

PROSPECTUS

(Sort of)

2023

THE

IRREGULAR

ART

SCHOOL





Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



Funded by Arts & Humanities Research Council

University of Leeds & University of York

In collaboration with Pyramid, Assembly House & Leeds City Council

With support from Research England & Michael Beverly Innovation Fellowship

Publication design by Jade French

Logo, identity & website design by Thom Isom

Films by Thinking Film

'Standie' photography by Alfie Fox

Exhibition photography by Víctor de Jesus

EXPLORERS event photography courtesy of Project Art Works

Handwritten font by Liam Hirst

WE'RE
MEANT
TO BE
UNFINISHED
THINGS

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1 Welcome



IRREGULAR
ART
SCHOOL.

THE 100% UNOFFICIAL
OPEN DAY
NOW RECRUITING!

Introducing Irregular Art Schools

Hello and welcome! We're the Irregular Art Schools team, a group of artists, students, social care professionals and academics with and without learning disabilities who have worked together to do research on inclusive artist development in Leeds.



The project came about by Leeds-based inclusive arts studio Pyramid discussing how being recognised and supported as 'professional' can be hard for learning disabled artists. This was captured on a 'Barriers Map' – a large hand-drawn diagram showing the complexity of the various systems and opportunities that Pyramid artists face and often struggle to access.

Then with researchers Jade French (University of Leeds) and Katie Graham (University of York), using the Barriers Map we identified the typical routes to artist development like higher education, getting involved with artist-led communities, and social care, which needed further attention. This became the starting point for our research.

With support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Irregular Art Schools was launched to explore these issues in February 2021. Our aim was to learn how to best support learning disabled artists in Leeds, but also to also ask bigger questions around inclusive learning and development in the arts.

We've experimented with new artistic methods and partnerships, as well as working to bridge the gap across art and social care. This has all been achieved through new collaborations between various people and organisations including Pyramid, Principal Investigator Dr Jade French, Co-Investigator Dr Katie Graham, artist-led gallery and studios Assembly House, and Leeds City Council's Adult Social Care team.

Why is it called Irregular Art Schools? Great question! We were inspired by Professor Roger Slee's book 'The Irregular School'. In it he discusses how thinking in terms of the 'regular' or the 'special' school obstructs progress towards inclusive education. Rather than separating learning and development into 'inclusive' or 'mainstream', 'regular' or 'special', we instead want to experiment with making arts development opportunities 'irregular'.

In our Irregular Art School, people with different life experiences, ways of knowing and ways of being can progress and learn together side by side. Rather than a physical place, for us Irregular Art Schools has become more of a method, a way of thinking and collaborating.

At a glance

34

**ACTION
RESEARCH
WORKSHOPS**

**2 ART
EXHIBITIONS**

31

ARTISTS

4 *calls to
action*

2 SUMMER SCHOOLS

7 FILMS

13 **NEW ARTWORKS**

countless biscuits and chats

2 BIG MAPS + 4 LONG LISTS

5 *partner organisations*

1 WEBSITE

TAKE YOUR
time this is

LIFE
WORK



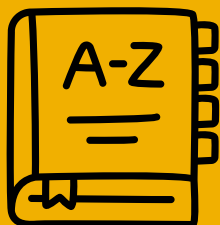
Chair and painting series by Liam Hirst 2023

About the prospectus

THIS PUBLICATION IS ONE OF OUR RESEARCH OUTPUTS. IT SHARES WITH YOU WHAT WE DID DURING THE PROJECT, OUR IDEAS, AND WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT.

You've probably noticed this is not a typical research report. Instead, we have presented our work as a 'spoof prospectus' for our imagined Irregular Art School. We hope this approach can help us to:

- Hold together the real and the speculative
- Share individual stories, ambitions, and ideas alongside the collective
- Be in the tension between what the world is and what it could be.
- Be joyful (especially when exploring hard things)



SPOOF: A parody or funny imitation of something that copies its original style.

PROSPECTUS: A document made by a college, school, or university, which gives details about it for potential students.

One question?
many
Answers

there is no failure in
ART

**POSITIVE
DEVELOPMENT**

SCHOOL IS:
60% social, emotional
and physical
education
40% ASU
Academic learning, memory
and thinking
WE DEMAND A
MORE INDIVIDUALISTIC
APPROACH!

I Want a
Cussion with W
Want and need.
I Want a ra

TO MAKE
V CHOICE
HOW I Am

I'm a **PERSON**
Not a **FUNDING
OPPORTUNITY**

Empowered
by my choices!
We need choice!

I WONT
NO MORE
ASSEMENT'S

**INTERGRATION
EQUALITY**

**ASSESSMENT
MAKE ME
GOOD
BAD!**

**TAKE
RISK'S IN
EDUCATIONAL**

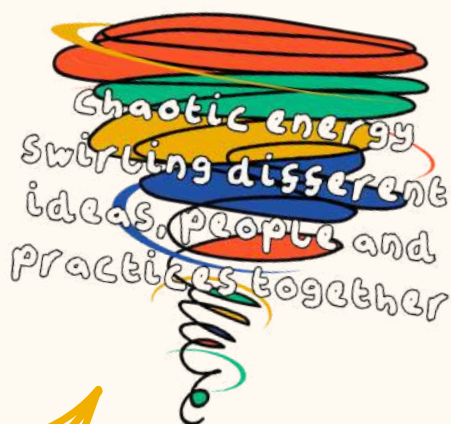
Not Another Bloody Assessment workshop signs 2022

Our methods

(The Irregular Art School Way)

Though Irregular Art Schools began life as a research project, it has come to describe a particular way of being, thinking, and knowing together which has allowed us to reimagine the structures around us. Along with inclusive and action research methods, inclusive arts practice is at the heart of how we work and think together. Throughout the project we have created artworks to reveal and express insights. We share these throughout.

Artists Victor, Newt, and Pete described the Irregular Art School method as a “technicolour tornado”. A chaotic (but good!) creativity which swirls different ideas, people and practices together often demolishing what’s in its pathway to create something new.



CLASS OF 2022/23

ALsie Fox
PYRAMID

Ria
PYRAMID

Liam Hirst
PYRAMID

Victor
PYRAMID

Alice
Clayden
PYRAMID

James
Hill
PYRAMID

Jade French
Uni. of Leeds

Katie Graham
Uni of York

Alice
Bursord
PYRAMID

Debbie
PYRAMID

Leigh
Bowser
PYRAMID

Tim Curtis
PYRAMID

Danny
Kilbride
Thinking Film

PETE
PYRAMID

Louis
PYRAMID

Alice
Boulton
Breeze
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Flo Simms
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Thom Isom
Designer

Lily
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Kev
Devonport
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Amelia
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Nwt
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Michael
Godsall
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Anne-marie
Atkinson
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Beth
ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

Molly
Newham
Uni. of Leeds

Shanelle
Bateman
Uni. of Leeds

Nicole
Guilliam
Uni. of Leeds

Tianna
McIntosh
Uni. of Leeds

Alison Wong
Uni. of Leeds

Joanne
Crawford
Uni. of Leeds

Helen
Graham
Uni. of
Leeds

Elsbeth
Mitchell
Uni. of Leeds

Arran Rees
Uni. of Leeds

Rebecca Star
Uni. of Leeds

Liz Stainforth
Uni. of Leeds

Jo Williams
Uni. of Leeds

Jo McGonigal
Uni. of Leeds

Abigail
Harrison
Moore
Uni. of Leeds

Anna
Douglas
Uni. of Leeds

2 Learning



our curriculum

**EXPLORE OUR
CURRICULUM:
THE PEOPLE AND
PLACES WE WORKED
WITH AND THE
APPROACHES WE
TOOK TO EXPLORE
PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT.**

Assembly House



Assembly House is an artist-led community arts organisation, project space and artist studios located in a Victorian mill, alongside the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, in Armley, Leeds. Since 2013 they have been providing affordable studio spaces and career support for early career artists, as well as developing creative projects in and for their local community. They also develop skill sharing programmes and commission local artists.

Visit to Assembly House studios 2022



Between January and August 2022 we collaborated with Assembly House. Working with them was so much fun. We visited each other's studio spaces, explored different studio practices and ways of using a studio, and tested new approaches to peer support. We learnt how important it is for artists to work with one another and meet new people who can support and question how we work. We made lots of new friends and some artists have continued to work together after the research ended. The collaboration really helped to develop our ideas and inspire us to test a more flexible studio at Pyramid. However, one challenge with Assembly House is that it is not a very accessible place. It's an old building and some artists at Pyramid struggled to use it. Alfie went on to make a piece of work about it with Assembly House.

Creative Producer Alice Boulton-Breeze described how Irregular Art Schools was: "transformative for the way we think about our building, artists, and our future at Assembly House. Being in a heritage building, with all the access issues that presents, has often made us feel defeated, but working with Irregular Art Schools has shown us what is possible and what we can do, despite some of the immovable limitations of the building; access is so much more than just whether we have stairs or not. Additionally, it has highlighted the endemic and unseen bias away from learning disabled artists working in grassroots spaces. It's easy to not see this and this project has really revealed that this is ingrained in a lot of how these spaces operate."



