



# ART evolution

Engage Scotland youth arts in  
the visual arts programme

Evaluation June 2022

Prepared by Vis-à-Vis Agency

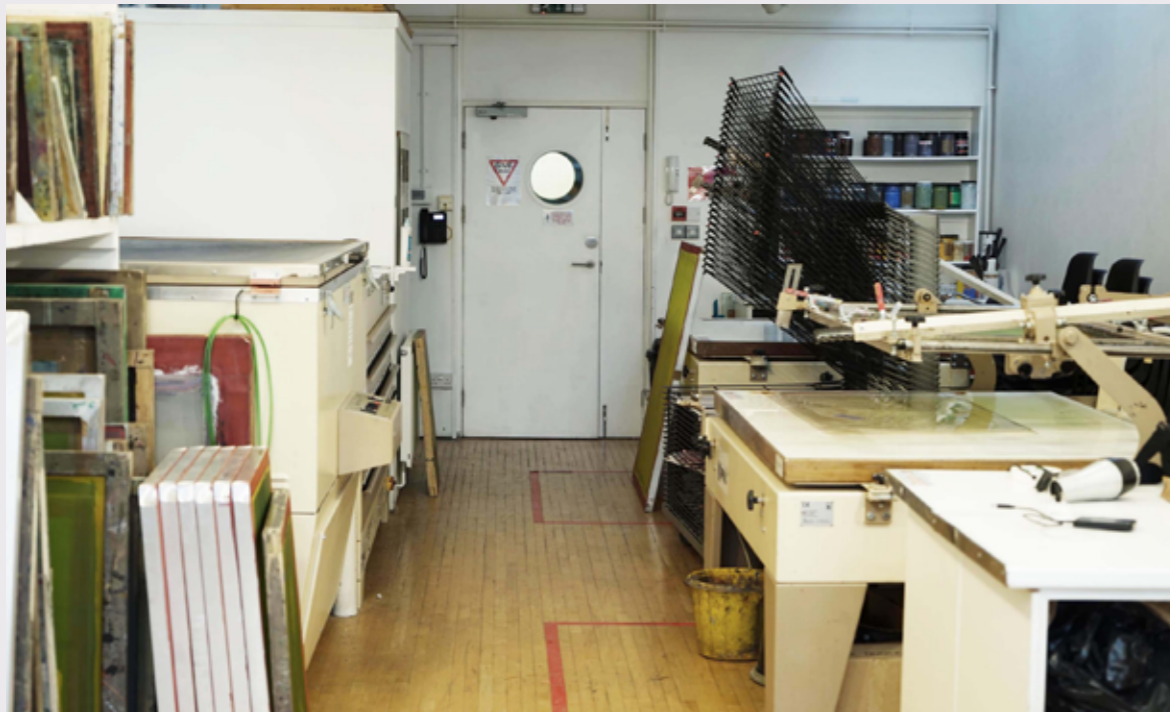




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ABOVE: Rumpus Room workshop sharing food  
 BELOW: Highland Print Studio



## Executive Summary

In 2021, Engage Scotland received funding to develop a programme to support youth arts infrastructure and project delivery in the visual arts sector. The funding was framed to support Covid-19 recovery. The funding supported a sector consultation to inform how the Engage Scotland programme should develop.

Three organisations were selected to participate in the programme, ART evolution: Highland Print Studio, Inverness; Rumpus Room, Glasgow; and Soulisquoy Printmakers, Stromness, Orkney. Each organisation proposed a different way of working and co-producing with young people.

As part of the programme, Engage Scotland provided funding for paid trainee roles within each project, building on work from a previous project, Celebrate ART, in 2018.

The projects took place from October 2021 and May 2022, a longer period than intended due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 across the country.

The overall aim of ART evolution was to increase co-production opportunities for young people and visual arts organisations, to aid post-Covid-19 recovery in Scotland by removing barriers to participation exacerbated by Covid-19. A series of project objectives, outcomes and outputs was created as part of the evaluation process.

ART evolution engaged 44 participants, provided six paid trainee opportunities and paid 10 freelance artists. 58% of participant surveys reported increased confidence through participating in the projects and 100% of participants agreed the project created opportunities to learn new skills. These skills included artform-specific techniques but also communication, project management and interview skills. Through participation one young person has applied to do an art foundation course with the intention of going on to university to study game design – something they did not realise was possible until participating in ART evolution.

100% of trainee surveys reported an increase in confidence and new skills. New skills included practical aspects of setting up, planning and delivering sessions as well as a better understanding of group dynamics and collaboration.

Whilst each project took a different approach to the programme, there were shared threads across them all, highlighting the benefits of the traineeships; the importance of flexibility and organisational support; and shared reflections on the length of projects. Inevitably, Covid-19 remained a common thread impacting on all of the projects.

The evaluation finds that ART evolution did indeed meet its aims, and offers opportunities for reflection on learning points for Engage Scotland and the wider sector. This includes focusing on sharing in multi-partner projects and evaluation; supporting grassroots organisations (echoing national recommendations); and providing paid traineeship opportunities.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Soulisquoy Printmakers litho workshop; Rumpus Room workshops set piece; Soulisquoy Printmakers



## 1. Introduction to ART evolution

Engage Scotland received Youth Arts Targeted Covid-19 recovery funding from Creative Scotland to develop a collaborative and responsive programme to support both youth arts infrastructure and project delivery in the visual arts and gallery sector. The programme's aim was to engage with young people aged 16–25, freelance artists, and three partner galleries/visual arts organisations across Scotland.

Whilst the programme built on aspects of a previous Engage Scotland project, Celebrate ART, the actual programme was to be shaped in response to consultation with young people and the gallery/visual arts sector. The proposal was to enhance the current capacity of the youth arts infrastructure within the gallery/visual arts sector in Scotland and to demonstrate new, innovative and creative models of working with young people, with a particular focus on tackling inequality and in response to further barriers to visual art engagement created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The funding also supported a programme co-ordinator role to work with Engage Scotland to develop and deliver the programme. The remit included undertaking the [consultation](#)<sup>1</sup> to inform the project's aims and objectives. The resulting call for proposals was published in June and open for four weeks, for the submission of applications for projects to run between September and December 2021.

Applicants' proposals had to engage with young people aged 16–25. Their projects were to include an associated paid youth traineeship and fairly paid opportunities for freelance artists or creative educators.

