



CASE STUDY:

TATE ST IVES 2023/24

Framing Collaboration | Sarah B. Davies

The Mildred Fund builds young people's personal, social and creative confidence through art. It supports visual art institutions to work with schools and community groups to provide 13 to 19-year-olds with creative skills for them to thrive.

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Tate St Ives project details

	School Project	Community Project
Project title	Create Club	RESIDENT
Partners	3 schools from the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust: Hayle Academy, St Ives School and Cape Cornwall School	Young and Yourself! (YAY!), a youth group in Truro for LGBTQ+ young people up to the age of 25 in Cornwall, part of Intercom Trust
Participants	22 students aged 14-16 years (Year 10 and 11)	6 young people aged 13-17 years
Artists	Peach Doble	Tom Stockley
Project team	Rachael Woodhead Curator: Families, Schools and Young People Joseph Lyward Assistant Curator: Young People's Programme	Rachael Woodhead Curator: Families, Schools and Young People Joseph Lyward Assistant Curator: Young People's Programme
Programme details	10 fortnightly sessions at 1.5 hours each	8 monthly sessions at 4 hours each
Creative outputs	25SECONDTATE: a gallery lift installation and activities for Tate visitors; Create Club Kit for the schools	YAY Mural: collectively demonstrating YAY's individual and collective strengths; Tate Art Box for the community centre

TATE ST IVES: FRAMING COLLABORATION

This case study focuses on the programme run by Tate St Ives in the first year of a three-year programme funded by the Mildred Fund. It details two main projects: **Create Club** and **RESIDENT**, which involved young people from schools and the LGBTQ+ community in Cornwall. These projects aimed to foster creativity, confidence, and collaboration among participants, many of whom are neurodivergent. A Creative Journey Framework was used to shape the projects and had five phases: 1. Welcome, Test, Experiment and Explore | 2. Inspire and Exchange | 3. Create and Produce | 4. Share and Celebrate | 5. Reflect and Grow.

What the research highlights: The research highlights the effectiveness of using the Creative Journey Framework to develop participants' growth in personal confidence and artistic skills, giving authenticity and voice to young people. Emphasising peer-led and process-led methods and approaches, the case study draws attention to inclusive spaces and practices with slow and 'kind' pacing of the projects to create a safe environment for young people to explore and express their individuality. Research also reveals how the projects used time and travel as an integral learning and bonding opportunity and embedded all work deeply into the gallery, allowing participants to feel a sense of ownership and pride in their visible contributions.

Effective approaches used: Needs-led and inclusive | Organisation-wide engagement | Trauma-informed training | 'Creative Journey Framework' | Shared aims across all stakeholders | Process-led | Peer-led | Gallery-specific | Contribution and ownership | Outcome focused | Celebratory.

A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION

Tate St Ives works "in depth, at scale" – connecting with discrete groups of young participants to create something for wider groups of young people to enjoy. For their Mildred Fund project, the Create Club and RESIDENT projects aimed to create ambitious exhibitions and/or resources by and for young people and support the young people to "explore, disrupt and take ownership of the gallery." The projects aimed to build confidence, creativity and transferable skills, and support mental health and wellbeing. They drew on process-led and peer-led methodologies and the project team developed a Framework that would support collaboration amongst each group. "You need enough of a framework to take people on the journey. To hold them."

The Creative Journey Framework was developed for both strands of the project, ensuring that there is a "shared map of plans and aims" that speaks to all stakeholders. The project team's enquiry question sought to explore "how is the Creative Journey Framework supporting collaborative practice?"

"We wanted to look at ... the impacts [of the Creative Journey Framework] for a group in the youth sector compared to how it might impact through the education sector. Most of the young people in both groups are neurodivergent, so what we were exploring is how to work in a way that is peer-led and collaborative, whilst being conscious that when young people are neurodivergent, they very much have their own way of doing things and their own wishes in terms of ways of working. So it was making it process-led for them and having their individuality celebrated as well."