Artwork by Ria & Kev 2022



Paintings by Liam Hirst. Suspended sculpture by Victor 2022



WE'RE MEANT TO BE UNFINISHED THINGS



Artwork by Alfie Fix 2023

Artists from both studios worked on new artworks during the collaboration. We decided that it's ok for artists to not always show 'finished things'. We also noticed how 'development' sometimes felt like we should be constantly progressing, but it's ok to feel 'unfinished' too. Our collaboration culminated in an exhibition of our emerging ideas and artworks called 'This is an Irregular Art School: Unfinished Things'. In the exhibition, audiences encountered different examples of how we had collaborated, supported, and been inspired by each other and our studio environments. For example, in response to the studio itself, Alfie produced an access report of Assembly House studios (frustratingly hidden away in a series of locked boxes) which later informed adjustments made to the physical space. Other artists like Ria and Victor showcased how the collaboration had been productive for their individual artistic development.

Pyramid's Irregular Summer School

In the summer of 2022, inspired by experiencing new studio approaches, we organised an intensive week of studio time at Pyramid which we called our Irregular Summer School. During this time, artists could come to the studio and work on their artworks and practice inspired by the research.

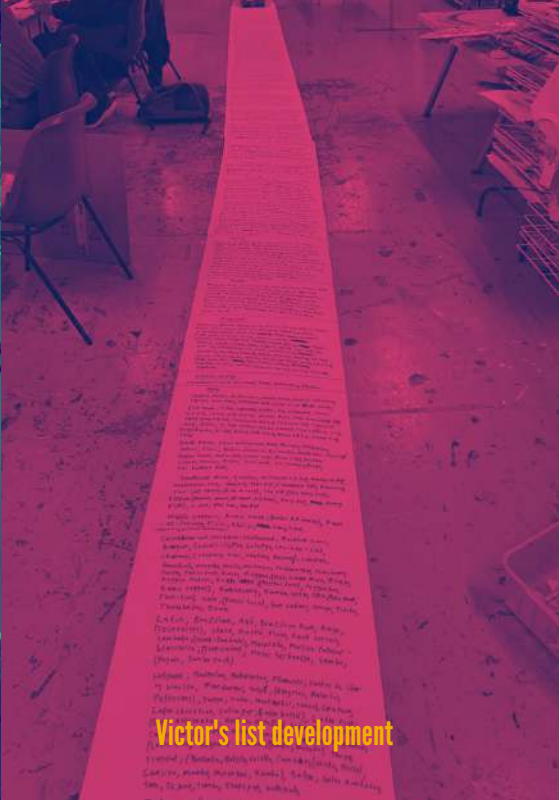
On reflection, the summer school was an opportunity for artists to spend dedicated time to prototype new artworks and lead on their personal development. We spent lots of time testing techniques and discussing ideas in progress. Many of the pieces created during this time went on to be further developed and later exhibited at the university.



Liam began his painting series during the summer school. With Jade he developed colour palettes and tested layouts.



Alfie was exploring access plans and redaction, later overlaid on photographs



Victor's list development



This was an early prototype for Ria's 'The Decider'



School of Fine Art, History of Art & Cultural Studies (FAHACS)


From its establishment in 1949–50, the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds has been known for radical and socially engaged practice and research in the arts. Leeds was the first English university to offer a Fine Art degree and the first Professor of Fine Art, Maurice de Saumarez, worked closely with Herbert Read and Quentin Bell to disrupt and develop art education. In the late 1980s, TJ Clarke, Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, now all recognised internationally for their foundational work on social and radical 'new' histories of art, were appointed to teach in the studios. Over the last 40 years, the School has sought to develop its world-wide reputation for art and cultural theory and practice that looks to break down hierarchies and traditions and question histories.

'WHAT' AND 'HOW' WORKSHOP

WE CREATED A MIND MAP IN THE STUDIO EXPLORING 'WHAT' WE WANTED TO LEARN ABOUT ARTIST DEVELOPMENT IN FAHACS AND 'HOW' WE MIGHT FIND THAT INFORMATION OUT. ONCE WE DID THE INITIAL SURFACING OF QUESTIONS, WE SORTED THEM INTO THEMES. THIS WAS DISPLAYED IN OUR STUDIO IN THE FINE ART BUILDING FOR PEOPLE TO SEE AND ADD TO.



Workshop at FAHACS 2022



In September 2022 we began our second collaboration working with staff and students in the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds. University art schools play a part in shaping the art canon and influence how many emerging artists develop their ideas of critical thinking, 'quality', and 'taste'. Does artistic quality and artist development mean different things in the contrasting contexts of the inclusive arts and higher education?

With staff and students we began our collaboration with a 'what' and 'how' workshop to surface what we wanted to know and how we might find out.

We worked with students to explore assessment, admissions, as well as developing art for an exhibition in the School. We were so grateful for the time students gave to the project and sharing their studio space for several months - though we often preferred meeting in the common room!



Our 'Degree' Show

**THE IRREGULAR
ART SCHOOL
EXHIBITION
PROJECT SPACE,
SCHOOL OF FINE
ART, HISTORY OF
ART & CULTURAL
STUDIES**

3rd - 24th February 2023



The Irregular Art School was an art exhibition in FAHACS which explored inclusive artist development and showcased the collaboration between Pyramid artists and undergraduate Fine Art students.

The exhibition felt like a culmination of learning from our research, acting like our version of a degree show. Curated by student Shanelle Bateman, it displayed new artworks that explored the restrictions of access in higher education, class, ideal learning environments, and inflexibility of social care support.

In the next pages, read or listen to the curator's introduction and stories from the artists about their work.



Curator's Intro

**Shanelle
Bateman**

Irregular Art School's
exhibition curator

**Nature is irregular.
Life is irregular.
People are irregular.**

It's time that higher education fits the people who use it and not the status quo. If higher education remains closed off to the many who cannot access it or do not feel welcome within it, then there will always be pools and pools of untapped creativity.

Working on this project has, first and foremost, been an opportunity to work with vibrant and talented artists and be exposed to the rainbow of out-of-the-box thinking that they bring to the table.



I have learned that making an art education more accessible for people with disabilities can actually help everyone, not just those who live with impairments.

Who doesn't want to feel more welcomed and understood? To feel that their individual needs and interests are respected and fulfilled? To feel that their potential has been supported and unlocked through the higher education process, instead of stifled and limited...?

Irregular Art Schools is a vision of what that could look like. All of us stand to lose out if we keep excluding those who don't easily fit into the boxes those who came before us created and this research and the accompanying exhibition is proof of that.

Listen to
Shanelle's
message



Scan ↑

About the artworks

Look at pictures and read or listen to stories about the artworks from the artists

Liam Hirst, Katie Graham, James Hill

These Barrier Maps were created in 2018 and 2023 by D1 – Liam Hirst and James Hill working with Katie Graham and in consultation with artists, strategic thinkers, and care professionals.



Scan the QR code and listen to the audio version of the text

The first map details the idealised life and development of an artist, highlighting many opportunities which are not available to artists with learning disabilities and autism. Since doing the map, Pyramid has designed and run several projects in partnership aimed at addressing these barriers, including the Irregular Art School.

It is a subjective map that hopefully captures some of the confusion that people feel when faced with a range of different agencies, and the lack of a 'safe space' to ask questions that might affect their benefits, support plans or tax status.





The map addresses barriers – but producing it was actually a really positive experience because we realised that, with every barrier, however large, there was something that we could do to improve the situation. We really hope that the Irregular Art School is taking a huge step towards addressing and disrupting a huge barrier!

Use this space to make
your own map!



Liam Hirst

My name is Liam Hirst. I am a 28 year old disabled artist. I work for equal opportunities for disabled artists in the arts. I am also the vice chair of the board of trustees for Pyramid, I help with fundraising and strategic planning for Pyramid and I am also a member of the Irregular Art School.

The art I make is 2D and 3D work about my own experiences of my own life. I mostly help with fundraising and strategic planning with Pyramid so I rarely make my own art and practice which I know I should do more of!

The art I am showing are quotes of things and statements of letting people with disabilities down. I am shining a light on them to hope and change and more equal opportunities for disabled people in the future.





The inspiration of my work came from my own struggles in life and the lack of support and development there is out there for disabled people like me to develop and make a career for themselves in the arts. I have enjoyed doing active research to overcome the challenges faced by people with a disability.

I have also enjoyed developing my own art practice. Collaborative engagement and practice will be great and both beneficial for the university and artists with a disability but also without a disability because it develops a co-working space and challenges what's best – what we perceive as best art.



Alfie's
story about
his artwork

Alfie Fox

My name is Alfie Fox. I am 23 and an artist. I do photography, screen printing, and a lot of different art. I focus a lot on access or how things are not accessible. It asks people to think about access and I did the photography for the standees. I do artwork on access because I have campaigned a lot for access. I was a scope for change ambassador, and I am on the youth Arts Council England board. [What have you enjoyed about the Irregular Art School?] Finding out how we can change things like access to education and working with a lot of different artists.



Ria

Being involved in the Irregular Art School project has got me thinking more about the kinds of choices I am given as a person living in what I, and many other people, refer to as 'The System'. When I personally talk about The System I am looking at it through the point of view of a care experienced young person who has a learning disability.

People can enter into the system in lots of different ways, usually from a situation that they have no control over, some are even born into it. During our time spent with artists at Assembly House I had lots of interesting chats with Kevin Devonport. He is an artist who makes work about his lived experiences of living in the prison system.



At first it seemed like a very different kind of system to what I have experienced but actually a lot of things were very similar... We both felt like The System makes us feel stuck, trapped and confused as there is no clear way out.

Inside The System we are not given clear choices and options about how we can change our lives for the better and when we are given them it doesn't always feel like people listen. It makes us feel out of control of control and frustrated. We want ownership over our own lives.



When you are in The System it can make your world like a game that you have to try and escape out of, but can never quite make it to the other side! For this exhibition I created an interactive art work.