Each project had to respond to at least one of the following criteria identified through the earlier consultation for selection:

- Fostering positive mental health and wellbeing
- Engaging and supporting young people who face barriers to participation that have been exacerbated by the pandemic
- Using a person-centred/youth-led approach to project design
- Exploring the outdoors and/or the natural environment as a way of tackling barriers to young people's engagement with visual art
- Exploring high-quality, innovative and inclusive approaches to 'blendedengagement' (i.e. a combination of remote and in-person)
- Exploring innovative solutions for safe in-person working
- Reinforcing models of partnership or collaboration with other organisations, e.g. third sector, local authority or other cultural partners

An evaluation role was included in the project budget to create a methodology, evaluate the projects and write a final report. The evaluator was recruited in July 2021.

Engage Scotland received eight applications for funding and selected three. Each project received a grant of £6,000 and an additional £2,000 to support a youth trainee position. The successful organisations were Highland Print Studio, Rumpus Room and Soulisquoy Printmakers.

In addition to funding from Creative Scotland, Engage Scotland received £5,000 from the Fleming-Wyfold Art Foundation which they requested was targeted towards the Highland Print Studio project.

Budget was allocated to commission an ART evolution logo from an early-career illustrator based in Scotland, Alice Carnegie, to create an identity for the programme.

<sup>1</sup> Engage Scotland (2021), *Youth Arts Project Scoping Report 2021*, <https://engage.org/happenings/youth-arts-project-scoping-report-2021/>



## 2. Evaluation methodology

Vis-à-Vis Agency was appointed as evaluator. An evaluation framework was developed for ART evolution once the project partners had been selected but prior to the recruitment of the young people and artists.

The framework established the aims, objectives, outcomes and outputs of the project in response to the original intention outlined in the Creative Scotland application and the youth arts consultation report.

### 2.1 Overall aim of ART evolution

The overall project aim was to increase co-production opportunities for young people and visual arts organisations, to aid post Covid-19 recovery in Scotland by removing barriers to participation exacerbated by Covid-19.

### 2.2 Project objectives

The project's objectives were to:

- Increase opportunities for young people to participate in co-production work
- Improve young people's mental wellbeing and confidence
- Increase the skills of young people
- Increase paid opportunities and skills development for freelance artists

### 2.3 Project outputs

The outputs identified were:

- To deliver three visual arts projects – in Inverness, Orkney and Glasgow – which were co-produced with young people
- To develop and support four young people as youth arts trainees
- To share learning with the wider visual arts sector
- To better understand the process and benefits of co-production in youth arts

### 2.4 Evaluation process

The evaluation involved:

- Pre-project questionnaires completed by eight participants, three artists, four trainees and two assistants\*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Highland Print Studio; Soulisquoy Printmakers post-it notes; Highland Print Studio

- Post-project questionnaires completed by 12 participants, four artists, four trainees and two assistants\*
- Three organisation reports
- One organisation debrief session with two organisations
- Four case study interviews
- Three project group debriefs (totalling nine participants)
- Reviewing three blog posts for the projects

\*i.e. the two Rumpus Room studio members who were paid a small stipend to assist the lead trainees in delivering workshops

## 2.5 Reflections on the methodology

The framework was designed in response to the original proposals reflecting in particular the number of planned sessions and anticipated numbers of participants and an online process. With Covid-19 altering the projects, the methodology had to also adapt and be flexible to changes. With shorter blocks of participation in two projects the pre- and post- project questionnaires were too much and the methodology adapted to use the post-questionnaires which were more consistent across the programme.

Thank you to all three projects' organisations, artists, participants and trainees for their participation and openness in this evaluation.



ABOVE: Highland Print Studio  
BELOW: Highland Print Studio



### 3. Introducing the ART evolution projects

Three organisations were funded through the programme and selected through the open funding process. The selected organisations presented three different projects in three very different locations.

#### 3.1 Highland Print Studio

##### About

Highland Print Studio (HPS), established in 1986, is a visual arts production facility in Inverness, specialising in printmaking and digital imaging. The facility is open-access which means that anyone can learn to use it by completing an access course and then continuing with the support and supervision of their team of specialist creative staff. In addition to an annual programme of access classes, HPS provides creative participatory activities for schools and communities across the Highlands. This ranges from taster sessions to large-scale programmes lasting months and years.

##### Proposed project

HPS' motivation for being involved in ART evolution was to help meet their aim of breaking down barriers to participation by working in collaboration with relevant partners. Their proposal was planned with research scientists at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to engage young people who are on the waiting list for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). By the time young people are referred to CAMHS, they are in a position of requiring immediate help, and currently they receive little or no support while waiting for their assessment. The UHI researchers were interested in evaluating the impact that an arts intervention could have on the wellbeing of the young people participating in the project.

HPS' proposal was to provide a programme of printmaking workshops where participants attend the studio for one half-day session a week over a period of fifteen weeks. There would be two courses per week, with eight participants on each course. The intention was to have an environmental theme for the project, with the creative activity being supported by a series of field trips led by the Highland Council Countryside Ranger Team. The participants would learn new artistic techniques and work towards an exhibition of work at a venue to be selected by the participants.

HPS proposed to support the trainee postholder to shadow the artist/tutor and to effectively contribute to the planning, preparation and delivery of the project.

##### Recruitment

As preparation developed for the project, it became clear that it would not be possible to work with the CAMHS team to identify participants (the target group being young people showing early signs of deteriorating mental health). Instead HPS and UHI staff met with guidance departments in schools within travelling

distance of HPS, with the aim of recruiting pupils from three schools to participate. A combination of Covid-19 and the ethics process at the university meant the start of the project was delayed until January 2022.

In the end, pupils from two schools were recruited for the project. HPS had an existing relationship with both schools. The age group was 16–18 years. In addition, a third group will be recruited through the university.

HPS had recently completed an open call for an emerging artist role and decided not to replicate that process for the trainee role. Instead, they invited a young person with whom they had built up a relationship over a number of years as a studio member and who had recently graduated from art school.

The freelance artist they worked with is also employed as the HPS Studio Manager and he was asked to participate due to his advanced knowledge of printmaking and for his experience of working with young people with mental health challenges.

