although
where other awarding bodies were linked to colleges the project usually struggled to dovetail with curriculum delivery and could only be offered as a stimulating enrichment activity.

Ross Anderson, Director at UAL Awarding Body, shared his thoughts on what their approach to assessment and awards is seeking to offer.

“Our feeling for a long time has been that colleges are looking for something different and we felt UAL could offer qualifications that would meet that demand, and at the same time develop the kind of awards that we really believed in ourselves, that mirrored the kind of creative practice we understand and are familiar with. We draw on many, many decades of art school experience. Our qualifications are largely based on the Art Foundation course that came about in the 1960s which itself was borne of the whole Bauhaus experience. So we have a sense of a lineage of sorts and we care about making the best art and design qualifications we can that genuinely help students to develop world-class creative practice.”

Values and Ethos

There was a synergy between Make Art Not War and many colleges’ longer-term ambitions for creative skills development and more open-ended learning opportunities.

Of the colleges who participated in Make Art Not War in-depth, deploying artist-mentors, attending briefings and maintaining social media activity and websites showcasing work, it was noteworthy that their own sense of mission and their organisational culture largely embraced the ethos and values of the project. The colleges who got most out of the experience were those whose values and ethos most resonated with the principles underpinning the work. There were one or two exceptions, where the project did not integrate quite so deeply, and teaching staff saw the concept as impossible to integrate into an already busy timetable. However, the majority did embrace the project fully and this is borne out by the reflections of artists.

“I had no issues fitting in with the college at all. It took me a bit of time to get my head around the brief and to make sure we were involving students in ways that stretched them. A lot of the learning became self-initiated because the college were supportive of the idea of getting the learners to think and behave in ways that were more independent and self-directed.”

One artist mentor in particular, Ethan Dodd, was so inspired by his work with students that he is currently undertaking a Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

“One of the large achievements that I felt I gained was the effect I had on the students, I felt that I have really come into my own in the classroom environment and was able to command the flow of the class effectively. The effect I had on the students was instantaneous and effecting, and has pushed me to consider teaching as a part-time career choice alongside my art.”

While colleges were receptive to the idea of the project it should be noted that these colleges were always likely to be predisposed to working in creative paradigms given their Leadership College status and links to Creative & Cultural Skills. That said, the 213 colleges engaging just with the Make Art Not War UAL study unit are still finding ways to run with the open-ended nature of that element of the project without additional help or support from artists. These are degrees of connection and varying levels of depth of engagement that simply reflect the variety of college contexts and capabilities.

From top left: North West Regional College, Cardiff and Vale College, New College Swindon, Gateshead College, City of Wolverhampton College, Barking and Dagenham College
Barking & Dagenham College is a mixed further education college in Rush Green, Romford, Essex. Taking on the Make Art Not War programme, so far the college has developed tutor-led assignment briefs in the creative subject areas and students worked on those independently, responding to the ‘What Does Peace Mean to You?’ provocation. In-depth activity on printing and textiles has been delivered also responding to the question, with over 100 students engaging from a range of courses. These textile creations formed part of a one-day ‘takeover’ event and exhibition and devised dance piece in the main entrance to the college. Additionally, other participatory opportunities included a ‘digital treasure hunt’ and a literary criticism exercise that comprised spoken responses to camera. More widely, students from all subject areas were able to participate in making project themed luggage tags which were finally displayed on trees within the college. In total there were more than 800 luggage tag responses to the project question, many of them deeply reflective. Alfred Cardona, Director of Quality and Transforming Learning, explains why the college felt Make Art Not War was a rich opportunity for students.

“One of the college’s drivers for quite some time has been to offer an education that is more than just the qualification. So, we are very active in generating experiences that are very focused on T-Shaped skills – or transferable skills. We are committed to project-based learning because it is a great way to foster those skills. Also, for this project I created a scoping tool for other colleges to use, to help them keep in focus the idea that this project should work as both curriculum delivery and enrichment opportunity.”

This strong interdisciplinary approach to the project gave students a chance to use the provocation ‘What Does Peace Mean to You?’ as a way to personalise reflection and remain future focused, rather than see the work as dominated by a heavily historical theme. All the work seemed to share a common theme, outlined by Alfred, which was a drive to encourage students to be expressive, creative and to solve problems.

“We very much wove the provocation into all sorts of areas of study and we did that because we wanted this to go wide and offer chances for there to be creative thinking for public service students. We did something with engineers about peace also, so the idea was very much to push students from all disciplines to think creatively to find solutions to challenging briefs, to find time to reflect differently or be taken by surprise, and of course for many students in creative subjects that will have mapped back to curriculum and assessment of their work.”

This ambition to offer students chances to develop what Anna Craft called ‘little c’ creativity, connects to what we know to be the anticipated future needs of business and employers. A range of data show that contemporary business and organisations increasingly thrive on innovation and need workers who operate in creative ways and that are solution focused. The recent World Economic Forum Global Challenge Insight Report (2016) highlights the top four desired abilities as: cognitive flexibility, creativity, logical reasoning and problem sensitivity. Just the sorts of skill the open-ended nature of Make Art Not War helped inculcate among students through a varied mixture of events, performances and extended study.

Impacts at Barking and Dagenham college have occurred on a number of levels. Firstly, there has been the experiential effect of eye-catching art. The spectacle of unannounced events and performances in traditionally non-performance spaces have grabbed attention of hundreds of students and the wider community and piqued curiosity about the project. Secondly, teachers have worked with artists in flexible ways to help achieve unorthodox results, generating reflection around what unexpected outcomes and benefits might be forthcoming when learning is configured in new and interesting ways. Thirdly, learners report a sense of vitality and relevance to their learning experience that positively shapes their wider dispositions to study within the college.

“The piece created was about each individual’s personal idea of what peace means to them. I personally think that project was really helpful. It thought me lots of things that I will need it in my further study so it was really good.”

A theme that runs through these impacts and connects them is the notion of real-world learning. The way the project was curated invited students to experience...
opportunities for skills acquisition and deepening knowledge in ways that are relevant and purposeful. The artists involved have modelled creative attributes and shown how they are a key element within their own working repertoires. Such approaches make forms of learning students recognise more visible within working life and can be inspiring for young people eager to understand how to realise their potential in the creative and cultural sector and beyond. This central idea - that artists coming into college with different perspectives and ways of working could stimulate fresh responses among students – was fundamentally important to the success of Make Art Not War and was commonly alluded to in interviews as a tangible added value. Alfred Cardona expresses the view that creating clearer connections between skills learned at college and their application in the wider world is of vital importance:

“The openness of the question, I think, is vital. It has been thrown into a range of contexts - important because all of these students, no matter what their future pathways, will need these creative skills. They will need to be able to solve problems, to collaborate, to interpret a client’s, a manager’s or a customer’s needs with imagination and discipline in equal measure.”