Although The System tries to look like it's giving you choices and options for you to choose from and make about the future of your life, when it comes to it there's always 'A Decider' (represented by the dice in my art work) who actually makes the final decisions and holds the power.

This is often people higher up in The System who don't know us personally, they just read about what other people have written about us on a file. Often when we speak up about the unfairness of The System we are labelled as trouble makers and having bad behaviours by the deciders higher up.

They are trying to silence our voices! Using the printing studio at the Uni was a really important part of developing my own creative practice throughout the project. I have always wanted to explore screen printing but there aren't the facilities at Pyramid.

ASK ME
WHAT
I WANT

I NEED
STRAIGHT
ANSWERS

SOCIAL
CARE MEETINGS
WASTE TIME &
SUPPORT HOURS

I WANT
OWNERSHIP
OF OWN 'EHCP'
MONEY

PEOPLE SAY TAKE
POSITIVE RISKS
DONT LEE ME.
TAKE THEM

DEMAND
INDEPEDENCE



The Decider Game Instructions

STEP 1

Read through the prompts and choose a character that you feel is most important to the support you need in your life at the moment. You can only pick one, so make the right choice.

STEP 2

Flip a big coin to find the number that corresponds with your chosen character.

STEP 3

Take a vote on the number, make sure your family

STEP 4

Congratulations, you've made with this choice for life. Stay where you are and don't try to move any further.

The artists at Pyramid, having social care support is a vital part of their art career. Our research is exploring the connections between art and social care in London, and the artists have used their artwork to share their experiences.



Step 1: Read through the prints and choose a statement that you feel is most important to the support you need in your life at the moment. You can only pick one so make the right choice!

Step 2: Flip a big dice to find the number that corresponds with your chosen statement .

Step 3: Take a seat on this number, make sure you're comfy.

Step 4: Congratulations, you're stuck with this choice for the rest of your life. Stay where you are and don't try to move any further.

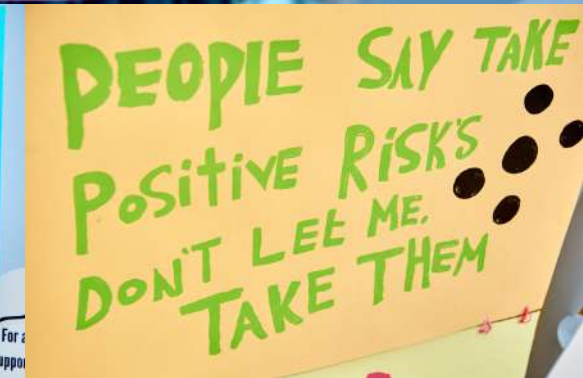
With the instructions I wanted to try and bring the viewer into my position during a social care plan meeting, where I feel like I can only make one demand about how I want to be treated in my life at a time as it can be seen as 'bad behaviour'. I also want people to understand how frustrating it is to feel like I don't have the final say over my life choices and how when I do make choices it's then often really hard to change something about your life further down the line as support plans are difficult to get updated and changed!



I NEED
STRAIGHT
ANSWERS



I WANT
OWNERSHIP
OF OWN 'EHCP'
MONEY



PEOPLE SAY TAKE
POSITIVE RISKS
DON'T LEE ME.
TAKE THEM



Victor

1128 musical genres with 748 musical instruments. I was exploring these ideas such as art movements and art genres, and I thought... expand on that to show how varied it could be.



Listen

But when I checked on Wikipedia it had many, but it doesn't cover everything. Funny enough there's country rap which is unusual for some people and then we got cow punk as well. There's so many electronic music it just blows my mind – how is that even possible?

I thought of the list because... so people can see the extent of it and acknowledge something that they did not know. So, I figure, I explore these things and hope for the best in what you do.

What's next? I think trying to give you some samples of what each music genres are like would be my next steps. So, I thought of 10 different music genres hardly anyone has heard of. I want people to not just explore music but create their own music within these boundaries but also explore beyond that.

[What have you enjoyed most about Irregular Art Schools?] That it would have an effect on society that gives change for people who need access and availability. I hope it helps them but also helps to empower them to succeed in their interests and find... what's the word...their wellbeing and their livelihood.

1. Aluminum Al , Carbon C , Hydrogen H , Oxygen O , Sulfur S , Phosphorus P , Chlorine Cl , Bromine Br , Iodine I , Fluorine F , Helium He , Neon Ne , Argon Ar , Krypton Kr , Xenon Xe , Radium Ra , Polonium Po , Francium Fr , Actinium Ac , Thorium Th , Uranium U , Plutonium Pu , Neptunium Np , Protactinium Pa , Antimony Sb , Strontium Sr , Barium Ba , Calcium Ca , Magnesium Mg , Sodium Na , Potassium K , Lithium Li , Beryllium Be , Boron B , Carbon C , Nitrogen N , Oxygen O , Fluorine F , Neon Ne , Sodium Na , Magnesium Mg , Aluminum Al , Silicon Si , Phosphorus P , Sulfur S , Chlorine Cl , Argon Ar , Potassium K , Calcium Ca , Scandium Sc , Titanium Ti , Vanadium V , Chromium Cr , Manganese Mn , Iron Fe , Cobalt Co , Nickel Ni , Copper Cu , Zinc Zn , Gallium Ga , Germanium Ge , Arsenic As , Selenium Se , Bromine Br , Krypton Kr , Rubidium Rb , Strontium Sr , Yttrium Y , Zirconium Zr , Niobium Nb , Molybdenum Mo , Technetium Tc , Ruthenium Ru , Rhodium Rh , Palladium Pd , Silver Ag , Cadmium Cd , Indium In , Sn, Antimony Sb , Tellurium Te , Iodine I , Xenon Xe , Ba, Lanthanum La , Cerium Ce , Praseodymium Pr , Neodymium Nd , Promethium Pm , Samarium Sm , Europium Eu , Gadolinium Gd , Terbium Tb , Dysprosium Dy , Ho, Erbium Er , Ytterbium Yb , Lutetium Lu , Hafnium Hf , Tantalum Ta , Tungsten W , Rhenium Rh , Osmium Os , Iridium Ir , Platinum Pt , Gold Au , Mercury Hg , Thallium Tl , Lead Pb , Bismuth Bi , Polonium Po , Astatine At , Radium Ra , Actinium Ac , Thorium Th , Uranium U , Neptunium Np , Plutonium Pu , Americium Am , Curium Cm , Berkelium Bk , Californium Cf , Einsteinium Es , Fermium Fm , Mendelevium Md , Nobelium Nb , Lanthanum La , Cerium Ce , Praseodymium Pr , Neodymium Nd , Promethium Pm , Samarium Sm , Europium Eu , Gadolinium Gd , Terbium Tb , Dysprosium Dy , Ho, Erbium Er , Ytterbium Yb , Lutetium Lu , Hafnium Hf , Tantalum Ta , Tungsten W , Rhenium Rh , Osmium Os , Iridium Ir , Platinum Pt , Gold Au , Mercury Hg , Thallium Tl , Lead Pb , Bismuth Bi , Polonium Po , Astatine At , Radium Ra , Actinium Ac , Thorium Th , Uranium U , Neptunium Np , Plutonium Pu , Americium Am , Curium Cm , Berkelium Bk , Californium Cf , Einsteinium Es , Fermium Fm , Mendelevium Md , Nobelium Nb .

[illegible]

Arizach's Punk: (crust Punk, D-beat), All Punk, Christian Punk
Deathrock, Digital Hardcore, Punk Punk (telling Punk,
Cob Punk, Cypriot Punk), Garage Punk, Grand confessions grand
Gorepunk, Noisegrand, Pismo grand? Hardcore Punk
(Cultural Thrash, Melodic Hardcore, Post-Hardcore Punk,
(emo Pop, Scenemo), Power Violence, Street Punk, Thrashcore,
Hustle Punk, Nazi Punk, D.C., Pop Punk (edgecore, Nazi Punk)
Popabilty, Punk Punk, Punk, Riot Punk, Skate Punk,
Skate Punk.

[illegible]

South Asian; Asian underground, Baul, Bhanga, Bhangra,
Doheri, Filmi, Indian classical; (Carnatic, Hindustani classical)
Indian jazz, Indian pop, Indian rock; (Raga rock), Kathak,
Lavani, Marathi, Ragini, Sufi rock, Sri lankan (Balla,
Sri lankan pop).

Southeast Asian; Gamelan, Malaysian hip hop, Malaysian Pop, Malaysian rock, Dangdut, Indo Pop, (Sundanese Pop), Kerencing, Thai: Luk thung, (Luk krung), Thai Pop, (Thai Song Pop), Filipino: Manila Sound, (Original Pilipino), Pinoy Pop, ~~Pinoy~~ Pinoy Rock, L-Pop, MNLN, Vn-Pop.

Middle eastern; Arabic music; (Arabic pop music), Fann
-at-Tanbura, Fijiri, khuliji, ~~Libra~~ Libra, Soud.

Caribbean and Caribbean-Influential; Basilekat Gana,
Bomayen, Cadence-lyPSO, CatPSO, cha-cha-ché,
Chachney, Clachney, Clachney Parang, compas,
Dancehall, Mambu, meke, merengue, Mizikabiz, Pichakere,
Poppo, Panto rock, Rasin, Reggae/Dub, Lovers Rock, Ragga,
Reggae fusion, Rappa, Rappa (Ragga rock), Reggaeton,
Roots reggae, Rocksteady, Rumba, salsa, Ska/Ska Punk,
Two-tone Soca, (Power Soca), Son Cubano, Songo, Tumba,
Tumbadora, Zouk.