### 3.2 Rumpus Room

#### About

Rumpus Room (RR) is an artist-led arts and social activism programme developed with and for children and young people (8–24yrs) in Govanhill, Glasgow. RR uses art and play as tools for political and social reimagining. The programme is hosted both in person at the studio and online in response to the needs and interests of RR studio members.

The programme has developed since 2018 working with young people and in collaboration with local organisations to firmly ground the work in their local community. RR also works to bring the project to a wider audience through an exchange of experiences with partners to explore how artists and arts organisations can make vital change within the communities they live and work in.

#### Proposed project

For ART evolution, RR proposed a new project 'Our Restaurant at the End of the Universe' as part of their Fare & Care programme. Fare & Care is a youth-led arts and social activism programme, developed with and for young people (16–25 years) at RR.

The project was initiated just before Covid-19 by young people who are part of the studio and had identified the need to create a safe space to discuss, lead and experiment with food as an artistic and social practice.

The project aimed to include:

- Workshops: 'Exercises of Imagination for a Utopian Food Future', eight visual arts workshops (including writing, sculpture, drawing and sound),



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Rumpus Room natural dyeing workshop; Rumpus Room tea tasting workshop; Rumpus Room workshop set piece

created in collaboration with young people to produce a collaborative video work. The workshops were intended to be developed in a blended way (online and in-person), using food as a tool to bring young people together; promote mental and physical wellbeing, and address social isolation.

- Collaborative artwork: Working together to create a collaborative video work that explores the group’s collective vision for the future of the food we eat, grow and share.
- Public sharing: Sharing the video work through an online event that could tour future art festivals.

Being part of ART evolution would give RR the opportunity, time and resource to create collaborative artwork with young people who are a part of RR. At the point of application, the group had been mostly working together at a distance, taking part in online workshops and events but not having capacity to create artwork together. The intention of ART evolution would be to support a meaningful exchange and the creation of a collaborative piece of visual art with young people at Rumpus Room.

### Recruitment

RR were ready to begin first – there was a core group of ‘Young Studio Members’ to build on and the organisation focused on working within an immediate geographic location. Activity with and for young people had continued throughout lockdown in an online capacity so they were also able to build on that.

Participants were primarily recruited through social media and RR attracted new people to the group; the project attracted participants who were new to Rumpus Room; the lead artists highlighted that this included those from a hospitality background because of its focus on food”.

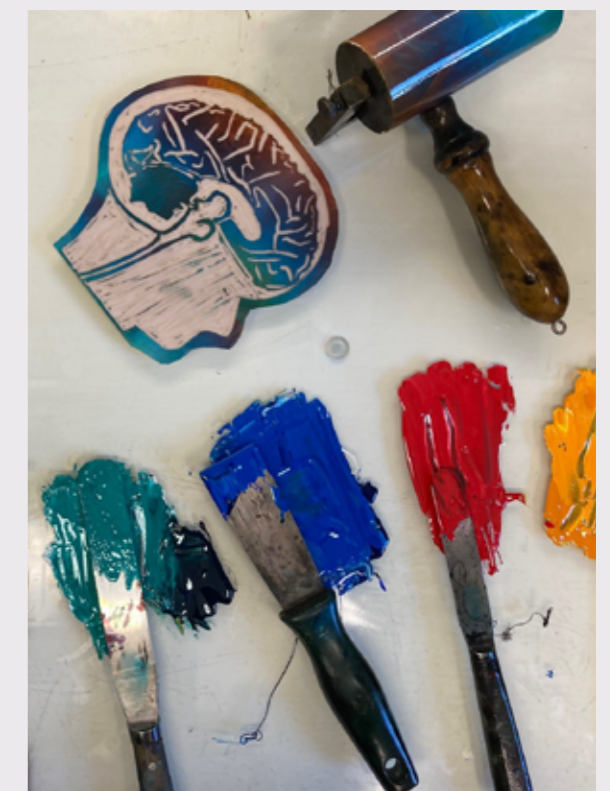
It was decided that the trainee roles would be recruited through the Young Studio Members rather than as a wider open call. RR split the trainee fee between two trainees and then paid an additional two young people to assist further. They also paid a young person to work on the film with the group.

Artists were selected by the trainees to align with the work they wanted to develop with the group. Three freelance artists facilitated sessions with the trainees.

## 3.3 Soulisquoy Printmakers

### About

Established in 1982, Soulisquoy Printmakers (SP) is a small, volunteer-led, registered charity, providing accessible facilities for traditional printmaking to artists and printmakers as well as a regular engagement programme to the wider Orkney community. SP attracts a wide and diverse range of participants, including adults,



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: All Soulisquoy Printmakers

children, young people, mixed age groups and those with support needs. Activities include outreach work beyond the studio, visiting schools and community groups on Orkney's smaller islands.

### Proposed project

Covid-19 meant that the highly successful participatory element of SP's programme was dormant and as they emerged from the pandemic they were looking for opportunities to enable them to reignite that programme, especially their work with the more vulnerable in the community. The project was particularly aimed at young people living on the outer isles of Orkney; those whose mental health had been affected and those with increased isolation.

SP's aims for the project were to:

- Create opportunities for co-creative collaborations with young people
- Provide opportunity for an experienced artist/printmaker
- Nurture talents of a younger generation through traineeship
- Maintain links with third sector partners
- Continue their role as an established visual arts resource
- Complement, extend and continue their contribution to the rich fabric of Orkney's cultural and artistic environment

### Recruitment

SP's approach was to recruit a steering group of young people for the project by hosting two 'open days' at the studio. The open days had a series of provocations to help inform the content of the final project. The steering group would work with the trainee to develop the brief for the project and recruit the artist. The intention was then that the project would open to more participants. Funding was available to cover travel and accommodation expenses to ensure this was not a participatory barrier for people from other islands.

SP adopted an application process for the trainee role, asking for responses to more informal questions. The trainees were selected using the following questions:

- ***We want to know about you***  
Please tell us something about your interests and hobbies. Why do you like doing these things, how long for, who with, etc.?
- ***Please tell us why you think you are the right person to be our Trainee?***
  - a) Please tell us why you are applying for the traineeship.
  - b) What qualities and skills do you think you would bring to it?

- ***If we asked one of your friends to describe you in three words, what do you think they would be?***  
Please list the three words and give us one example of why this describes you.

Four applications were received. One person was recruited as trainee whilst the other three were invited as project associates, and together they formed the project steering group.