Barking and Dagenham have woven together a series of events and deeper dives into sustained project learning which has extended a fresh challenge to students, one they seem to have relished. It seems self-evident to students that the world of work and the skills associated with it are real and relevant. Yet they also understand that within that world they will need to retain a sense of their personal capabilities and skills and know how to apply the best of their talents to tasks of all varieties and sizes.

An Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) can be taken by students in England and Wales. It is equivalent to half an A level and forms part of level three of the National Qualifications Framework.

The extended project was devised by Sir Mike Tomlinson in 2006, during his review of 16-19 education. They were designed to promote independent study, critical thinking and creative processes. Students have the option to create either a dissertation or to reflect back learning in a number of other forms: a musical or dramatrical composition, report or artefact, backed up with paperwork. It is an extended piece of work requiring a high degree of planning, preparation, research and autonomous working but which does not have to conform to an essay outcome.

While the option to create a performance, event or artefact is open to students, the majority often opt for dissertation outcomes. Make Art Not War wanted to explore the potential to frame EPQs in such a way that students wishing to take forward non-written outcomes could be more actively encouraged to do so. EPQs that explore the diversity of outputs open to them are more likely to inculcate the kinds of creative habits and transferable skills – such as those gained through independent study and the exploration of learning process – which HE and employers demand.

As part of this effort, 14-18 NOW led a national EPQ conference in collaboration with the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA). A keynote on the importance of creative skills and alternative forms of assessment was delivered by Professor Bill Lucas. Bill explored the opportunities that the EPQ gives for students to connect with their passions, the signature pedagogies which teachers might find most likely to encourage deep, student-led learning and the processes by which colleges and schools can steer and support students into more expansive and adventurous learning. Bill shared the key words he had found in an examination of EPQ syllabuses.

He argued that the EPQ gave teachers a real opportunity to undertake both practical and collaborative learning.

Bill Watkin, Chief Executive of the SFCA, outlined why he felt creative options for EPQs should be advocated more strongly.

“EPQs have shifted somewhat from the original concept in that quite a lot of teachers of EPQs would now major on extended essay outcomes rather than what was originally conceived which was also performances, media footage, a sculpture, and so on. It’s a creative way for skills associated with project work to flourish in arts and humanities contexts without always resorting to writing.”

As part of the day Greg Klerkx demonstrated the 14-18 NOW stimulus resources specifically developed for teachers teaching the EPQ.

Teachers who attended the conference certainly came away enthused. They spoke of a renewed appreciation of the opportunity the EPQ afforded.
“I am fully aware of the importance of creativity for our human nature and the very special qualities it can enhance within us. It can feel too pressured at times however, especially at A level, to ‘get through’ content and examination skills. CPD like this is so vital as it reminds us, or rather ‘me’, that creativity is not something to ‘tag on’ but a key method in our core teaching.”

“It was so good to attend subject related, useful, engaging CPD that was not exam board affiliated or focused explicitly on classroom teaching. The focus on developing creativity is highly relevant and engaging, and I came away from the day feeling excited about trying out some of the new ideas I picked up.”

Andria Zafirakou gave a key-note address advocating the power of creativity and the arts, and arguing for the special role the EPQ has in providing opportunities for their development. Andrea is the 2018 Global Teacher Prize winner, an annual US $1 million award supported by the Varkey Foundation acknowledging a teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession. She is an Arts and Textiles teacher at Alperton Community School in northwest London. In her view, the EPQ stimulus developed through Make Art Not War affords a valuable opportunity to counterbalance dominant modes of teaching which currently favour knowledge transmission over skills development and personal expression.

The EPQ is a reminder not to become complacent in education and it’s also a call to action. It reminds us that if we allow them to dominant modes assessment begin to heavily influence teaching in any pressured education system. This can sometimes stifle even those spaces originally designed to allow creative expression to flourish. There are certainly amazing examples of EPQs that are not essay based - and they are hugely inspiring. Andria Zafirakou’s own work with students using textiles and art is evidence of the transformational power of creative learning and it grabbed the world’s attention. The EPQ is one way of sustaining creative forms of teaching and learning, even in challenging times.


Blackburn College - March 2019
Over the last year, I have had the pleasure of being invited to attend many conferences around the world and to speak at different events and to audiences with regards to my experiences as teacher and an ambassador of the arts and creativity in education. I am a firm advocate of supporting and promoting the importance of the creative subjects in our education system as I have first-hand experience of the transformational power they offer our young people.

I jumped at the chance to contribute to the launch event of the new EPQ module Make Art Not War with an audience comprising of sixth-form leaders, I jumped at the chance to be given the opportunity to listen, to collaborate and share ideas with fellow educators from all over the country. After all, they are “my kind of people,” colleagues who understand the challenges that exist in our schools today and what realities our students face. I was also very excited and was looking forward to bringing back ideas and examples of great practice to use in my own school especially as the best learning happens when teachers get together to share.

When I then found out that one of the developers of the programme was my superhero, artist Bob and Roberta Smith who provided the thought provoking question “What does peace mean to you?” and that the classroom resources and event facilitation was delivered by none other than the ultimate guru of creativity - Bill Lucas, I had no doubt that the quality of this EPQ resource was going to be stellar and that it would have the potential to be transformational for our students by providing them with an outlet that they could use productively. I was not disappointed. I left the magnificent Imperial War Museum empowered, energised and already getting into my “teacher mode” of planning and thinking about what ways my students can personalise the theme and then fly.

We all know that our young people have opinions that they want to express, and this can lead to work they wish to exhibit. They want their independent voices to be heard and they need an outlet to be able to achieve this. By enabling them to undertake their journeys through the process of creative practice is life transforming, inclusive and very powerful. I believe that the Make Art not War EPQ is extremely significant now more than ever and could fill a gap in schools and educational institutions.