Latin; Brazilian, Axé, Brazilian Rock, Brega,
(Tecnobrega), Choro, Forró, Frevo, Funk Carioca,
Lambada, Zouk-lambada), Maracatu, Música Popular -
brasileira; (tropicalist), Música Sertaneja, Samba -
(Pagode, Samba rock).

HISPANIC; Banzuelo, Ballezquez, Flamante, Cantos de im-
 y Vuelto, Fandango, Sole, (Alegrías, Bulerías,
 Peteneros), Tango, tango, (tango), tango, Gaiteros,
 Latin Christian, Latin pop, Latin rock, Latin jazz,
 (Latin Alternativa, rock en español), Latin rock,
 Cuban jazz, Bachata, Merengue, Mariachi, Reggaeton, Reggaeton,
 (Latin Latin regional Mexican), Bachata, Merengue,
 Tropical, (Bachata, Bolero, Cumbia, Chicha, Chicha, Pango,
 Gaiteros, merengue, merengue, Rumba), Salsa, Salsa Rumbas,
 Son, Tejano, timba, Trovato, Bolero.

Religious; (Buddhist music, Christian; Church music, Spirituals, Gregorian chant), Islamic music, hymns, Liturgical music)

Latin folk; Fado, Hymno, San Mexicano
Musica Criolla

Durkxon Synth, isolationism, Drone, Ill beat, Lowcase,
New-age; andem New-age, Neoclassical New-age, Space music,
(Reductionism; lowcase, onkyotei) (Bass music; Footwork,
Future bass; kawaii future bass), Jungle terror, (wave;
~~hardcore~~) hard ware), Break beat; Acid breaks,
(Baltimore club; Jersey club, Philly club), Big beat,
Break beat hardcore; 4-beat, Dark core, Hardcore breaks,
Broken beat, Florida Breaks, Nu Skool breaks,
Massive breaks, Psychedelic break beat, chill-out;
Tampo, (Psyblint; Psydub), Trip hop, Trip rock,
and Seiwed, Disco; Afro/cosmic music,
Disco; Hi-NRG; Eurobeat, eurodance, Italo dance),
Disco; space synth, space disco, Eurodisco, Nu-disco,
Disco; Boogie, city pop), Disco edits, Drum and Bass;
step, Drumfunk, Drumstep, hardstep, intelligent drum and
atmospheric drum and bass, Jazzstep, jump-up, Liquid funk,
Funk, Sam bass, Tech step, (Dub; Dub Poetry, Dubtronica)
Acoustic music; Acousmatic music; live electronics,
Acoustic improvisation, Musique concrète, Soundscape,
Post-Rock, (Alternative Dance, Madchester,
Dance-Punk, Krautrock, New Wave; cold wave,
Jack wave, Neue Deutsche Todestkunst),
Minimal wave, Neue Deutsche Welle,
Synth-pop; Dance-pop, Disco Polo),
Hyper Pop), indie electronica, Post-rock,
(Gritland, Electronicore),
Electronica, Jazztronica,
Electronica; Kosmische Musik
EDM; (Asian underground),
Music; (Afro beats; A Zent o),
Mahraganat, shagun et
Pop, Funk

BA Fine Art Students

by Jo McGonigal & Anna Douglas

The painting project "Do you already think you know what painting is?" was based on "10+Extend[1]" where first year Fine Art students and Irregular Art School participants were given 10 instructions for making 10 paintings over the Christmas period. This project aimed to allow students to encounter an experimental – non-assessed – instructional – introduction to painting to stretch their ideas of what painting is or might be.

Painting has been and remains to be the medium of choice for many art students, throughout an era that has seen significant changes in image production and circulation. Painting is no longer synonymous with a flat picture plane, hung vertically on the gallery wall, but has opened itself up to other languages, proving itself to be endlessly agile and with porous borders. Painting has become charged and revitalised with other life.

So, what is painting now? What kind of support does an art student require to develop a painting practice? How is the study of painting as a singular activity explored and progressed as a multi-layered and loaded discipline with its historically perceived position and constraints.



How do we maintain student enthusiasm for painting whilst challenging, developing and stimulating student ideas beyond the plethora of historical arguments in order to enhance understanding of paintings other possibilities?

We know the prior experience of art education for many of our new students has been through painting as part of their A-level Art curriculum. Those who have completed art foundation courses may have had introductions to other areas of Fine Art such as sculpture, print, photography or performance. The challenge for us is how to introduce the students who already have some understanding of painting to engage with its recent developments and question its existing pre-conceptions. We wished to 'complicate and pluralise' what painting is, to encourage students to produce a different account of painting and see what conversations emerge.

In this way, by introducing our first year students to painting's generative dimensions at the beginning of their studies, we wish to use this exhibition as a space to refine our approach in how we might teach painting. By presenting the project outside of curriculum, students are instilled with a practice-led approach away from the sometimes constraining examination conditions and modular organisations.

Here, understandings are realised through 'doing', developing sensuous material approaches that are both direct and open-ended, and that mitigates painting's deeply problematic history whilst developing insight into its expanding future. We hope they may stimulate some further discussion.

[1] 10+EXTENDTM: How Can We Teach Painting to Students Who Already Think They Know What Painting Is? Teaching Painting, Black Dog Publishing, London UK. Sarah Horton and Sarah Longworth West

Make these 10 paintings at any scale and in any way:

- a painting visibly including letters, words, numbers or instructions
- a painting made on a non-art surface (not paper, wood or canvas)
- a painting that is ephemeral
- a painting of an ending
- a painting made with more than one visual language or style
- a painting made of two or more separate components or surfaces
- a painting made with a glitch or interference
- a painting made using one or more non-art substances with at least one object attached to it.
- a painting made with pressure
- a painting made in which the frame or framing device plays an integral role and is non-rectangular



**Nicole
Guilliam**



Scan to listen

My name is Nicole and I am a fine art student at the University of Leeds who is currently on a work placement with Pyramid. I am an autistic student with a passion for improving opportunities for artists of different backgrounds and abilities.

During my time at Pyramid I worked with the Ribblehead group on a project that involved making dioramas. Working with Pyramid inspired my piece for the Irregular Art School project. Using my own experiences of working in art spaces made by (and for) neurotypicals; I wanted to create a space that would be more accessible and comfortable for me as an autistic student.

I have enjoyed working on the Irregular Art School project as it feels like a free and space space to talk about experiences and come up with ideas/solutions to real problems that disabled artists face. So lets make some noise!



nicole Guillian
A Comfortable Creation



Scan to listen
to NICOLE'S STORY

Molly Newham

my artwork in the exhibition is called 'university should be...' I was inspired by my time spent taking part in Irregular Art Schools, meeting the artists and our discussions on how art school could be different.

I did a map like illustration that has helped me understand my own feelings about uni, especially for me as I am the first in my family to go to university and have a working-class heritage.

The grids, arrows and roads are symbols that share how it feels navigating the environment. I think this illustration is also a bit like a board game, where no one quite knows the rules.

I was inspired by the work of Bob and Roberta Smith and their use of language and typography, and it was something we discussed through Irregular Art Schools meetings. I chose to use charcoal and graphite and draw some of my favourite buildings on campus.



Scan to listen



3 Student Life



Student Stories

EXPLORE STORIES FROM OUR STUDENTS

In this section of the prospectus, you can read individual stories and reflections from the core Irregular Art Schools team about their time on the project.



From questioning the idea of a 'masterpiece', exploring new avenues of creative practice, to reflecting on relationships and systems, we hope the stories show the variety of learning and experiences which occurred during the research.

We have also told our stories using film. Visit our website to watch!



victor's story

During my time in the Irregular Art School I have learnt how art is extremely subjective. It has helped me to reach for my artistic voice. I evaluated my work (the lists) by sharing them with people at the exhibition. I felt proud.

Art is not just about selling paintings, pleasing art critics & making masterpieces. I am still not sure exactly how you make a living out of art but I would like to try. Being a part of Irregular Art Schools has made me think differently about the things I do in my everyday life, like making the lists. I know now that anything can be art. Art is decided by the individual & can have multiple meanings.

There have been downs to the project too. Collaborating with other artists & making sure everyone is committed to an end goal can be frustrating. Gate keeping within art education, both present & past, can be a barrier to potential future artists. We have been finding the problems & working out how to solve them together. We haven't addressed all the problems yet but we can make art around them to try to connect those things together.

Irregular Art School is a research task force solving problems around inclusive art and leading by example. The Irregular Art School has expanded my curiosity to try new things, sensing and testing my work, removing boundaries.

What is next for me?

I am going to continue experimenting in different types of mediums – digital art, mixed media, sculpture, pottery etc. I am working alongside Pyramid Director James Hill to create the charity's new strategic plan. We are using the Feynman technique to write it. We want to make sure that it's easy for neurodivergent people, and everyone, to understand.



What is a masterpiece?

CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE ABOUT THE IRREGULAR ART SCHOOL

What is a masterpiece?

Is it subjective group thinking of any skill?

Is it for competent professionals only?

Is it mastery?

Is there a limit to mastering a skill?

Is it ambition & drive?

Is it critics & ratings?

Who decides what art is?

Does it have a purpose?

Is it extremely narrow minded, limiting, unhelpful and stressful?

Can it make you obsess over your work being perfect?

Is it a process, and a method?

Can it stop you from making anything at all?

Is it a waste of time obsessing over perfection?

Are you putting more material in the bin than you need to?

Does it mean you don't end up showing your art?

Is it bad for your mental health?

Should it meet a standard or subvert expectation?