Recruitment of the artists was carried out by the steering group and supported by the volunteers at SP. Together they created a project brief and organised recruitment of the artists through an advert in local press and through social media.

Nine applications were received, and the group shortlisted three applicants to invite for an interview. One application was from a collective of three artists, the other two were solo. The collective of artists was selected by the group.

### 3.4 Project support

Support from the organisations was integral to the success of the project and from the application stage, each applicant had committed to supporting the project in-kind. All had in-kind support related to overheads and administration and of course, SP's included their volunteers' time.

Participants first received a tour of the HPS studio and were able to select which of the three available processes they wanted to focus on for the project. As Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, some members of the group were able to continue into the next cohort.

At RR, the trainees were supported, by two members of the team, to plan and deliver the four workshop sessions with the participants. They helped to guide the trainees in choosing artists to work with; support the trainees and participants in the sessions and facilitate reflection and support the planning of the sessions.

Three volunteers who were members of SP supported the steering group and the artists throughout the project. Volunteers also offered an additional four sessions for the group after the artists had completed their sessions. A total of 200 volunteer hours was recorded for the project.

In addition the three projects and trainees were given access to Engage membership, which allowed access to bulletins, the members' area and free or subsidised training. Membership also included delegate places on the Sharing Space Conference.



ABOVE: Highland Print Studio  
BELOW: Rumpus Rooms casting workshop



## 4. Project delivery

### 4.1 Highland Print Studio

At HPS, three different techniques were available to experiment with. These were: etching, lino cutting and screen printing. These techniques were focused on as they would enable the participants to create a quality piece of work in the timescale of the project. After a demonstration of the techniques, the participants selected which they were most interested in. For example, one participant chose screen printing as they were interested in creating merchandise for their band that could be sold.

As part of the process, they also learned other skills such as Photoshop, and were introduced to the concept of negative space. Another participant was interested in gaming and able to learn more about modelling through the project.

Being in the studio, the young people did not feel rushed or stressed. They weren't told when to move on to something else or to make way for somebody else as they felt they were at school.

Due to Covid-19, the format of the project changed, and the project will complete after this report is concluded. There were two cohorts from each school with five participants who worked over six weeks in the studio. At the beginning and end of each cohort, a UHI mental health and wellbeing questionnaire was completed by each participant, the research results of which will be available later in the year.

Read more about the project [here](#).

### 4.2 Rumpus Room

At RR, the roles of participant, artist and trainees were more blended. Before Christmas, the trainees delivered four workshops exploring different aspects of food and making. The trainees met in advance of the sessions to select topics and plan the sessions. They brought in artists with specific skills such as working with clay, dyeing and fermentation to work with them and the group. After each of the workshop sessions, they met to reflect and organise the delivery of the next session.

The participants were invited to share memories and experiences of food; to bring ingredients to the sessions to create new dishes and share food. They made small installations of what they thought their 'Restaurant at the End of the Universe' would be like, and how we will be eating in the future. This considered not only the type of food they would be eating but how it was produced.

The trainees continued to meet after Christmas with the filmmaker to use footage and ideas from the four workshops to write scripts and co-create new films.

In March, at the monthly yard social at the RR space, an exhibition of some of the works created by the participants and the trainees were exhibited. The works will be included in a group exhibition at Glasgow School of Art.

Read more about the project [here](#).

### 4.3 Soulisquoy Printmakers

SP began sessions in November with their steering group to create the artist's brief, in order to appoint the artist with the aim of beginning sessions in December. The group intended to meet at weekends for two months. They were able to participate in one weekend session before Covid-19 suspended the second December weekend.

The artist collective had not collaborated as a threesome previously, but one artist had worked with each of the others. Their skills and experience complemented each other's and they were able to introduce a range of techniques to the group. The steering group wanted to experience as many techniques as possible and experiment with different materials.

The themes for the workshops established by the group were: heritage, mental health, family and the sea. Due to the breaks caused by Covid-19 and bad weather, the artists held an additional online session in early February, to take stock and consider what had been achieved to date and understand what the group wanted to achieve by the end of the programme. The artists introduced a Miro board (online collaborative whiteboard) to open up communication between sessions, which also helped document the process.

SP provided funding to pay for two additional workshops with the artists to support the collective further.

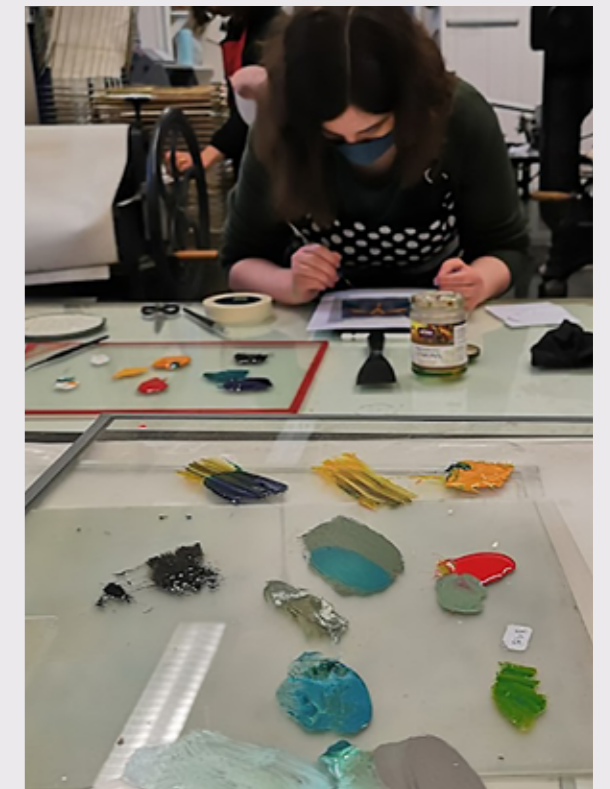
In March the group exhibited their prints – first a day for friends and family and then another day for the general public.

Read more about the project [here](#).

### 4.4 Impact of Covid-19

The funding for the project was borne out of the pandemic and part of the Scottish Government's Covid-19 recovery funding distribution to offer creative opportunity to young people and freelance artists to help recovery. Whilst in-person activity could take place, masks and social distancing were still required. After the easing of restrictions in the summer as winter neared, new restrictions were introduced and impacted on the schedule of the individual projects.