More importantly, I also feel that our students will be grateful to have this alternative theme and opportunity to explore and to demonstrate their creative identities. I predict that learning opportunities such as the Make Art Not War EPQ will capture student’s imaginations and minds and will enable them to explore, express, campaign, demonstrate, voice and showcase topics, issues and themes that are relevant in their lives in unique ways. I can’t wait to see what they will come up with.

If we want to continue to support our students to become independent, confident, good communicators, resilient, successful and potential global changemakers, I have no doubt that by embedding opportunities to teach and learn creatively exemplified by a Make Art not War EPQ will help them to gain the tools and skills to get there in a unique way.

Andria Zafirakou, Global Teacher of the Year 2018
Established in 2010, City of Glasgow College is an FE and HE college with strong maritime connections, formerly constituted as Glasgow College of Nautical Studies.

Engaging with the Make Art Not War project made a lot of sense for the college, as Tom Elliott, City of Glasgow College Curriculum Head Digital Media explains:

“City of Glasgow College is well-known for the wealth of creative talent and artistic ability among our students and staff. This important project enables our students to showcase the very best of their work as well as learning some important lessons from history and from the artists they will work with and alongside.”

Over 140 students have participated in the project. Each ‘class’ worked over two three-hour sessions with an artist. The sessions have comprised planning, discussion and reflection around the provocation question, some original work during class time and additional work within student’s non-contact time.

Visual Artist Martyn McKenzie worked alongside students from a wide range of disciplines. His approach was to use the question What Does Peace Mean to You? as a way of conceiving original ideas differently, challenging students to think deeply and to pursue curiosities and unusual lines of enquiry. Creative thinking was something Martyn was keen to enable among the students, and he found the provocation a positive way in.

“There was something very important about the question that enabled me to encourage students to explore elements that are key to my own practice. I’m very interested in helping students to take a more meditative approach to learning because much of my inspiration is rooted in artists who encourage contemplative engagement. Many of them had never worked in abstract ways at all before, so it really extended their practice and was thought-provoking.”

This is in keeping with some of the facets of creative thinking set out by Lucas and Spencer (2017) which surface throughout all participating colleges ways of working on the Make Art Not War project. These are a set of creative habits which generate forms of teaching and learning that are: Inquisitive, Persistent, Collaborative, Disciplined and Imaginative. When cultivating creative thinking the learning contexts are crucial and Martyn’s approach to the sessions he led were modelling many of the important attributes of creative learning spaces. He was opening up opportunities for play and exploration. He made students feel at ease with regard to making mistakes and taking risks with new ideas. He encouraged students to consider unlikely and alternative spaces for creative work, to find inspiration out of the classroom and in their own time. He facilitated critical thinking and the refining of ideas. Finally, he respected the creative ideas of the students and strongly encouraged them to value and pursue their own creative ideas.

With regard to the impacts and effects of this work, many elements of the project are still in play at the time of writing and students have indicated that they are finding the project a positive learning experience.

“I really enjoyed this project! It’s making me think creatively more and think more outside the box. I could describe what I created but I like how it could mean many different things to different people and it’s such a personal thing.”

“The project was an interesting and exciting adventure to me. I’ve created some abstract pieces inspired by the First World War and Mark is a great artist to work alongside.”.

As much as we must welcome the latest announcements of new Government money for the arts and education it is disheartening that we have drifted into a world where ongoing funding for all schools and colleges has been replaced by initiatives, projects and schemes which make great announcements but do little to deal with real issues of entitlement and the unfairness of who gets good arts education. Look behind the figures of last year’s £96 million for talented students and you can see that £90 million is for continuing the Music and Dance and DaDa schemes that support talented students to study at institutions like the Royal Ballet School and Chetham’s School of Music. Not exactly ground-breaking news since we have been struggling to keep this funding alive since discretionary funding from Local Authorities was cut in the late 1990s.

It shouldn’t be news that young people can study music, dance and musical theatre in specialist vocational schools. It should be normal. The press release lists a number of other deserving beneficiaries of the funding but together they take only crumbs. We can also look at funding for Music Hubs, with the announcement of £300 million – using the old trick of conflating 4 years’ worth of funding to make the investment seem greater - and wonder whether this gets us back to a time when Local Authority music services provided ongoing in-school and weekend music education for all schools with state schools often enjoying the same opportunities that today’s independent schools take for granted.

Words like ‘new’ and ‘pilot’ also grate. Music announcements come with promises to bring experts together to create a new music curriculum. We had that with the original National Curriculum - possibly the finest example of a music curriculum in the world at the time. The problem is now not curriculum content but that there is no longer the teacher workforce to deliver one or any sign that schools, now struggling to balance their budgets, could afford to invest in new arts staff. All this does is to outsource the music education that used to be part of parcel of schools’ thinking to the Hubs and to the occasional wonderful projects funded by Arts Council England and grant-making trusts. In the 1990s and 2000s we understood that arts funded projects could support, enhance and inspire by bringing artists into schools and communities. They couldn’t provide these things on their own without a bedrock of curriculum work in schools. Parents today need to nose out those schools who still value the arts. They can’t assume it’s the norm.

It is refreshing, therefore, to be involved with the 14-18 NOW Make Art Not War programme, where there is a memory of what works and a desire to work with educators over the long term to model how artists, arts organisations and schools can make the arts accessible and relevant to young people. Over the last 5 years the Programme has worked with partners across arts and heritage, commissioning new works inspired by the period 1914-18 and this latest iteration is a legacy programme for Further Education colleges and sixth forms which goes with the grain of what’s happening in their examination courses. Meticulous work has gone into developing publicly available learning resources for the long term with an eye on the five creative habits (imagination, collaboration, inquisitiveness, discipline and persistence) developed by Professor Bill Lucas. Using conferences and sharing platforms teachers and tutors are able to build on this year’s programme to embed the creative habits into their curricula. Importantly Bill Lucas is advising the Organisation of Economic Cooperative Development (OECD) on the introducing of PISA testing of creative thinking for the world’s 15 year-olds from 2021. I am wondering how the UK is going to fare with this.