Liam's story

Before the start of Irregular Art School, at Pyramid we had made a artis journey without Learning Disability compare to a person with a Learning Disability one of the biggest areas that we knotted the biggest difference was the access to higher education and access to the network that comes with the knowledge of a fine art degree, the cercal of peers that know how to write interpretasion panels and the jargen of the art world.

This is how the Irregular Art School come about through a year of monthly meetings and finding out more about are self and the overall question and the different sub areas of the overall project.

During the relationship with Assembly House I started to play with using words and painting. We went to the degree show for a look at how a large-scale exhibition is put to gather. During the trip I got inspired by work by the student and fancied giving it a go and know that I would be able to use my own experienses of life with a disability and autism.



Liam Hirst in Pyramid studios 2022

During the first week of the summer holidays I had three days at Pyramid where we just made art. This was the first time for a while that I had made art and having fun just playing with my ideas. In the August of 2022 we had our first sharing of work and learnings we had made during the relationship with Assembly House.

In the September of 2022 we moved to the School of Fine Art this is when we started to plan and do the second Barriers Map: this one looked at the barriers of disabled people having access to universities and getting paid as artists. As well, we had chats with students, student support, and Admissions to work out what the barriers are.



"I am not leaving until there's an accessible fine art degree!"

In the time I spent at the School of Fine Art I made more paintings and talked to students about my work, they really enjoyed it and was interested where I got my ideas from. We got a painting challenge and one of them were to paint using words. When we were at the School of Fine Art in one of the sessions I said as a joke that I was going to get a chair and chain myself to it and say that I am not leaving until there is an accessible art degree. For a long time I have known that the government have been letting people with a disability down by not investing in the Education system which includes higher education.

In February 2023 we did our final sharing of work and learning the students at the Fine Art school picked two pieces of my work to put up on the wall with their works. This made me feel happy and proud that the students saw me for my work and that my disability didn't matter.

Alice's story

At the start of the Irregular Art School project we identified the barriers that stop artists with learning disabilities from achieving their creative goals & developing their practice. It felt overwhelming, there are so many hidden systems within our society that make it difficult for artists, especially artists with learning disabilities, to have artistic freedom.

Then collectively we started to figure out ways of breaking down these barriers which felt great, but now coming to the end of this chapter of the Irregular Art School I think that actually breaking down barriers is just the beginning.

What happens on the other side of the barriers is just as, if not more, important than getting over them.

We need to make sure that there are ways of structuring person-centered sustainable flexible support systems for artists with learning disabilities to continue to develop their creative practice in whatever way they want. To create this type of tailored support in a meaningful way more money is needed to fund it, through social care & through private funding bodies.

As a society we need to put a higher value on people who have different life experiences and who bring their own unique perspective on the world. To encourage people to do this we need to make space & time for them to tell their stories in safe environments. If, like the artists we support at Pyramid, people choose to express their stories through the making of art then that art also needs to be valued as a non-traditional form of communication.

The Irregular Art School has made me realise that it's ok for things to be complex, muddy and a little bit messy, as long as we have an awareness of things that need to change, other people to have open, honest conversations with around solutions and an action plan (no matter how small) of how to change those things, we can continue to make the (art) world a more inclusive place for everyone.



P.s I would like to say a big thank you Jade for asking me to be involved with the project. Working for a small charity it can often be very hard (basically impossible actually) to carve out time to reflect on everything that we do here at Pyramid and to think about the BIG questions that drive us forward. This project has given me that time & I will be forever grateful.

Ria's Story

I collaborated with artist Kevin from Assembly House to learn how to do realist drawings. We worked together in his studio space. We started with graphs lines and measured things out. We focused on photographs of objects like Madlug bag, hand cuffs, keys and locks. Things to do with justice and care system. We talked a lot about our personal experiences of different systems and we found that they are similar.



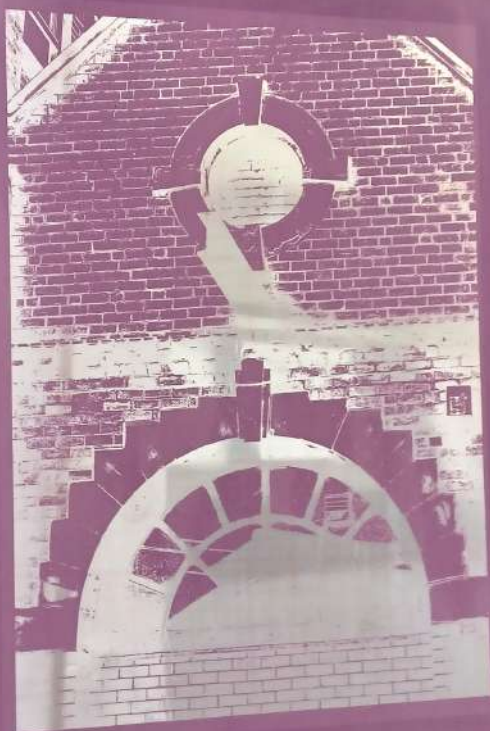
It was good to be able to talk to someone with a shared experience of the care & justice system. We agreed that the systems are a mess, collapsing into pieces of a society in the 21st century.

Working in Kevin's studio space made me realise how much I would like my own individual space at the Pyramid studio. I started to have more conversations and make plans with Pyramid Director James about how members could have more access to the Pyramid studio in the future. Things like having keys, having our own space so that we can leave our art work up and having someone to help at the studio on weekends so that we can go at different times if we want to.

We went to the Explorers event at Tate Liverpool. We talked to people about "Not Another Bloody Assessment" and we explained to other artist professionals how hard it was to go through lots of assessments when we have a disability and how it feels having care plans around us all the time. We asked 'How would "normal people" feel if they had to have assessment on them all the time?' I listened and talked to people about their answers and we all made placards together. I like being an advocate for people similar to me.

I had chance to do some screen printing at Leeds University when I was making my art for the Irregular Art School exhibition and I learnt how to use the different equipment in the printing studio. It was good having specialist equipment & 1:1 support from print tutor Ellen. We don't have all this equipment at Pyramid which means I can't always do everything I want to do. I have recently signed up as a member at the Leeds Print Workshop and I will be starting to go there to make new work with my Pyramid support artist soon.

I spent a lot of time writing up the story of my 'The Decider' art work for the Irregular Art School exhibition (you can find this in the degree show section) and I talked to people about my work at the Irregular Art School Open Days. This was hard but it made me more feel confident talking about my art, being an advocate and being an artist. I have just been given some funding by Leeds 2023 to make new work which focuses on the integration of disabled people into communities. This will be exhibited at Leeds Industrial Museum at Armley Mills in September 2023.



Artwork by Ria 2023

Jade's story

Irregular Art Schools has been a project of mantras, slogans, and catchphrases. Early in the research, partly as a way of documenting, partly a way of percolating, I began creating text-based posters of my thoughts and conversations. These were exhibited and distributed in both exhibitions. It was a joy to see them appear, as if by magic, lining corridors and offices across Leeds.

One mantra which has come to encapsulate my Irregular Art Schools experience, as well as being an action researcher and artist facilitator more broadly, is 'the map is not the territory'. Coined by Alfred Korzybski, he used it to convey the fact that people often confuse models of reality with reality itself.

What I like about action research and artist facilitation, is both require contextual in-the-moment doing and thinking. A willingness to abandon the map, the model, the plan, for something emerging and unforeseen, but often more productive and meaningful.



For me, 'the map is not the territory' gained ever more resonance as the project progressed. I observed and lived it in so many meetings and circular exchanges: the inevitable moment where the rubber of 'the system' or 'map' hits the road of people's real, everyday lives. This moment seemed to happen over and over. Whether it's an artist's inflexible care plan which never quite meshed with the messy reality of what it means to be an artist. Ideals of 'development' which all too often were narrow and linear. Or, trudging through murky processes set by universities, HMRC, and other bodies for answers, which equally never quite applied to the intricacy of human life.

And so, this is my learning as a student enrolled in the Irregular Art School. Prior to this experience, I often found myself framing the challenge as such: there are incredibly knotty systems which are too dense and complex for learning disabled people and their supporters to navigate. These need to be made accessible and more useable for change to happen. But Irregular Art Schools has enabled me to revisit this logic.

The lives of learning disabled people are anything but simple. *They live complexity.* I have therefore begun to wonder whether issues actually arise in the converse: when generic systems are enforced onto complex and nuanced ways of being. In other words, we need to not just focus on making systems and processes uncomplicated (though sometimes that would help!) but ensure that they allow for gloriously real, complex, and ever changing 'irregular' lives.

THE REVOLUTION
WILL BE IN
**EASY
READ**

BUT, ISN'T THE
**ART
CANON**
MADE UP ANYWAY?

TAKE YOUR
TIME,
THIS IS
LIFE WORK.

THIS IS AN
IRREGULAR
**ART
SCHOOL.**

WE'RE
MEANT TO BE
UNFINISHED
THINGS.

DO THINGS FOR
**TODAY
YOU,**
NOT FUTURE YOU.

James' story

I was so excited when we were first introduced to Jade, a long while ago now. Our first Barrier Map was still quite new at the time, and of all the barriers on it, access to higher education was probably the most significant and impactful. Going to University creates so many opportunities for people, not just in relation to technical and academic skills learnt, but around softer social things like having a social group to go to exhibitions with, or create exhibitions with, and having peer groups who will come to shows and can talk the critical language of art. It was also one of the barriers where we as Pyramid felt most on the periphery – only able to shout from the sidelines rather than make any real change.

Three years (it might be more!) down the line I feel like we the students of the Irregular Art School have collectively stood together right inside the institution that is the University of Leeds and have made our cases and spoken to decision makers, academics, and students, in a highly highly impactful way.