HPS had to rethink their approach due to Covid-19 restrictions and did this by reducing the group size of participants and shortening the number of sessions to accommodate two cohorts from each school. However, Covid-19 also impacted on involvement from schools, and with teacher absence due to illness, it was difficult to sign schools up. The process was lengthened, and in the end a third school dropped out. To counter this, HPS will run a third group for students who attend UHI. The project will now complete in June 2022.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Rumpus Room cooking workshop; printing at Soulisquoy Printmakers; Soulisquoy Printmakers

At RR, they had to restructure sessions due to the team and participants having Covid-19, resulting in some activity needing to be adapted to be delivered online. Social distancing and mask-wearing made communication more difficult and less instinctive. A quieter group appeared to reflect a lack of confidence which took longer to overcome than it had in a pre-Covid-19 workshop environment. The pandemic continued to impact right to the end and the exhibition had to be reworked due to staff and trainees being ill or having to self-isolate. The project ran from October 2021 until mid-March 2022.

Likewise, Covid-19 caused delays for SP. The self-isolation of group members impacted on the schedule and created longer breaks between sessions. In addition, bad weather unfortunately prevented some of the group from participating due to cancelled sailings and buses.

*'I didn't like that Covid ended up holding back our sessions so much, but I feel it was also a part of the project, and the way we chose to handle the delays helped us learn to be more adaptable.'* – Soulisquoy Printmakers participant

Further, the intention to open up a number of sessions to a wider group was not possible due to the spread of the Omicron variant and the widespread increase in cases within Orkney. This meant that the numbers needed to be restricted to the original group. The project ran from October 2021 until March 2022.

Engage Scotland was able to increase the grants to RR and SP by £600 in response to their requirements and to accommodate the impact of the extended projects due to Covid-19. This was able to happen due to an underspend on the training.

All of the organisations involved appreciated the flexibility and responsiveness of Engage Scotland in not being rigid in aligning to the original outlines, which enabled them to adapt the projects as necessary.

It is important to note that whilst the funding was designated for Covid-19 recovery, and it did bring people together, nobody could have foreseen that Covid-19 would be ongoing and have such a continued impact on the project. It became less about recovery and more about resilience.



ABOVE: Highland Print Studio  
BELOW: Soulisquoy Printmakers workshop session



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: All Highland Print Studio



## 5. Meeting the project aim and objectives

### 5.1 Project aims

#### 5.1.1 Increase opportunities for young people to participate in co-production work

*'I really enjoyed collaborating with the other members of the steering group. It was great to work towards our project goals with inspiration from such a variety of viewpoints and I learnt a lot from working with them.'* – Soulisquoy Printmakers participant

ART evolution created three co-production opportunities for young people in three different areas, which would not have happened without this specific funding. Consequently, 47 young people co-produced as participants and trainees.

Whilst the approaches in each individual project were different, the young people did co-produce. For example, with RR and SP, young people were involved as participants and trainees in the selection of the artists and development of the final outputs. In all the projects, young people selected the techniques and elements they were most interested in.

40% of young people responded that collaboration was in their top two most enjoyable aspects of the project.

At SP, 75% of the young people specifically commented on collaboration and working as a group.

*'I was most curious about exploring play and remembering the experience of multiple minds together'* – Rumpus Room participant

When the trainees at RR were asked what they benefited most from, comments such as 'being involved in a different process and the inner workings of the project'; 'discussions with the group' and 'learning from participants and peers' were highlighted. Of the three trainees who completed questionnaires, they all believed that the project had exceeded their expectations with regards to co-production experience. This was mirrored by the trainees at HPS and SP.

From an organisational perspective, all three organisations reported that this aim was met well.

*'...they were all leaders in their own sense. There was no hierarchy on how each session should be led. I felt there was a real equality in the groups and understanding of each other's needs.'* – Soulisquoy Printmakers artist

#### 5.1.2 Improve young people's mental wellbeing and confidence

*'Being here made me feel relaxed not stressed; the process helped me to be calm.'* – Highland Print Studio participant

This was the hardest area for which to agree on a measure. UHI were already

measuring this for HPS and initially the other two projects explored whether they could adopt parts of the measures— specifically the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. The young people of RR felt it was not appropriate to use these measures; that young people had a lot of different factors affecting their mental health and the project had not been promoted as a mental health project. In addition, the results were not going to be available from UHI until a few months after the end of the project. So a direct measure was not used, instead, those involved were asked about their confidence through questionnaires and group interviews.

***‘I met new people and it allowed me to realise that it’s not as scary as I thought and can also be really fun and good for me, and that I can meet good people if I just put myself out there and go for it.’ – Highland Print Studio participant***

58% of participants who completed the end-of-project questionnaire said their confidence had improved through this project – 50% of HPS and 75% of SP participants. The fourth participant commented that they already felt confident but that their confidence in printmaking had increased.

***‘It improved my confidence in things that I am not usually comfortable in – interviews, meeting new people and working in unfamiliar spaces.’ – Soulisquoy Printmakers participant***

In fact, at SP the team and the artists all commented on the confidence of the steering group growing, evidenced by them setting up a group chat to communicate between sessions. At the group interview, the steering group talked about continuing to work together as a collective.

The team at RR reflected that Covid-19 brought new positive challenges in the group’s dynamics, in getting used to working together again, having the confidence to build connections with new people, and collaborating and discussing ideas. In the initial stages of getting to know each other the group was quiet, and it was only towards the end that the participants started to grow in confidence and feel more comfortable in sharing thoughts, stories and ideas. RR said that the project offered young people a space and an opportunity to reconnect with their peers, to be in a shared space with other people making work and preparing food, and this may have helped in reducing some of the social isolation caused by Covid-19. This was reflected in the conversation with trainees, who felt the project was just hitting its stride when the workshops finished.

Of those at HPS who did not feel their confidence had improved, one felt it was a 50/50: ‘Yes and no. Yes, I am going out more. No, because I still feel a little worried’ and another said that they ‘have never really felt that confident’.

From the focus group in Inverness, the three participants explained that this was their first experience of HPS and they agreed that the informal approach of the studio, artist and trainee made them all feel welcome and relaxed. They felt that they were supported as young adults and not as school children, that the ‘*staff weren’t grumpy like school teachers*’.