It has been a sad feature of my career to see the arts sidelined in schools at the very time when our society needs creative minds to respond to today’s challenges. How could we have recognised in the 1970s that we need to nurture young people’s creativity, ingenuity and inventiveness, but in the 2010s have fallen back to a knowledge-based curriculum model? We have benefited hugely as a country from the art schools, conservatoires and drama schools of the last century creating together the creative industries as we know them today – arguably one of the UK’s greatest success stories and with its greatest stars coming from all walks of life. Tutors in colleges working with 14-18 NOW say they value the benefits of working on a live brief with their students plus the opportunity to be part of something bigger working with students
across the country but importantly with artists who challenge their students’ thinking and embody problem-solving and creativity. Only by working with every educational institution in the country and ensuring that every young person gets their chance to develop their creative skills will we harness the country’s talent to deal with future challenges.

Pauline Tambling, CBE
New College Swindon is a further and higher education institution, founded in 1983. It is currently one of the largest institutions of its type in the country, with around 3,300 16–18-year olds and 2,500 over-19s enrolled.

The attraction of Make Art Now War was summarised by project co-ordinator Karen Pau:

“This is a fantastic project and opportunity for our students. They are fully involved in an amazing arts experience and producing pieces that connect back to the First World War.

The college took an interesting approach by selecting a specialist curator to act as an artist mentor to the students. Katie Ackrill, Visual Arts Coordinator for two Wiltshire-based arts centres, explains the perspective she was able to bring to the project.

“The best advice I can give is to start with something you’re passionate about or enjoy; whether it’s a story or narrative, an artwork or an object, or a burning social or political issue. Whatever it is, it needs to spark the inquiring part of your mind to ask questions and delve further. Research and experimentation is important to any practice, so find something you can really sink your teeth into, go for it and make it your own!”

Katie’s own professional sense of curating ideas and finding connections has opened up some highly personalised learning pathways for students. For example, Lily Soellner is currently studying at New College, doing AS Levels in Fine Art, Textiles and Psychology. She focused on a textiles project for Make Art Not War, and her research revolved around her German great-grandfather’s life experiences during WW2 as part of the Textiles AS under the theme ‘conflict’. Lily’s great-grandfather Valentine Söllner, was a Lutheran vicar, so did not fight. However, he did preach controversial sermons during the Nazi period and Lily recounts that he remembered the Gestapo attending and recording his services. Lily contacted two centres in Nuremberg searching for background documents, and focused on images by asking her German relatives to send any photos of her great-grandfather that she has incorporated into textiles pieces. She also accessed his old bible to use its text and is writing up experiences from her relative’s point of view. Lily explains:

“I was inspired by my teachers who suggested researching family history concerning the Great Wars. I was also inspired by similar projects I’d seen where students had discovered more about their heritage and created personal, emotive pieces. I wanted to see what I could dig up in my family’s past and ultimately, I was excited to create a project and final outcome that I will be proud to show to my grandfather, depicting his own father’s courage.”

Working with Katie and reflecting on the work of other artists that may influence and inspire approaches to the Make Art not War theme Lily made some strong connections:

“I looked at Rosie James’s work as she uses free-motion embroidery (essentially drawing with thread) which is a technique I really enjoy the process and outcome of, as it gives an illustrative and free tone. Another free-motion artist I have looked at is Gillian Bates, especially her more architectural work to inspire my church images. I am also taking inspiration from Natasha Kerr who creates hangings and quilts to portray family histories and uses photographs in her personal pieces. I plan on making a quilt as my final piece and I have been using old photos in my samples already, so will explore Kerr’s use or colour and her layering techniques.”

The notion of possibility thinking and making connections requires students to hold multiple ideas simultaneously and combine them in new ways to create original responses or products. It also requires sophisticated approaches to planning, so that as possibilities are explored, new ideas and pathways for further exploration are organised and categorised in ways that capture their distinctiveness without impeding or slowing down the pursuit of other likely connections. When Katie described the work of students it was clear that these skills were being developed.

“My aim is to treat the students as artists, just as I would if I was curating an exhibition or event in a gallery setting. I see my role as ensuring they get greater access to outside information, the sorts of facts and artefacts they wouldn’t normally come across and to let them explore the possibilities of what the varied art world is like beyond college. Because those were the questions I was asking when I was at college, too.”
New College Swindon has integrated the project in a variety of learning contexts. Some students have a ‘conflict’ themed exam question to focus on. Katie has been able to offer Make Art Not War related insights and input to that process, working with Contextual Studies, Textiles and Graphic Design. Foundation Art and Design students explored the concept and multiple meanings of peace, others focused on First World War propaganda. Graphic Design students are engaging with the project from a more political and social point of view, not so much focused on the centenary, but taking things in a more contemporary direction. The Contextual Studies students have taken the peace concept into a wide array of different domains related to identity formation and relationships to wider society, including LGBT rights, concepts of beauty in mainstream media exploring a wide range of connecting themes which flow directly from the original provocation.

The majority of student responses show how the open-ended and exploratory approach has paid dividends. One Graphic Design student offered this perceptive insight:

“Peace means to me spreading love to one another, caring and no violence, we can all be together as one and not have any conflict between each other. My project was on conflict and peace. Instead of using war and weapons my idea was to turn the concept around and I added flowers to the war theme. I created a clothing brand called ‘Anti’ clothing to do with Anti-war… badges and logos. I wanted to embroider this logo on to the badges I have created and this is the first time I have done this kind of thing. I want to produce the products and create the design, try the brand and see if it has potential. I have really liked the embroidery and learning more about anti-war and have a better message and show that we can improve as humans.”
Below are just three of so many examples it has been my privilege over the years to witness of high-quality creative experience impacting on the lives of young people, their parents/carers and communities.

60 Haringey families (a borough with 192 languages spoken in its schools), children alongside parents, carers, grandparents and siblings. Each working with a ceramicist producing a clay sculpture of itself. Colourful, well-crafted, amusing, sad – each a compelling account of the family identity, culture and drama. Each sculpture subsequently on display at the National Portrait Gallery exhibition “Family Faces” with a short reflective commentary from the family on the experience of the creative process.

“Where did your ideas come from? From my dreams.”

“I feel proud. I realise I have skills I didn’t know I had.”

“I’m really proud of my sculpture. In future I’ll know how to do it even better.”

“My favourite bit was working with the clay, feeling the clay with my hands and seeing the sculpture come out of it.”

25 Nottinghamshire children with special educational needs, many of them severe. The cast of an Edinburgh Festival Fringe production of “Canterbury Tales” playing daily for a week to full houses. The performers taken to new limits. Their teachers and carers setting new levels of expectation for their pupils – expectations fully met, in fact exceeded. The audiences deeply moved and, more importantly, changed in their understanding of, and respect for, children with special education needs.