Ian Kingsnorth, Tate St Ives YAY! (RESIDENT) 202

"... It's giving enough of a framework that everyone feels grounded and trusting, but within that the idea is that we give the young people and partners time to grow ... and the artists as well. At the same time... there's not this big pressure at the start to say you have to create something because ... it's too much, you know. It's about going on the journey with them."

YOUNG PARTICIPANTS

The participants included a group of six young people aged 13-17 years from Young and Yourself (YAY) based at Intercom Trust centre in Truro, and 22 students aged 14-16 years across three schools within the Truro and Penwith Academy Trust.

The school students were all studying Art GCSE and were selected to take part in the project as the teachers had identified that they were "touching on social anxiety." The young people from the YAY group are neurodiverse and identify as LGBTQ+.

The project team observed that some of the young participants often found it difficult to communicate with adults, were less likely to take part unless they had a trusted friend in the group that they could work with, and were frequently going hungry – as were their families. Some did not have access to art materials at home, although they indicated that they were very interested in art.

FRAMING THE JOURNEY

The project is mapped out below through the key aspects of the Creative Journey Framework.

1. Welcome, Test, Experiment and Explore (September – December 2023)

In this first stage the project team and the artists focused on developing relationships with and between the participants as well as encouraging exploration of the gallery and of different media and practices. The project team observed some important learning points during this stage:

- The importance of putting in hard work at the start to get to know everyone
- Establishing the right environment is key. This included food, a Pride flag, and comfortable and creative spaces

- The importance of taking time to understand the challenges faced by the young people and adapting where necessary
- Creative experimentation helped to increase confidence, for example a session named "create and destroy" allowed participants to sculpt with clay and then destroy their creations, affording them with the permission and freedom to experiment within the gallery space.

"So they made something [in clay] and then we did a procession through the gallery to ... the front of the gallery ... and then we all shouted 'destroy!' threw our sculptures in [a large bucket] and turned them into one giant sculpture that was all mushed together. And they were just like, 'wow, [are we] allowed to do this?'"

"... [They] enjoyed a wealth of fun experimentation ... to gain confidence (and build ours) in accessing the gallery and creatively questioning the artwork and spaces ..."

"... Through that we are learning so much about them. And then gradually we start to aim the journey in a certain direction led by them, and that will bring about a final project that they will feel proud of, but it will have come from them."

'It's giving enough of a framework that everyone feels grounded and trusting, but within that the idea is that we give the young people and partners time to grow ... and the artists as well.'

2. Inspire and Exchange (January 2024)

The next stage drew on the gallery's collection for inspiration and aimed to support the young participants to collectively hone their ideas for collaborative outputs. The project team reflected on some of the important aspects within this stage which helped the facilitators, partners and participants to collaborate effectively:

- The importance of peer-led, collaborative decision-making and of there being "no rules" set by the project team, artists, the wider gallery or the teachers
- CPD for 15 teachers across the Trust helped to share the ambition, ideas and the important processes of the project
- A Create Club Kit for schools helped expand the reach across the schools in the Trust with lesson plans and ideas
- A Tate Art Box for YAY's centre supported young people to continue working creatively with materials selected by these participants
- Trauma-informed training for staff at Tate St Ives who are working with young people helped to ensure participants are supported and welcomed
- Young people started to understand the importance of making work that comes together and how things "smush"

"... We got a big ... sheet of paper out on the wall and they could all add things on to that, and actually they added bits on very individually. Then we stepped back and looked at it and ... [a young person] said 'The problem with it is, it's not smushed ... we've all done our own things, but it doesn't really work together.'"

"[One participant] asked if they could take a glue stick home one time, which actually led us to a conversation with the youth worker about the lack of art materials [at home], so we ... put together a Tate box which is now at the youth club and we top it up regularly ... we put stuff in there to start off with, but [one participant] actually ... requested things and [it] was so good to have that confidence, you know. 'You put some [water] colours in there, but they're not [the ones] I want ... can you have a look [for] any better ones?' It's brilliant. Absolutely brilliant."