We have done this not just by stamping our feet and complaining about how unfair the system is (although there has been a bit of that, quite rightfully), we have also done this by making sensible, thoughtful practical suggestions for change and by actually modelling what that change might look like by being, and working, in the spaces of the University. Most importantly, we have made some really beautiful, really strong, really thought provoking artwork that has had a huge impact on students and academics alike.

Similarly, in working with Assembly House our artists have seen the potential for being in a space that is led by a passionate group of artists, peers and friends working together to make the best use of a space. It has changed what they now expect from Pyramid. One of my over-riding early memories of the Irregular Art School is of the highly respectful and professional way that Assembly House artists welcomed and worked with our artists from the start. It's been really great to see those working relationships in some cases continuing on beyond the project.



I come away from this project thinking most about the power of WORDS WORDS WORDS. There's a sort of very shallow assumption around people with learning disabilities accessing higher education that goes 'if they can't read or write, how are they ever going to...?' and yet this project has been full of words. 'THE SYSTEM IS LIKE A JIGSAW PUZZLE', 'I'M NOT LEAVING', 'Good – corridor – in way' and of course the thousands of words of Victor's lists spilling from the walls.

Our 'Degree Show' was full of words. And our artists have, as you can see throughout this publication, used their own words to articulate many many sensitive, thoughtful, positive responses to the challenges and opportunities that they have seen through this project.

Like Jade, I have loved the fact that people in general, and artists at Pyramid have taken Jade's poster and used it to decorate so many different places – so now I see THIS IS AN IRREGULAR ART SCHOOL at Pyramid (the office and the project space), the University, Assembly House. It really makes me feel that lots of different places can play their part by becoming a little more irregular, and that there is a lot of collective will for the change that we still need to make.

I am so very very proud of this project and of everyone involved. I cannot wait to see what happens next.

PEOPLE SAY TAKE
POSITIVE RISKS
DON'T LET THEM
TAKE THEM

Katie's story

During my time as part of the Irregular Art School I have learned much about art and the potential art has to expose not only what exists but also what might be possible. Art can be exciting, frightening, often exclusive but also offers an open and accessible way to communicate ideas and experiences through a variety of forms and a range of creative practices. The Irregular Art School has been a journey of learning, challenge and opportunities.

I came to the Irregular Art School as an outsider to art (and learned about outsider art amongst other movements at the school), but with a sense of frustration with social care. Its many challenges are well known to anyone who has been involved in a Care Act assessment, come up against the benefit system, tried to make use of the opportunities of personalisation and personalised funding – but also I also came with a sense of optimism that there are ways to make a complex system work better and create diverse opportunities rather than a long list of limits on life and life choices.

The Decider Game Instructions

STEP 1

Read through the prints and choose a statement that you feel is most important to the support you need in your life at the moment. You can only pick one, so make the right choice.

STEP 2

Flip a big dice to find the number that corresponds with your chosen statement.

STEP 3

Take a seat on this number, make sure your comfy.

STEP 4

Congratulations, you're stuck with this choice for life. Stay where you are and don't try to move any further.

TAKE THE
**DEMAND
INDEPEDENCE**

Artwork by Ria 2023

The work of artists at the school has been a constant source of critique and challenge of these systems which are intended to support, but are experienced as inflexible, unimaginative and restrictive as Ria's 'The Decider' work so clearly articulates: 'make sure you are comfy... stay where you are and don't try to move any further'. The experience of assessment and support in a social care context can be in stark contrast to the rhetoric of social care which claims a commitment to personal choice, personal development and wellbeing encapsulating the range of life and the reality of a system that is sustained through a dependency on 'safe' and stable (meaning inflexible and static) support structures and arrangements. These systems trap people who use social care support, but also those working in social care and we can feel we can lack the agency and creative space to be innovative in our practice.

Whilst we are living in the context of serious underfunding of social care, we explored how social care is only a small part of the picture. The Irregular Art School work has exposed the complex and confusing picture as depicted in the 'Barriers Map'.

This complex picture includes education from school to university, getting paid work alongside receiving the right benefits, living in the right place and with the right support. Some of these feel like impenetrable systems, however throughout our conversations others have become more visible, knowable, but no less complex.

The work of artists at the Irregular Art School has the capacity to open up conversations and bring people together into a conversation that challenges, but approaches these challenges with an appreciation of the many different perspectives, limits and opportunities we face in social care and the world of art.

The Irregular Art School has created spaces in the places where learning disabled people have been told they should not be and the works are a call to action – let's be creative with the opportunities we have and look beyond what seems possible now – to call on Ria's work lets not call it a dream, let's make plans!



**DON'T CALL
IT A DREAM
CALL IT A
PLAN !**

BE

ALGIE'S STORY

At the start of the project I wasn't sure about being in a group or going to new places like art galleries, a university and trains. Now, I feel more confident to work with new and lots of people. I collaborated with Assembly House artist Michael on a photography project where we used different cameras and learnt how to develop our own film in the dark room at The Art House in Wakefield.

When I was at the Assembly House I did an access audit looking at how lack of access can stop disabled artists accessing art studios. I exhibited it in a locked box that people had to figure out how they could access the report. I also used the photography studio at the university where I took artists pictures to make into standees. I saw how a background works and lighting. I also looked at access at the university, I looked at the stairs and the lift and ramp. We had an exhibition of our work at the University and I recorded my voice talking about my work. I have never been confident enough to do this before but I did it and was proud of myself. Other artists at Pyramid also saw my standees from the exhibition and they inspired them to make their own!

I went to the Tate Liverpool to do a workshop with Project Art Works. I took a lot of photographs, it was very busy and I was confident to walk around and photograph.

About half way through the Irregular Art School I got funding from Arts Council England for my Access Cloaks project. This project is about disabled people having access to art and artistic places. I am teaching at three special schools and one Pyramid group how to monoprint and we will sew hundreds of their monoprints together to make giant cloaks. The cloaks will hang on Carriageworks, Armley Industrial Museum, Leeds City Museum, Hyde Park Picture House, and will help the people of Leeds think about access and inclusion.



It means that I have to work in schools, with groups. I am working with school children of different ages (post 16 and Fireflies ages 6–10) at SILC schools across Leeds. By going into schools, the groups get to see me, a disabled artist, speaking in front of the whole class, demonstrating, giving instructions and passing on my knowledge and skills. As part of my Access Cloaks project, I decided to continue my collaboration with Michael from Assembly House. I commissioned Michael to film, photograph, and edit the documentation. I have been working together with Michael to edit the films at the Pyramid Studio. He brings me pre-edited films and I am the producer, giving my thoughts. Michael is now also a Pyramid artist & he works 1:1 with me in the studio sometimes.



What does it mean to be a 'professional' artist?

Money Selling work, making work

Exhibiting Having people see my work

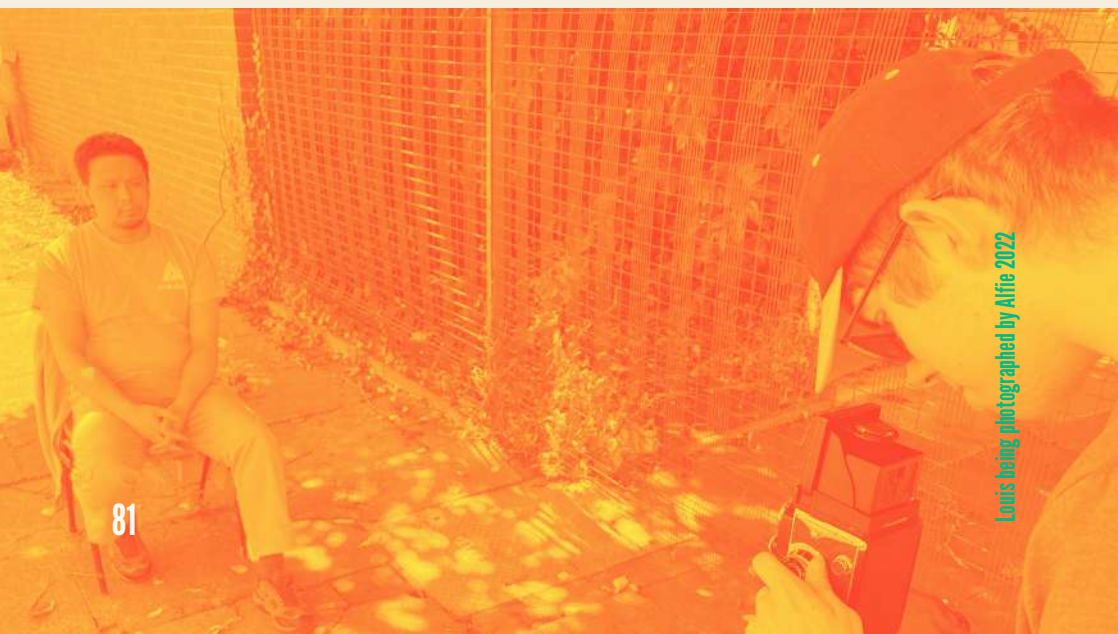
Inspiring like with the standees and having confidence to start speaking to lots of people because of my art and giving me confidence to speak to Arts Council England about what I learned and about access for people with disabilities

Sharing knowledge Access Cloaks project teaching children to do mono printing . I became a member of the youth arts council board around the same time as starting the Irregular art school and my role on the youth board was to tell arts council they needed easy reads for people with learning disabilities to apply to the Arts Council England

The Campus

Photography by Alfie Fox

During the project we have worked in, and visited, different places to help us think about professional development in the arts. This has included different artist studios, arts organisations, and technical spaces. But a challenge that some of our artists faced is accessibility to and around these spaces. Even buildings which claim to be accessible aren't always and this is reflected in some of the artist's practice. The artworks in this section were created by Alfie Fox. They depict different buildings from the project with excerpts of access plans overlaid.