And public recognition for the intrinsic quality of this highly successful show in the shape of a much-coveted Scotsman Fringe First award. In the words of The Scotsman:

“The joy on the face of a Down’s Syndrome girl receiving an award at the Fringe Club yesterday…sharing the limelight with one of Poland’s greatest actresses and other gifted playwrights, directors, and performers from the UK and overseas. Forming a cross section of the Fringe, their enterprise and originality were being recognized by the Presentation of Fringe First awards from the Scotsman.”

500 pupils from Nottingham schools in the Nottingham Albert Hall taking part on “The Great Orchestra Experiment” – an extravaganza of instrumental and choral engagement for pupils across the city. Apart from the quality of the music, the scale of the event and the joy of the occasion, the most striking feature is the visible diversity of the pupils involved. Based on whole class ensemble teaching as part of a progression structure of area and city ensembles, this event is a true representation of the city’s population. 44.9% of the City population is from a BME background – the engagement of pupils with the Nottingham Music Education Hub is 45.9%. 21% of the population has a special educational need – the engagement of pupils with the Nottingham Music Education Hub is 20%.

And now 14-18 NOW’s Make Art Not War – a nationwide project, evidencing a powerful reminder of the transformative nature of creative experiences, the life affirming proximity to artists and the fundamental life-skills therein.

Concentration, dedication, expectation, ambition, problem solving, reflection, celebration, personal confidence, cultural identity and respect. And in these three cases, young people who may not always have easy access to the powerful and positive experiences which so many take for granted are fully involved. It is easy to offer the joy and power of creativity to the advantaged. The challenge is to ensure that it is the entitlement of all. It can be done. It has been done. It must be done.

Paul Roberts, National Council Member, Arts Council England, Commissioner, Durham Commission for Creativity and Education
City of Wolverhampton College accommodates over 4,500 students and comprises three campuses across the city, also including specialist training academies in Telford and Worcester.

Jo Slater, Curriculum Manager, explained why the college wanted to engage with Make Art Not War. “Working on this project has allowed for wider participation across our Creative Arts departments around a common theme, changing the way in which learners work both independently and collaboratively. The nature of the project and the response required by learners has encouraged them to think more creatively and challenge views and opinions that they wouldn’t have been exposed to ordinarily. Hearing directly from artists about their own practice and being able to relate that to our own projects has certainly influenced the way we are working and will help with projects in the future.”

Make Art Not War has been interpreted differently across college departments. For example, performing arts students conceived a ‘vintage showcase’ which comprised musical numbers, media editing and dramatic scenes from 1918-1980 exploring what peace was. Dance students created a dance show which was heavily peace inspired. An exhibition took place at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery which showcased work from different college departments and a sensory dome was built by construction students to meet the needs of their peers in the music department who felt that peace was connected to the heightened use of senses in darkened quiet spaces. Humanities students have written fiction and non-fiction designed to be taken by users into the sensory dome, adding a written stimulus to the musical outputs. Gaming students have interpreted the brief through digital visual designs that were also part of public exhibitions.

It is clear that the college’s emphasis with this project has been on collaboration and exploring some of the affordances of creative learning by forging partnerships and alliances that generate new ideas and fresh perspectives. The artist mentor described what she saw as the college’s ambitions for Make Art Not War. “The college aims to get students and staff from different departments and disciplines working together. This project was perfect for that. It was all about getting students to engage in ways they wouldn’t normally, opening them up to styles of working with other creative people that prepare them for work a bit better. And for the lecturers, too, seeing different methods and approaches of teaching which might spark new ideas.”

In Wolverhampton the project was planned in ways that encouraged interconnections and new ideas. Kerry Rousell’s practice embodies many of the elements the college was looking to develop. For example, all sessions were designed in such a way that a premium was placed on students listening to one another as well as voicing their own ideas. It was a low-stakes learning environment in the sense that risk was encouraged, making it a safe space to offer new ideas. Alternative learning and exhibition spaces were incorporated into the project which increased opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas and there were a range of performative outcomes – musical, audio-visual, dance, drama – which built in interdependencies between students, ensuring they were real stakeholders in one another’s learning.

“We've even got the construction students involved. They're building a sensory dome which will then be used by the music students to showcase their work on this project.”

There has also been a strong focus on sharing the product. And Kerry has directed and facilitated student’s rehearsals and edits by moving between groups and offering focused questions which further refine learning outputs prior to performance or exhibition. This reminds us of the importance of feedback for students in developing creative skills. Feedback questions can be structured to prompt analysis, improvements and connections. For example: ‘I like this because …’, ‘This would be even better if …’ or ‘Have you also seen/heard …’ City of Wolverhampton College has made strong use of feedback as part of this project.

In terms of impacts, Jo Slater feels there have been some tangible shifts.
“Make Art Not War has allowed us to have a more visible, public presence for our learning much earlier than would normally be the case. And I think that helps the college in terms of the wider community understanding us and thinking of ways to engage with us. But it also added an important and very real dimension to the student experience, moving their learning from theory to practice much more quickly.”

Student perspectives also signalled an appreciation of the project’s offer of skills development within an interesting conceptual framework.

“It made me think of what peace actually does mean to me and realise at this age I can’t really answer that question - it sparked creativity in a complicated way.”

“I’ve gained new skills with different media, as well as honed techniques as I created and tested skills with multiple pieces. Overall, the work I created was outside of my comfort zone but has helped me develop more knowledge across most other media.”
A large part of the world has already woken up to the essential role that the arts can play in awakening creativity in young people – and whilst it is undoubtedly true that creativity isn’t the preserve of the arts community, they do have a significant – I would say unique - role to play.

As the Cultural Learning Alliance continues to remind us, this is a matter of social justice. Do we value the arts and cultural opportunities in this country enough to make sure everyone has equitable access to them? The answer at the moment is no. As the CLA also points out, there is a relationship between young people participating in the arts and young people exercising their right to vote. Doing the former makes the latter more likely. I hope that the students responding to Make Art Not War and those young people who expressed their profound belief in the importance of arts subjects in Time to Listen make the difference they deserve to.

Jacqui O’Hanlon, Director of Education, Royal Shakespeare Company
Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC) is one of the largest colleges in the UK, delivering education and training across the capital region of Wales. The college comprises 30,000 learners.

Katherine Keeble Bickell, explains how Make Art Not War worked in the context of CAVC.