ABOVE: Soulisquoy Printmakers selecting prints to share  
BELOW: Soulisquoy Printmakers framing work for exhibition



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Rumpus Room natural dyeing workshop;  
BOTTOM LEFT: Rumpus Room casting workshop

At HPS, one participant, as a result of this project, now knows there is a course they can do that is based on their interests in 3D modelling and gaming. They have now applied to do an art foundation course at UHI with the aim of applying to Abertay University later. They described the project as *'life changing'*.

*'...art doesn't have to be a hobby; it can be a job – you can take an idea and express yourself – nobody is judging you.'* – Highland Print Studio participant

All of the trainees agreed that the project had increased their confidence as individuals and one felt this had helped them to secure full-time employment.

*'I am more confident in delivering workshops and it has also increased my confidence to continue to develop my own practice as an individual.'* – Rumpus Room trainee

Specifically, HPS' trainee commented that taking responsibility for young people's learning increased their own confidence. Training around mental health increased their knowledge and their confidence working with the participants.

From an organisational perspective, HPS and SP both felt this aim was well met, whilst RR felt that it was mostly met. The reflection was around the impact of Covid-19 on the participant group and that because of lockdown it took longer to build confidence in the group, which only became visible in the final session.

*'You've got groups of young people who have never accessed the place and you can see the increase in confidence they get from finding themselves comfortable in a different environment. Just getting them out of school and into an environment like this, accessing the facility among Joe Public – they realise that others there using the equipment are just real people.'* – Highland Print Studio Director

### 5.1.3 Increase skills of the young people

*'It has helped me develop new skills including printmaking and listening to others' ideas to improve my artwork; it improved my confidence, because I wanted to show people my work because it was a new artform'* – Highland Print Studio participant

100% of the participants across the three projects who completed questionnaires agreed that they had learned new skills at part of ART evolution. These varied from specific art techniques, to being taken out of their comfort zones, improving their social skills and learning new interview skills.

Participants were asked to tell us more about their learning as part of the project (Table 1). From the 12 completed responses across all three projects there were three areas that participants at HPS felt they had not learnt enough about (confidence is reflected in 5.1.2). Communication with new people is likely to be addressed by them working in their school cohorts due to Covid-19 restrictions.

No explanation was given alongside the responses around learning about working with artists.

**Table 1: Participant Learning**

Learning	Nothing	Not enough	Satisfactory	More than I had hoped	As much as I could learn
Learning new art skills			5	5	2
Project management skills			8	3	1
Communicating with new people	1	3	4	3	1
Collaborating with my peers			9	2	2
Working with artists	1	3	4	4	
Increasing my knowledge in the arts			4	6	2
Increasing my confidence		2	4	6	
Creating artwork			3	5	4

100% of trainees who completed questionnaires agreed that they had learnt new skills through ART evolution. Some of the RR trainees' reflections on learning included session planning; how to work collectively as well as individually; understanding how to work within specific resources (time and money); understanding group dynamics; time keeping and being professional.

The trainee at HPS wrote that the learning they gained from the project helped them get a job in the sector they had trained in at university;

***'From watching John teach I learnt new excellent teaching techniques and how to become a teacher. I learnt that teaching or art therapy would be something I would want to do in the future.'*** – Highland Print Studio trainee

Trainees' expectations were exceeded across all elements, with the exception of networking with peers (Table 2). At the outset it was that the trainees would be brought together and to explore shared training opportunities. These opportunities could have been opened up to the artists and wider sector. The staggered start and end points of the projects meant that this collegiate approach to training and networking did not happen. This also impacted on bringing all the trainees together, and the artists separately, for a group interview at the end. In the end there was one group session which was attended by three trainees.

**Table 2: Trainee Learning Expectations**

Learning	Nothing	Not enough	Satisfactory	More than I had hoped	As much as I could learn
New creative arts techniques				2	2
Use and experimentation of different materials				1	3
Co-producing work with young people				1	3
Networking with peers	1		1	1	1

From an organisational perspective, HPS and SP both felt this aim was well met, whilst RR felt that it was mostly met.

***'The organisation and project management has really helped me across all areas of life.'*** – Soulisquoy Printmakers trainee

#### 5.1.4 Increase paid opportunities and skills development for freelance artists

***'Participating in projects like ART evolution plays a key element in my personal and professional growth, and shapes the learning journey within the discipline.'*** – Soulisquoy Printmakers artist

At HPS, the artist has a very established career as an artist and reflected *'I hope it helped others, I am the artist doing the teaching'*. Their motivation for the project was working with young people and being paid fairly. The artist was involved in the setup of the project with UHI, which was a new area of work for them.

At SP the learning related to the artists working together as a collective; developing their co-production skills with the young people and adapting their own methodologies to work, and for one artist in particular they were able to develop their printmaking skills. Networking took place between the group and the other artists at SP. One of the artists was already a member of SP and another has since joined. SP now has a network of new artists to develop participatory projects with.

The project provided opportunities for the freelance artists within RR, which allowed them to receive paid work, develop their approach and skills in facilitating projects, and explore new ideas and opportunities for the programme. It supported the group of young people to connect with creative spaces, groups and other individuals; to learn new skills; and to feel that their work, time and commitment were valued. And, it supported the freelance artists involved in the one-off delivery of activities within the workshops.

Nine freelance artists were employed across the three ART evolution projects, representing 57 days of paid work. Each project was committed to paying Scottish Artist Union rates, although to make their budget go further RR split the budget differently. They paid SAU rates to freelance artists other than themselves and split their RR freelance rate, as SAU rates for delivery but with a reduced day rate for planning and support.

In addition, Engage Scotland commissioned a freelance illustrator, bringing the total number of freelance artists employed to 10.

From an organisational perspective RR and SP both felt this aim was well met, whilst HPS felt that it was mostly met.