3. Create and Produce (February – June 2024)

This stage involved pulling together ideas for artworks, completing the project work and installing the work into the gallery. The project team reflected on the important aspects of this stage:

- Significant time was needed for the production and installation of the creative outcomes, as well as ensuring this aligned well with the timings for the students' Art GCSEs
- The ongoing support to help them to listen to each other and share their ideas in turn
- It was important that the artworks developed were inclusive, celebrating them as individuals as well as a group

Create Club developed 25SECONDTATE, a collaborative collage covering the walls of a gallery lift using the work they had created throughout the project. This lift takes 25 seconds to go up and down and the group developed a set of 25 second creative challenges for visitors to do in the lift, inspired by the collection displays.

"It was important to make sure the projects were embedded into the fabric of the gallery and celebrated publicly ..."



Ian Kingsnorth, Tate St Ives YAY! (RESIDENT) 2024



Ian Kingsnorth, Tate St Ives YAY! (RESIDENT) 202

"... The young people have used all the artwork they've created. They repurposed it and photocopied it, looked at it in different ways, swapped it between them because collaboration is our key theme, and then ... made these incredible coloured murals with text placed in it as well ... next to the 25Second Tate lift will be 'challenge cards.' And our themes are ... Draw, Make, Perform and Write ..."

YAY! developed a mural which was installed in the gallery from July to December 2024 before being installed in their community centre. They created a mural manifesto and collaborated on an artwork inspired by the gallery's collections and their experiences as queer individuals.

"... They wanted to come together as a community but ... show their individual interests ... They had a lot of discussions around access. The mural is going to go in our front entrance so everybody can see it, even if you can't afford to buy a ticket ... And they're adamant it won't go on stairs because again, that's not accessible."

The project team reflected on the importance of connecting with other teams within the wider gallery to achieve the installations:

"As a cultural institution, the sustained presence of young people in the gallery (regular interactions with security, [the Assistant Curator: Young People's Programme]'s presence at staff briefings to discuss Young People visits, seeing and sharing progress on the projects, having the work installed in time for summer season) has allowed the team as a whole to build a better understanding and value of the programme. It has also enabled us to realise and embed more ambitious outcomes for the programme."

"... We've not been able to really insert young people's work in the gallery ever before. This is the first time we've managed to do it in [a] gallery space, so there's obviously a lot of nervousness, but at the same time, making it authentically peer led. But also you need deadlines, so how you manage the group to hit the deadlines that you need but keep authentically peer led and hold them together."

4. Share and Celebrate (July 2024)

This stage involved celebrating the installed artworks at the gallery with young people, families, friends and stakeholders. This demonstrated a great deal of value for what the participants created. The project team reflected on what they learned during this stage:

- In order to embed the new installations as part of the gallery (not just in Learning spaces), the team needed to put in place a "new infrastructure across different teams. This enabled a risk assessment to be signed off by Visitor Experience managers and gallery resources to be monitored by the gallery team"

"... We held the aims for each stage, but the young people could decide on the outcomes."

- The young participants created the exhibition interpretation, which took "some time and back and forth" to ensure it "met Tate standards and formats." The project team will implement training on Tate's interpretation guidelines for the whole Learning team at Tate St Ives "for the future"
- It was necessary to work with the communications team to organise signage and wayfinding, as well as finding space to put gallery resources.

"It was emotional for all, with comments on the impact for parents and their pride as well as the change it made for young people. Some favourite moments were seeing the confidence of the young people in the gallery. For example, one participant ... chatted to Louise [Head of Programme, Tate St Ives] and the artist Tom gave a speech talking about how meaningful this project has felt to him. There was also a shared moment of understanding need from YAY! and TSI staff when we collectively began to gather up a food package for one of the parents that had been using a food bank and they were able to take it away with them ..."

5. Reflect and Grow (July – August 2024)

Time for team reflection was an ongoing factor, which was embedded throughout the year and informed what happened next within each stage. Additionally, the final evaluation informed the project team's plans for the next year of activity.