“We really wanted to be involved in this project because for us it seems to be all about inclusivity and diversity, and that’s a big part of our ethos. In our Barry campus the project launched in November. They integrated the project into a teaching module so students have their Make Art Not War work formally assessed as part of their qualification.”

Artist Mentor, Ethan Dodd has been attending CAVC’s Barry campus to work with Level 1, 2 and 3 Art and Design students.

“We’ve been working on ideas of what peace means to students, making flags and looking at symbolism and ideas around peace and protest. We’ve also been working with ceramics, textiles and crystallisation – which is my specialism.”

A key component of Ethan’s approach has been to create a context for learning where asking questions is encouraged and offering interpretations and analysis of art is commonplace. He was mindful to actively reinforce the idea that there are ‘no wrong answers’, helping students to find their voices and viewpoints about creative concepts and products in a safe environment.

The ability to ask questions and open out learning in ways that encourage experimentation is a key part of engendering a growth mind-set among learners. Carol Dweck’s work in this area sets out a number of principles underpinning successful techniques and it is notable that Ethan’s approach strongly conforms to these. He modelled elasticity of intelligence by going with suggestions and seeking out connections. He showed a willingness to make mistakes in order to learn. He pushed students to work at the edge of their comfort zones. He used language that substituted absolutes for provisionality, “We might… we could… we can’t yet ….” All of which keep learning spaces and concepts open for further changes and revisions rather than close them down.

Students responded positively to this approach, enjoying the mixture of introductions of the oeuvre of artists and their motivations and the personalised focus on what peace meant to them.

“I really liked working with Ethan. He made me understand about how art doesn’t have any rules. He really pushed my boundaries in art and helped me look at things in a different way.”

“This project made me really focus on more on my ability to listen and to think about what peace means to me. And this unit led me to create a human head out of clay. Something I have never done before. I really enjoyed this and I hope that I can get to do more projects with a similar concept.”

As a child, the received wisdom was that I wasn’t creative. My sister was the creative one, I was the academic one. You couldn’t be both – and it was ‘better’ anyway to be academic. Years later, it came to me that this was all nonsense. I am creative – I just wasn’t good at drawing!

Successful organisations need people who think laterally; who are imaginative, open minded, and think originally. Most organisations rely on team work, with collaborative people who reach across boundaries and see the other perspective. In a fast-changing world, organisations need individuals who are inquisitive, think critically, are adaptable and at ease with ambiguity. In short creativity, if you define it like this, is essential in the world of work.

At the start of my career I was a secondary school teacher. In my borough, a huge dollop of critical thought made some of us refuse to accept others’ low expectations of our African Caribbean, Asian and white working-class pupils; thinking imaginatively was key to engaging students and delivering excellent teaching & learning. Worried about the outcomes we were seeing for black pupils, I remember collaborating with a group of other young black teachers from across the borough to develop a new Saturday school for black primary age pupils – one that would combine academic rigour, imaginative teaching, and a strong focus on pupils’ self-identity and self-esteem. We were creative.

Towards the end of my executive career creativity continued to be essential - whether working as an Executive Director in the London Borough of Lewisham, a Senior Civil Servant, or Deputy Chief Executive at Arts Council England. The importance of being able to imagine another reality for the diverse local and/or national communities we were serving; the strategic thinking necessary to improve life chances; the comfort with ambiguity we needed in light of repeated re-structuring and reduced funding; the importance of people who could develop new ideas – test them, pilot them – working collaboratively across boundaries; the policy development at central government, that was essentially a creative endeavour of problem solving.

And throughout all of this endeavour, discipline and tenacity was required. Creative people are also disciplined people who usually have to plan, rehearse, revise, re-shape, re-draft and complete – to deadline. The 14-18 NOW Make Art Not War artist films demonstrate just this and how we can fuel young people with these same critical competencies.

Increasingly, employers tell us that new recruits lack these essential skills that are so important, particularly in a world characterised increasingly by portfolios rather than careers. This is a serious deficit that needs to be plugged by an education system that values creative subjects and creativity.

In a changing global and technological world, creativity is important not just for organisational success, but for peace and social cohesion. Critical thinking becomes an important tool for detecting fake news. The willingness to reach across boundaries and see the other perspective becomes important for refuting hatred. A comfort with ambiguity makes it less likely that we will resort to easy answers that scapegoat others.

We don’t all need to be able to draw – but creativity is a must.

**Althea Efunshile CBE, Non-Executive Director & Public Policy Professional**
Lewisham Southwark College has three campuses across south east London. The college has strong connections with HE and employers, enabling students to gain valuable work experience. Head of the College’s Department of Art and Design, Natalie Garner was the strategic lead for the project.

“I saw Make Art Not War as linking with identity formation and ways of feeling comfortable and confident about who you are. This is a big and very relevant theme for students. I felt that the peace theme would resonate with students, especially those in creative subjects, as they try to find their own voice and discover who they feel themselves to be. Having Yinka on board was a great advantage.”

Artist mentor, Yinka Danmole has a background in architecture but now also directs Studio Danmole, an interdisciplinary Art & Design studio, underpinned by developing work somewhere between Art, Urbanism & Technology. Working closely with Communities, Artists, Academics, and other professionals the studio aims to create socially critical work driven by a desire to enhance public life.

Work began with a series of project presentations by Yinka, setting out the concepts and themes. These were followed by mini workshops that were consultations, trying to get smaller groups of students to come up with ideas for what Make Art Not War might do at a larger scale. Eventually this was narrowed down to a single idea. It arose from a student whose response to ‘What Does Peace Mean to You?’ was to reflect that he was most peaceful when he was laughing, and things that made him laugh most were memes. This gave rise to the idea of a 24-hour meme channel. The idea was to invite students to create new memes from scratch using humour to address the concepts and challenges inherent in the provocation question.

“I was very interested in what this project was trying to achieve, especially as part of the wider group of 14-18 NOW projects, trying to curate a national conversation about war and peace and to understand our relationship to both those things. I’m particularly interested in reflecting on ‘why ask this question now’? I need to know what students think about this, and what they make of it. I wanted their concerns, their questions, their understanding and even their misunderstandings to be the start point for our work together. It had to be about them.”

Natalie went further and explained for one young student why the project had been particularly impactful.