*‘The ART evolution project has opened up a window of creative opportunities which enriched my printmaking skills and encouraged further research and self-development within the discipline; this was made possible with the professional support and advice from the leading project co-ordinators and the Soulisquoy Printmakers group. The project has enabled an inspiring, creative collaboration between the artists and the steering group, and provided me with the necessary support to deliver the sessions.’*  
– Soulisquoy Printmakers artist

## 5.2 Project objectives

- To deliver three visual arts projects, in Inverness, Orkney and Glasgow which are co-produced with young people
- To develop and support four young people as youth arts trainees
- To share learning with the wider visual arts sector
- To better understand the process and benefits of co-production in youth arts

**Table 3: Project activity data**

Organisation	No. of sessions	No. of participants	No. of trainees	No. of artists	No. of paid days (freelancers)	No. of volunteers
Highland Print Studio	10	15	1	1	20	0
Rumpus Room	4*	22	4**	5	17	0
Soulisquoy Printmakers	14	3	1	3	20	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>3</b>

\* This is the number of open sessions and does not include the additional sessions for the trainees only

\*\* Two trainees and two trainee assistants

Three of the four objectives of the project were easily met and evidenced. The fourth – sharing learning with the wider visual arts sector – is not possible to conclude at this point. Online statistics to date from Engage have indicated that the blog posts have had a total of 447 views – a modest number but they have been very engaged as the average time spent on the page is three minutes 18 seconds. Twitter posts have received: 2086 impressions, 81 engagements (likes/retweets/comments) and 58 link clicks. Facebook reached 451 people with six engagements. The Engage e-bulletin has received 67 click-throughs.<sup>2</sup>

Future online engagement once the report and case studies are published will be monitored in comparison to the current statistics.

## 5.3 Project outputs

HPS chose not to host a sharing event or exhibition of work, preferring not to put pressure on the participants. Each participant worked to create a print using their chosen technique.

At RR, through the workshop process participants created:

- One communal dining blanket (with screen printed images and naturally dyed fabric pieces)
- Nine videos
- Two scripts
- A collection of pottery plates and objects
- A series of screen prints, drawings, and a collection of poetry-menus

With the exception of the films, the works were exhibited at the Rumpus Yard Social, and films will be part of a group exhibition at Glasgow School of Art.

The SP steering group members created:

- An artist book per person, which includes all the prints
- An exhibition of the prints – framed and displayed at the studio. A preview event for family and friends was held as well as a public open day
- A ‘catalogue’ of the prints, accompanied by texts and images from the workshop
- A paper-based publication and online presentation

Additional project outputs include:

- One session for trainees – this was delivered by the programme co-ordinator

and was attended by six trainees

- Three blogs (one from each project) for the Engage website
- Three trainees trained in Youth Mental Health Awareness
- Three participants attended Engage Sharing Space event
- One participant spoke at the Engage Sharing Space event

A final sharing event with the wider sector is planned for Summer 2023 and is therefore out of the scope of this evaluation.

## 5.4 Additional outcomes

- The participant group at SP want to continue to work together as an independent collective
- SP has secured additional funding to continue working with the steering group to support them in the studio and to develop their own programme to encourage young people to take part in printmaking
- The SP group are now working as part of the National Galleries of Scotland 'Your Art World' programme
- Some of the HPS participants have continued to attend HPS as part of the second cohort of students
- Some of the HPS participants are interested in becoming members
- One of the trainees at RR is developing a new programme to facilitate with other young people continuing on the theme of food
- The films produced at RR will be shown as part of a group show at Glasgow School of Art

*'Definitely, I'm thinking of buying a membership anyway because it's a nice place to work. I would love to come back, whoever's reading this, please organise another course or something.'* – Highland Print Studio participant

<sup>2</sup> Data collected 30 April 2022.



## 6. Common threads across the three projects

### 6.1 Traineeships

All three organisations felt that having trainees involved in the project was a positive experience and were pleased to be able to pay them to participate. RR had previously begun to look at paying young studio members and this project enabled them to do so.

Being paid was not the primary motivation for trainees – their motivations were mixed but being paid was a lower priority for all of them. Nevertheless, they greatly appreciated being paid for the work and all trainees who completed the questionnaire want to continue to have a relationship with their organisation. HPS commented that this is a model they would like to continue in future projects.

### 6.2 Project length

Each project has extended the programme in some way – not just because of Covid-19, but in response to the needs of the young people.

In their reflections, participants across the programme wished there had been more time to engage in more activity. The trainees at RR felt that the workshop sessions had just hit their stride and then they were over.

At HPS, some of the young people in the first cohort were able to attend sessions with the second cohort. They even asked for classes during the holiday period to continue their work. SP extended their programme with two additional sessions. RR supported the young people with additional meetings in order to create films. RR reflected that more workshop sessions would have been good, but that would have meant forgoing paying the young people, which was important to them.

### 6.3 Flexibility

Whilst Covid-19 was the dominating factor influencing the need for flexibility in each project, flexibility also came across as core to all of the projects in order for the organisations and artists to co-create with young people: the approach of the artists and the creation of an informal, safe space for experimentation and self-led activity required flexibility from the organisations and artists.

In addition, the young people often had jobs and/or school or college work to manage and some had caring responsibilities or anxieties about being involved in groups. Projects needed to accommodate that and not expect participants to be present 100% of the time.

### 6.4 Organisational support

The structure of each of the organisations varied. SP is a volunteer-led organisation and RR is a small project-funded organisation. Whilst HPS is a



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Rumpus Room cooking workshop; Highland Print Studio; Highland Print Studio

Creative Scotland Regularly Funded Organisation, they have a very small core staff to develop, deliver and support projects. In common, they are all small, open-access, grassroots organisations that build a relaxed, supportive environment for people to learn and create in.

SP volunteers supported the project with 200 hours of volunteer time. At RR, the team worked beyond their paid days and reduced their own rates to support the young people. In Inverness, HPS welcomed students during the holiday weeks and with the easing of restrictions were able to accommodate those who wanted to attend in the second cohort.

Everybody who completed a questionnaire, be they a participant, artist or trainee, valued the support of the organisation and would like to continue to work with them in some way.

*'I would love to be involved with Soulisquoy again in the future. As a creative practitioner, I felt valued, respected and supported throughout the project. It was amazing to be paid fairly for the work that I do, and to be given creative freedom to design workshops around particular techniques that I'm passionate about. I loved being able to work in the print studio and being able to set it up how we wanted for a particular workshop.'*  
 – Soulisquoy Printmakers artist

## 6.5 Ongoing work with young people

All three organisations are committed to continuing to develop co-production with young people.