Louis being photographed by Alfie 2022



BUT

■ small for a wheelchair

■ terrible ■ knocked a glass art work over;

■ hard me see

■ worried ■ break more

■ get in trouble

■ leave immediately

■ only seen one room

But

Tim and Louis ■ see two more rooms

■ it is hard



Doorways:

1. Some of the doorways [REDACTED].
2. The doorways could be [REDACTED] by using [REDACTED] on the [REDACTED] door to [REDACTED].

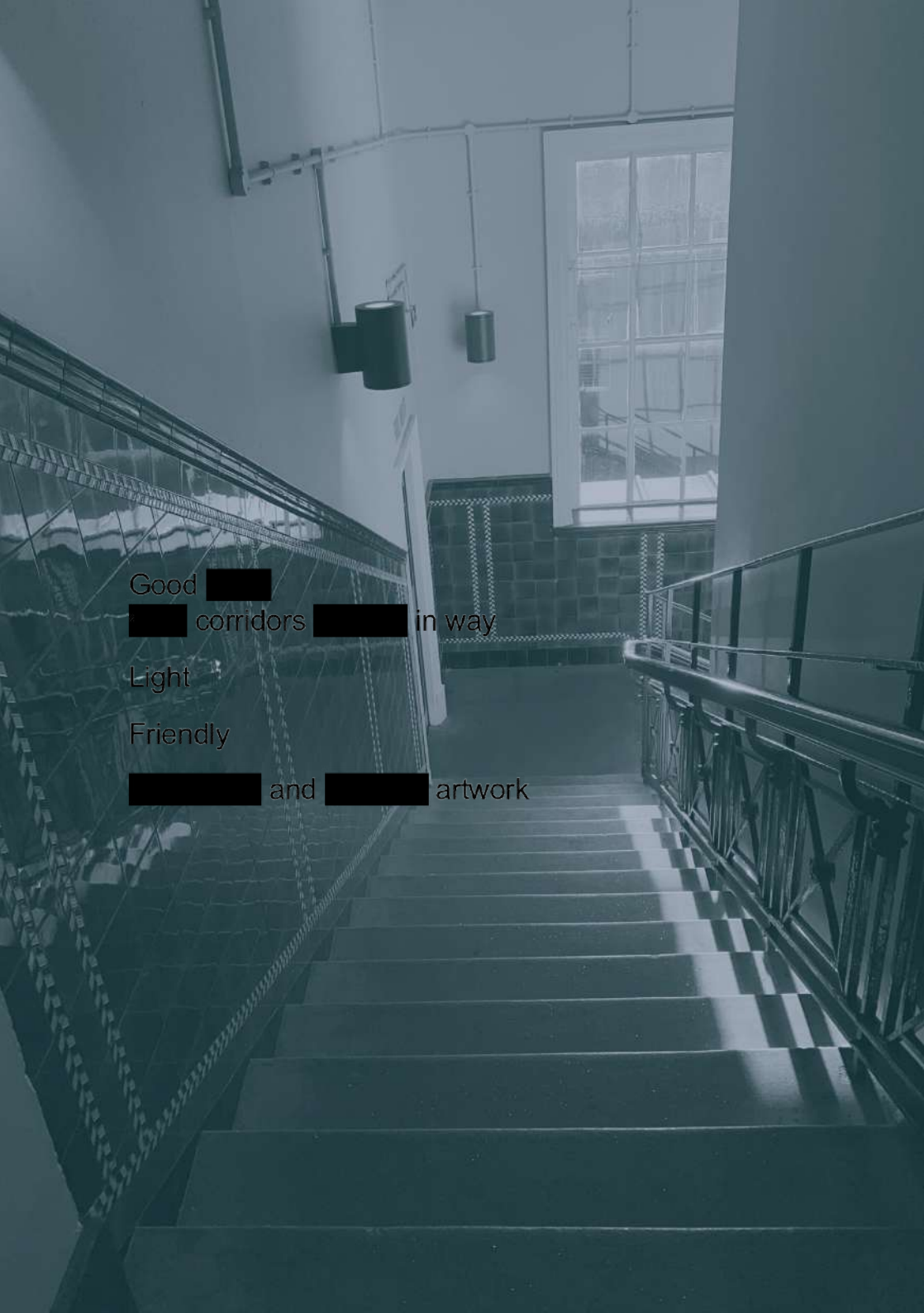


Stairs

1. They were

2. The was not well but when the lighting was turned on it seemed

3. There is



Good [redacted]
[redacted] corridors [redacted] in way

Light

Friendly

[redacted] and [redacted] artwork



Getting Support

We are irregular, our support needs to be irregular.

We need straight answers

Social care support is often difficult to get and when you get support it is inflexible and restrictive. We need personal support that is creative, flexible and responsive. The social care system is complex and confusing – during the project we have tried to understand how it works and how it can work better to support people to be artists.



Scan to listen to Katie

**I NEED
STRAIGHT
ANSWERS**

18 degrees
5 dpi

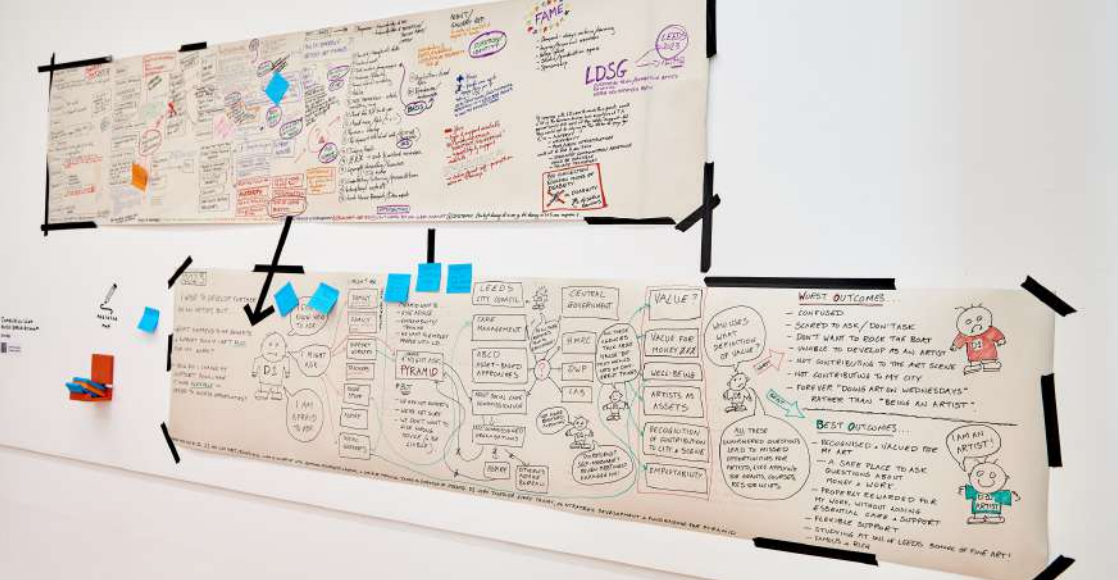
As part of our research we worked with social care sector professionals in the region, like commissioners, social workers and support staff, to work towards better connections between social care, learning disabled artists and arts organisations. To do this, we ran workshops and attended social care away days and manager meetings.

Workshops & conversations

In one workshop with social care professionals, Pyramid artists Alfie and Liam shared their creative practices and what drives them to be artists. We then made a piece of artwork together in the studio and discussed what it means to have an artist identity. We found that there was a difference with how art is described. Historically, in social care settings, 'art' has been seen as a social and therapeutic activity and we had some interesting discussions about a shift in thinking of art as part of our identity, as a part of who we are, and as a potential career.



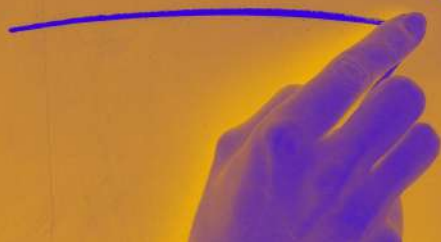
**"Being an
artist
should be
on my
passport!"**



Following the workshops we continued to have discussions with social care professionals from Leeds City Council. They helped us to understand more about the complex system of social care commissioning and the social care landscape from assessment, support planning, outcomes and the importance of community assets. These discussions helped us to develop our second Barriers Map (2023) and to think about conceptualisations of value, personal and professional development as an artist and how we can build the right relationships to create the potential for more flexible approaches to support. We feel that these discussions and relationships across the art and social care worlds are an important starting point for future work looking for practical ways to create flexibility in social care support systems to help create the environments where creativity can flourish. Thank you to everyone who took the time to speak with us and we hope to work with you again in the future.

4 Applying

APPLY
NOW!



Admissions

Your Access Statement
'Apply your own way'

You tell us how you would like to have a conversation with us about why you would like to study with us. Other people have told us how we would like you to find your way. We can provide examples if you decide we would like to have a conversation with you about how to help you. Your access statement

we Application Process

Need

Contact details

Why you want to join - any format

quality or quantity.

portfolio

- film

- statement

↑ weblink

social media

You

Don't need

we will provide examples of previous students' access statements but we want your name, Qualifications.

Where you grew up
what school you went to
what school your parents went to meet a deadline for application.

we see/hear/your!

REIMAGINING Admissions

100%
OF
APPLICANTS
ACCEPTED



NO qualifications
needed here!