“One young man who was a recent victim of violent crime joined the project and he has very much used the experience as a form of talking therapy, allowing his own response to recent events in his own life to be seen from different vantage points in the context of the project’s provocation question. It’s been very good for him. The concept has really enabled a lot of personal reflection.”

Enabling students to connect with issues, experts, and allies right in their own backyard is a good strategy to make project-based learning more accessible and immediate. Yinka certainly adapted his approach to take account of student’s personal goals and their background and context in the south London setting. He also modelled ways of thinking and planning for creative work in the future that was about making your own projects or jobs rather than relying on traditional routes into work.

“I’ve been very up front with the students about how I go about my work and it’s very much a case of ‘if you can’t find the work, make it’. I wanted the project to help them understand the importance of thinking about taking a self-initiated approach to creating work or creative products. It wasn’t too long ago I was at college myself, so I am trying to make this project relate to their interests but also reflect my mindset and approach to work in the real world.”

Students enjoyed working with Yinka and have responded well to his person-focused approach. His ideas around self-initiated working have appealed to students keen to see pathways for future work but who cannot always use established connections and industry contacts to secure break-in opportunities.

“This project taught me to trust my ideas and not be afraid to develop them.” (BTEC Art & Design Level 3)
North West Regional College (NWRC) has main campuses in Derry-Londonderry, Limavady and Strabane, and supports over 10,000 students each year. Learners attend from all parts of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, undertaking full-time or part-time study programmes in a range of vocational or non-vocational areas. Curriculum Manager for Art and Design, Gaenor Speer, explained why she felt Make Art Not War offered a valuable new opportunity to students.

“North West Regional College is coming from a very unique place with regards to this project. We were curious about the opportunity to get students to engage with the history of our own city through the question ‘What Does Peace Mean to You?’ It was also going to let us engage with an artist-in-residence opportunity and show that different mode of working ‘live’ for students and to inspire them to see ways that their creative studies can really lead to a career in the sector.”

NWRC set up the project within the curriculum working to the UAL Awarding Body so each student was individually set the provocation question within the context of their course studies. Their artist mentor added to that learning challenge by mixing students from different disciplines to create a group response.

Thinking of the benefits for learners working on this project with artist Sarah Smith, Gaenor felt that the mix of modes and media offered more effective way to interpret a brief and express a response.

“Working in this way they’ve had to work individually of course, but also in groups. And they’re able to respond to challenges in the moment more quickly because it is more process focused and conceptual rather than task oriented. You give a group of diverse learners a concept to work on creatively and you also give them freedom to approach that in ways that intuitively they feel are right to them.”

NWRC found a neat way to balance the personalised aspects of the provocation in this project with the more collaborative dimension suggested by the focus on creative skills development. And this is also in keeping with what we know about effective creative learning techniques. There are times when it makes sense to gestate ideas and to find inspiration on a personal level. It is also often sensible to take time to work solo when refining particular techniques or processes which need to be mastered manually or cognitively, perhaps improving skills in draughtsmanship or exploring the affordances of a piece of industry level software. Yet there are other times when to take ideas to fruition it makes sense to join with others. Sarah Smith, the artist mentor on the project explained how one student developed by taking different approaches to the same conceptual challenge while working individually rather than within a group.

“One thing I did notice was the project enabled students to be brave enough to experiment. Many students tend to foresee an outcome before you’ve begun any research or making. I tried to help the students understand that the richness in experimentation and exploration and the chances you take and odd things you might try end up adding to the final work. That journey made this project rich for the students.”

Managing learning in this was very much a conscious choice for Gaenor, Sarah and the lecturers at NWRC. This allowed students to connect their individual endeavours to a broader collective pursuit and explore the concepts of war and peace as young people within a Northern Irish context. With this in mind, the young people created a series of ‘peace boxes’ which were inscribed with quotes of their choosing that related to the concept. These boxes were put out to the community in a number of ways to understand the wider response. As part of that consultation process students interviewed their families, members of the public and local councillors. The initial boxes – which drew their inspiration from dispatches and messages ferried during armed conflict – specifically explored the Troubles, having the insignia of the 16th Ulster Division and the 36th Irish Division on each box. The huge variety of responses gleaned from this exercise formed the basis for reflections within the classroom, opening up debate around the nature of the differences between generations when considering peace.
Make Art Not War definitely gave the students at NWRC a sense that their views were listened to and valued. They were given new roles, created new curriculum opportunities and partnered with a range of co-learners in new ways to bring this large-scale project to life.

“I really liked it. I was able to explore new mediums. And I enjoyed working with a much bigger group of students and hearing a wider range of opinions and ideas.”
Gateshead College is an FE College for 16- to 18-year-olds, higher education, apprenticeships, part-time adult learning and training for employers. The college is keen to provide students with opportunities to experiment, be curious, make mistakes and self-reflect. Chris Toon, Deputy Principal of the college, had a clear sense of how Make Art Not War fitted into the college’s existing mission and ethos.

“This project has given us access to more and different artists than we usually encounter, but this way of working, bringing in external partners, is something that was already very important to us. Our mission is to give students what we call ‘employment edge’, those additional skills and nuanced understandings about how to work in teams, how to interpret client, customer or employer needs, how to transition into industries basically, and Make Art Not War certainly helped with that.”

One of the artist mentors working on the project, Michael Wylie, brought insights and modelled ways of working that were in line with Chris Toon’s ambitions around ‘employment edge’.

“They had time to experiment and create their own pieces of work. Many of the students were used to working digitally so it was nice to get them to produce work by hand and really encourage them to step out of their comfort-zone. Students were encouraged to produce their own response using the skills and techniques they had experimented with during the workshops. It was great to see the variety of outcomes that they produced using different mediums including, pencil, paint, photography and animation.”

Initial workshops around typography evolved later into work related to peace banners and placards in the protest tradition. The North-East of England of course has a proud history of worker protest and Michael showed the students banners and placards that trade unions had produced as inspiration for their own. Michael also introduced them to protest artwork from Paul Peter Piech and after two days of production they took a walk down to a very cold Gateshead Quayside to stage their own ‘protest’ with the college’s Photography students documenting the process.

Artist mentor Chris Folwell worked with students to explore notions of personal interpretations of peace and this initially took the form of sculptures and digital work designing idealised ‘safe’ spaces. This led to further sensory interpretations which were sound effects and sound recordings that represented peace for the students. These explorations were opened and gave students to chance to experiment and improvise. Recordings were translated into sound wave forms and in turn these were transformed into light trail photography. The photographs were then further interpreted into wire frame sculptures. Chris encouraged the students to keep evolving ideas and to experiment with the affordances of different media in what became a very rich, multi-layered project.