The team planned to include the following learning points into their plan for the second year:

- A slower, “kinder pace” for participants – and for other projects
- Sustaining the relationship with participants is important. They will be inviting the young people back as Ambassadors
- Giving the participants the opportunity to join Tate Collective Producers will support them to continue developing their confidence through arts and culture

During this stage, the GCSE results were received (August). The teachers had been invested in including the Create Club work in the students portfolios, which the project team hadn't envisaged: *“The schools said they felt the project has raised the results of Young People's GCSE results, potentially by as much as two grades in one case.”*

CONFIDENTLY COLLABORATIVE

“... We held the aims for each stage, but the young people could decide on the outcomes.”

The project team at Tate St Ives maintain that the Creative Journey Framework provided a strong framework “behind the scenes” that successfully “held” the needs of the project, the artists and the young people. It helped communicate the process clearly to all involved and helped them to work collaboratively through the stages, whilst giving space for bold risk-taking and authentic, “peer-led creativity.” The impact on the participants' capacity for collaboration and increased confidence was significant, and the creative outputs were exciting and courageous, interacting directly with the “fabric” of the gallery.

“Focused arts provision has meant that the Young People have been supported in exploring, learning, and expressing themselves in an open, positive environment. We have seen individuals' confidence, self-worth, social skills, and artistic ability grow throughout the time working with us, and the work is having a significant effect beyond the gallery as well.”

The project team observed that increased confidence led to meaningful change for young participants with “personal growth” in a number of cases, as well as “collective confidence” across the groups.

One young person ...

“... Wore a mask all the time and [we] presumed they were perhaps ... worried about germs or Covid. Eventually [they] came in without the mask on and ... the youth leader, said that's because [they're] not afraid to show their face to you now, and see you as part of the group.”

Another young person ...

“... Dropped out of college because of anxiety and they were non-verbal at the start of the sessions. They're talking to us now, which is absolutely brilliant ... it's coming from being non-verbal to then, like laughing, cracking jokes with us, you know ... within a matter of months ...”



Cover image: Tate St Ives YAY! (RESIDENT) 2024 © Ian Kingsnorth

The project team observed that the young people see Tate as a “safe space” and have a great sense of ownership of the gallery following this project. For one young person “... walking into the space made them feel brilliant because there's a sign saying ‘Staff only’ and they got to walk in there.”

In turn, the organisation increased its confidence in young people, leading to greater care, a kinder welcome, and an appetite to develop inclusive and accessible approaches to the spaces where their work was developed and shown. This is the first time the gallery has given over space to young people on a semi-permanent basis – an important shift for the organisation.

“We have established regular conversations between Young People's Programme and Community and Access curators at Tate to share practice on peer-led, trauma-informed practice, and approaches to working with neurodiverse artists and audiences in particular.”

LEARNING: EFFECTIVE PROCESSES AND CONDITIONS

The project team learned of the importance of a solid framework, which nurtured young people's and stakeholders' confidence in the process.

The effective processes and conditions that have helped the project team across the stages include:

- Understanding the needs of the young people and sharing those needs across the whole organisation through staff training and creating a welcoming environment:
- *“YAY! talked about the importance of people – one participant said Joe and Rachael's level of connection and discussions were so important and that they felt confident and trusted.”*
- Framing the intention at the start: supporting wellbeing and valuing creative collaboration is a key starting point. Tate St Ives' evaluation plan includes measurements against NHS 5 Ways of Wellbeing which supported their work
- Friendships are important for building confidence in a group. Being able to attend with a friend is vital at the start
- Getting the environment right is vital: the team paid attention to providing the right food, a Pride flag and ensured the whole gallery welcomed them. This helped increase trust and confidence
- Process-led creative activities increased creativity and skills
- Kinder paces are needed, mirroring the practices of youth workers

“... The term ‘kind pace’... prioritises maintaining strong relationship and trust with the Young People, focussing on their achievements and contributions to the whole project, not just the publicly presented outcome.”

- Inclusive, accessible approaches that are attentive to the challenges of the young people are important
- Peer-led ideas and outcomes supported the development of voice and authenticity
- Providing transport was a crucial ingredient for working across the region, ensuring the young participants were brought to the gallery by minibus. The “journey back to the bus” and the bus back home were noted as important moments to bond, and for adults to informally learn what had worked well.

“This is the kind of thing galleries should be doing.” (Visitor)