Now Open For Applications

2024

Come and learn with us!

It doesn't matter:

- Where you grew up
- What your parents do
- If you have qualifications
- How you communicate
- What support you need

How to apply to the Irregular Art School

Tell us why you'd like to join in any format you like (audio, film, written etc). That's it. We only ask prospective students to reflect on why they wish to enroll.



Use this space to doodle or make
notes about why you want to join!




How you're assessed

Assessment became an important topic in our research

Between October 2022 – February 2023, we collaborated with the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds and explored what it means to develop as artists within a university with staff and students.

Assessment came up consistently as an area to explore: sometimes it can be extremely productive and rewarding and other times confusing or even harmful.

A person wearing a striped t-shirt and jeans is holding a large yellow speech bubble in front of their face. The speech bubble contains the text: "What are all the ways you've been assessed in your life? How did it make you feel?"

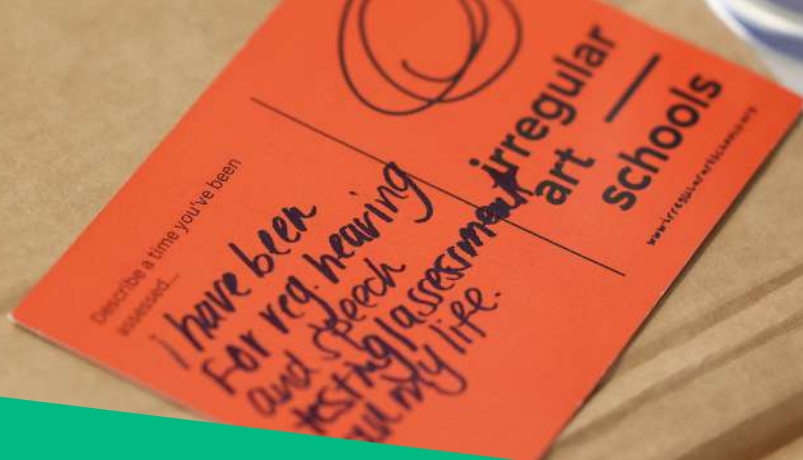
What are all the ways
you've been assessed in
your life? How did it make
you feel?

We then were invited invited by Project Art Works to facilitate a workshop at EXPLORERS run in partnership with Tate Liverpool. EXPLORERS is a two-year national project running from 2021–2023 and aims to open routes into artistic practice for neurominorities, dismantling attitudinal and systemic barriers to representation and rights in art and society.

We developed a workshop called 'Not Another Bloody Assessment!' and tested it first with staff and students in FAHACS. In the workshop, we invited people to reflect on past experiences of being assessed. We then asked people to reimagine their ideal assessment approaches by creating mini protest signs.

What are all the ways you've been assessed in your life? How did it make you feel? How should you be assessed in the future?





Not another bloody assessment!!!

Read our full article on inclusive assessment in the arts by scanning the QR code or visiting:

<https://universityofleeds.medium.com/we-need-to-rethink-assessment-to-make-the-arts-more-inclusive-b77405b2a8d0>



Scan



peer review

Peer review is considered an important part of doing research. It's a type of evaluation where people with similar expertise review a piece of work before it's published. However, peer review does not always include learning disabled people easily. It can be very wordy and inaccessible and often aren't led by learning disabled researchers themselves.

We decided to think about what peer review might mean to us and imagine how we might do these more inclusively. We worked with academics from the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds to explore and evaluate existing peer review processes to see what did and didn't work for us.

"Who is the
peer in
peer
review?"



SCAN FOR REFLECTIONS
OR VISIT WEBSITE

(Art technician) (DIY)
(utopia and digital heritage)
(make an idea/theoretical)

reviewing a peer review template

1. Look over the peer review form as a group.
2. highlight any jargon - what's not accessible?
3. Put any good parts onto post its.
4. Put any ideas how you would do it onto post its.

(Superfluous)
~~Superfluous~~

Proper label
It's clear & [↑]
(annotated) } Diagram
Figure

(couldn't really exist)

(human imagination) (create a utopia) (unrealistic)
(play on words) (quality) (impossible)
(utopia = no place) (better place)
Ideals

calls to action!

BY D1
LIAM & JAMES

D1 are Liam Hirst and James Hill. We work together every Friday looking at fundraising and strategic development for Pyramid.

We've often thought in terms of BARRIERS, including the Barrier Maps that we made at the School of Fine Art exhibition. This makes us sound like miserable gits but we actually think of this as a positive process – for all the barriers that we identify, there is always something that we and Pyramid can do to improve the situation.

Some of those things are easy internal things that we can change – like making our publications clearer. Many of them are large, complex, systemic changes – 'wicked problems' – that Pyramid would only be able to tackle in partnership with other organisations. That isn't going to stop us trying, though!

During the Irregular Art School project we have identified some particular barriers, and this is a CALL TO ACTION! If you are a researcher, a funder, a care professional, or in any way interested in tackling the following barriers, get in touch with **james@pyramid.org.uk**. We want to work in partnership to resolve and demolish these barriers.

1. What is the impact on artists with learning disabilities if they get paid for their work?

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Earning money from selling work in the arts or working as an arts professional may impact on an individual's benefits or tax status. Individuals and organisations are very unclear who they can or should ask for advice about this. There is money out there to pay artists with learning disabilities, but it is being blocked from getting to them because of this worry and lack of clarity.

WHAT MIGHT BE THE SOLUTION?

We could explore running an annual advice surgery in Leeds with representatives from Leeds City Council, the Department of Work and Pensions, HMRC, and Citizen's Advice, which would be a safe space for both potential employees and employers to ask general questions or to ask for advice without fear of consequences.



2. Care plans and arts provision for learning disabled people are often too rigidly structured so that they can only 'do art' in a specific space and time frame.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

People with learning disabilities are granted the support to 'do art' only at a specific place and time each week. This really impacts on their ability to 'be an artist' throughout the week. How can they network, talk to other artists, develop ideas, spend time on their own projects, or even visit galleries or go to events?

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Arts organisations could provide supported inclusive studio space that was open all week for people to come and go as they please, but this would rely on a more flexible system of support from social care. There is certainly a will to do this but it is a bit 'chicken & egg'. If the services aren't there – then no one will ask for the support. We could model a more flexible studio space as a trial, working with social care professionals who could trial a more flexible support package and at the very least, test for demand.

3. Application and assessments rely too much on the written word.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Application and assessment processes (whether marking at school, passing exams, applying for University or a job, applying for arts funding) still rely way too heavily on an assumption of literacy and numeracy skills, and often are fiercely competitive on the basis of how well an application is written.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

The arts are actually really well-placed to tackle this, because if you want to assess or mark an artist – you could look at their artwork!!! And producing artwork doesn't rely on literacy or numeracy skills!!! A pilot project where one set of dummy applications was assessed using three different methods and then the results were compared for learnings would not be too expensive for a funder to run, would it? We would love to take part!

4. How do you prove the value of what you do when there are so many different meanings of the word 'value'?

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

We think most people know that there is a 'value' to people being involved in the arts. But when you have a learning disability and need to apply for state support to get involved, you are expected to be able to prove what that value is.

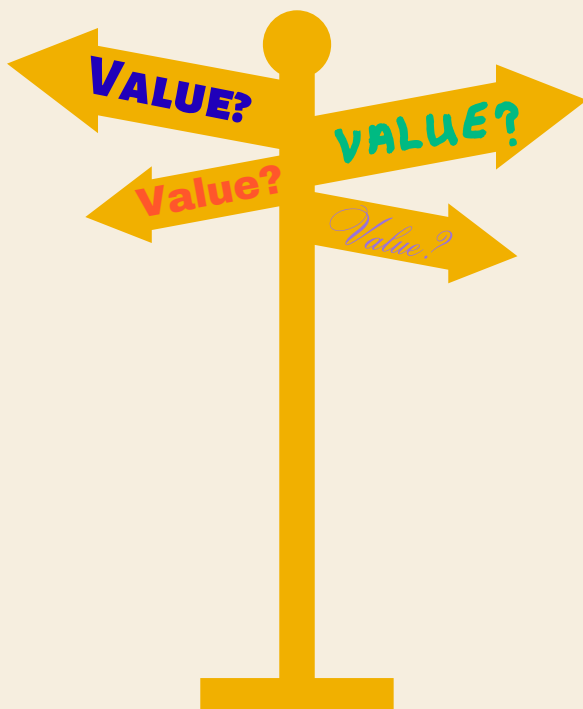
But, a social care funder might think that value means 'value for money' (i.e cheap). In contrast, an arts funder might think that value means the money you can sell your work for. A GP might think value means health outcomes. It is hard to make the case for financial support based on the 'value' of your work, when there are so many different definitions of it.

Do organisations like local authorities or universities 'value' artists with learning disabilities? Yes, they do! But what do they mean when they say that they value them?

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

How about a research project that collates information from different organisations and funders about the different outcome measures that they collect for themselves, and are asked to collect for other people?

Could we do an honest mapping exercise where organisations talk about how often they have to report on outcomes that are different or outside their own objectives? Could we collectively come up with a consistent set of metrics for collecting our data, making it easier for organisations and individual artists to demonstrate the value of their work, across different sectors and to different funders?



Staying In TOUCH



irregular
art —
schools

Visit Our Website



The Irregular Art Schools website is an archive of the project. It platforms all of the films, articles, reflections and research documentation as well as information about the artists.



Scan ↑



www.irregularartschools.org
or scan the QR code.



Email Jade French, Principal Investigator:
j.french2@leeds.ac.uk



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