Students were very engaged by this approach.

“I enjoyed working with the artists. It pushed me out of my comfort zone when working with typography and sound waves. Although typography is not an area which I would have chosen to explore, I decided to use textiles which is my chosen specialism thereby giving the opportunity to make the project my own.”

“I thought this project was exciting and fresh. I was able to fully express what peace meant to me and by doing this, practice my skills further. During this project I created a banner and chose to use song lyrics as listening to music makes me feel at peace and feel relaxed. I chose John Lennon’s song Imagine because I thought it was a perfect fit to this project and also the lyrics have a very strong meaning to me.”

Heather Penten, Curriculum Leader at Gateshead College felt the openness of the project really offered students an alternative space to extend their skills and experiment in ways that she feels will give them an edge.

“We weren’t prescriptive at all with this project. It was really open for the students to take things in different directions. It was a real creative challenge for them with very few limits. Another positive was mixing up classes and year groups, which is always a good stimulus, to hear a wider range of student voices and see how larger groups take on learning challenges. We’d definitely like to do something like this again.”
Make Art Not War has provided a range of innovative opportunities for students to develop their creative capabilities. The project has emphasised the importance of real-world, creative learning which feels personally relevant to students; colleges embrace this form of learning and want to offer more of it to students in the future.

It is clear from this report that there is a demand for awarding bodies who can offer qualifications that provide a supportive context for creative teaching and learning. Schools and colleges work with a range of different providers and inventive, confident teachers will find ways to make space for creative development whatever the nature of the qualification rubrics, but many cite the UAL Awarding Body as offering the kind of open and expansive framework which went with rather than against the creative grain.

Colleges who got most out of this also had senior leader buy-in who championed Make Art Not War. Senior leaders who recognised and celebrated the link between the project and pre-existing college ambitions and vision helped raise the profile of the work and allowed it to gain traction across the college, involving greater numbers of students and whole college faculties.

Make Art Not War has supported partnership working, advocating the integration of artists and creative professionals into colleges and showcasing the benefits for students. An interesting element of informal professional development also emerged as an aspect of partnership working.

There are wider policy implications around inculcating creativity among students which are highlighted by Make Art Not War. Talking with college staff it quickly becomes clear that this form of teaching and learning succeeds largely in spite of rather than because of current education policy. If the pedagogies and outcomes associated with such work were valued more by policy makers, and the clear links to future demands of employers were better understood, projects such as this could help shift forms of learning and assessment into mainstream practice. Future shifts in global assessment, such as the critical thinking tests being introduced in 2021 by PISA, together with employer demand for creative skills, suggest national education policy is increasingly out of step with on the ground practice and international shifts in workforce and education reform and Make Art Not War modelled one way they could be brought into alignment.

These are challenging times in education but exciting times too. For more than a century we have studied and been tested and become qualified to the beat of the industrial revolution and through an education system that was designed to reflect the needs of that era. Things have changed in education since the time of the First World War – but modestly so, when we consider the incredible leaps in technology and the dramatically shifting demands of the workplace. However, we are beginning to realise that education is much more about having the right blend of skills, dispositions and capabilities than it is about memorising easy-to-test facts and knowledge.

Make Art Not War is an exciting example of the potential for teaching and learning in ways that develop such capabilities. Students who have engaged with the project have thrived thanks to the open-ended nature of the tasks, and they have also valued having artists working alongside them, bringing fresh perspectives to learning and co-creating curriculum content with lecturers.

14-18 NOW has spent the past five years inviting and inspiring reflection on the impact and legacy of the First World War. This final project has pointed to the future and asked: ‘what next?’ It took inspiration from Bob and Roberta Smith’s interest in Franz Cisek and his understanding of the deep difference between creating and knowing and how each stimulates a quite different form of learning. In a host of different ways, the schools and colleges who have participated in this project have implicitly connected with the principles and philosophy of Cisek. They too have made learning inventive, playful, open-ended, challenging. They have shown young people that whatever course they are studying and whatever pathway they choose next, the creative capabilities they have nurtured will stand them in good stead.

CONCLUSIONS
Make Art Not War, produced by ArtsMediaPeople and commissioned by 14-18 NOW, was devised with leading contemporary artist, Bob and Roberta Smith, leading academic Professor Bill Lucas, director of the Centre for Real World Learning at the University of Winchester and the former CEO of Creative & Cultural Skills, Pauline Tambling CBE.

Bob And Roberta Smith
Bob and Roberta Smith OBE RA, is a leading contemporary artist, writer, author, musician, and art education advocate. Known for this ‘slogan art’ he is also associate professor at Sir John Cass Department of Art. He considers art as a human right and has long believed in the place of creativity and art in education. He was lead artist for the 14-18 NOW commission in 2014, Lights Out and was the lead artist for Make Art Not War.

Centre for Real World Learning,
University of Winchester
Bill Lucas is Director of the Centre for Real-World Learning and Professor of Learning at the University of Winchester. In 2017 he was appointed to be the co-chair of the new PISA 2021 test of Creative Thinking which will be based on his acclaimed five-dimensional model for creativity. For Make Art Not War, as a writer and creativity advisor, working with Ellen Spencer, he edited and generated a suite of curriculum materials to impact creative approaches to learning for 16-18-year olds.

Creative & Cultural Skills
Creative & Cultural Skills is an independent charity and licensed Sector Skills Council that champions non-traditional progression routes into and through the workforce. They deliver activities for young people though the National Skills Academy network and promote careers advice, guidance and apprenticeships.

The project was delighted to collaborate with the UAL Awarding Body and the Sixth Form Colleges Association.

This report was written by Dr David Parker, a writer and researcher who specialises in understanding programmes and interventions which mobilise the arts and creative practice to transform learning.

14-18 NOW
14-18 NOW was the UK’s arts programme for the First World War centenary. Working with arts and heritage partners all across the UK, it commissioned new artworks from 420 contemporary artists, musicians, film makers, designers and performers, inspired by the period 1914-18. An incredible 35 million people engaged with the programme of extraordinary arts experiences between 2014 and 2018.

14-18 NOW commissioned 125 projects in 220 locations across the UK, touching millions of people emotionally and engaging 8 million young people with the First World War.

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