Some of the participants at HPS are keen to join as members. The SP participants will continue to develop work together with SP and the trainees at RR are involved as young artists. One of their trainees will be facilitating a new set of workshops there.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Highland Print Studio; Rumpus Room; Soulisquoy Printmakers



## 7. Conclusions and learning

experimental  
 fun process great  
 hopeful challenging adrenalin  
 progressive life-changing energising  
 fruitful interesting motivating  
 refreshing inspiring productive  
 future-proofing

### 7.1 Conclusions

All the aims and objectives for the project were met.

Co-production opportunities were involved in all three ART evolution projects and collaboration was an important part of ART evolution for them all from different perspectives. Co-production and the project development aspects by the young people were stronger in the RR and SP projects.

The objective to improve young people's mental wellbeing and confidence was met, but more limited than the first aim. As a measure for this across all projects couldn't be agreed, the focus was on improving confidence, which has been evidenced across the ART evolution projects. A follow up with HPS when the UHI study is completed will be informative.

Increasing the skills of the young people – participants and trainees – was achieved across the board. ART evolution not only developed technical skills but creative skills and organisational ones too.

The projects also demonstrated increased paid opportunities for artists. The skills development aspect was more evident in SP – where the artists were working together for the first time – than the other two projects, but skills development was still involved.

All of the projects demonstrated new models of working for their organisations, from paying young people to creating steering groups and developing a study looking at the impact of youth arts activity on mental health and wellbeing. The programme successfully built on previous Engage elements – in particular around the creation of traineeship roles.

The environment created by each of the organisations for the young people, participants and trainees, was central to the success of ART evolution – flexible, supportive and committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for the young people.



## Learning for the wider sector

- Paid trainee roles offer an invaluable experience for young people to be involved in many dimensions of an arts project and develop skills for their own artistic practice and personal and professional lives more broadly
- If measures for mental health and wellbeing are integral, agree how the project is framed from the beginning so that participants and artists all understand what is being measured and why
- Track in-kind support and hours to understand the real cost of projects and input from partners to help create case for funding for labour in grassroots organisations
- Build flexibility into project plans from all angles; understand where changes or interventions can or cannot be made in advance
- Boundaries are important within groups – particularly where artists and the participants are close in age with each other
- Develop shared communication tools and check-in points to counter any cliques forming
- Be realistic in shorter projects about the ability to reach and recruit new participants, schools and partners in a quick turnaround period
- Support projects by being flexible and approachable

## Learning for funders

- Fund projects for a longer length of time so that relationships and collaborations can build; greater impacts can be measured and made
- Support projects by being flexible and approachable

## Strategic context

As discussed above, ART evolution also echoes some of the recommendations in the National Partnership for Culture's 2022 independent report, including:

- 'Greater support and guidance should be provided to education professionals and young people to help demonstrate accessible pathways into careers in culture'
- 'Equity of access to culture should be prioritised at a national level to support local, grassroots delivery'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2022), 'Independent Report from the National Partnership for Culture', p.5; p.7, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-report-national-partnership-culture/documents/>



## 8. Case studies

### 8.1 Ragini Chalwa, Young Artist Group, Rumpus Room

Ragini has been involved with Rumpus Room since January 2021 – she is a studio member and participant in projects.

Having completed her undergraduate degree in India in painting, Ragini came to Glasgow School of Art to complete an MFA, interested in painting, illustration and sculptural work. In lockdown she grew interested in creating workshops with children and young people.

Ragini was involved with an earlier project as a participant with RR and the ART evolution project continued themes around food and offered the opportunity for paid work as a trainee. She is interested in food futures and bringing together people using food to explore different ways of thinking and being. She was looking forward to learning how to lead workshops and using food as a topic to explore chimed with her own personal history – for her, food is about her grandmother, bringing back memories and recalling emotions.

The project was split into two phases. The first phase, in October and November, was working with young groups of people to explore the themes. Ragini and her co-trainee planned a loose structure for the sessions which they took to the wider group for discussion.

Generally there were 15–20 people at a session, and the sessions were planned with several activities for people to engage with. The creation of food was also central to the sessions – cooking together and sharing ideas and recipes, from a soup where everybody brought an ingredient to contribute, to roti making, and creating absurd recipes to experiment with ideas.

The sessions were experimental, not bound by rules designed to stimulate thoughts and share different cultural experiences. They aimed to talk about food futures, to eat and celebrate and share. They also brought in artists to work with on the workshops, for example, in ceramics and fermentation.

After Christmas the trainees came back together: reviewing where they had got to before Christmas (the documentation as well as the artworks created) and throwing around ideas. The intention was to make a film which another studio member would film and edit. The project culminated in an exhibition of work as part of the regular Rumpus Room Yard Socials.

This was the first time Ragini had the responsibility of leading a workshop, which she says, 'puts you in a different position, to be mindful of other people's intentions and the freedom to pursue ideas.'

By the third and fourth sessions she felt she had learned the skill of facilitating – but it was good to have somebody else to work with.

Ragini reflected that during Covid-19, 'our heads were working a lot but our hands were not.' This project created lots of hands-on activities for the younger people



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Rumpus Room cooking workshop; Rumpus Room tea tasting workshop; Soulisquoy Printmakers

to do – cooking, drawing, fabric drawing, fermentation. It provided intellectual stimulation, thinking about something other than the pandemic. It provided an opportunity to be social with other people and taught new skills with which they could choose to continue. Ragini felt that participants were less verbally interactive – quieter than would be expected or usual – because of the experience of Covid-19.

The project has made Ragini think about accessibility in her practice; helped her understand the importance of planning for workshops; skills exchange opportunities through collaboration, and ‘seeing different things in people – emotions and qualities’.

**Ragini’s advice to young people who would like to get involved in leading arts projects but maybe think it isn’t for them:**

‘Try it out if you enjoy it; [if you enjoy] being with people you can learn to be good at facilitating a workshop.’

**Ragini’s advice to arts organisations looking to engage with young people:**

‘Be ethical, know your values and then you can do well.’

**Ragini’s one word to summarise the project:**

‘Adrenaline’

**What next for Ragini?**

Ragini will continue as a studio member of RR and will be facilitating a new series of workshops there, for and with young people, to share and celebrate South Asian heritage.

**8.2 Magdalena Choluj, India Whitwell, Jack Whitwell, Artists, Soulisquoy Printmakers, Orkney**

The Soulisquoy Printmakers (SP) ART evolution project advertised for an artist to work with the steering group of young people to develop and deliver the project. The process was managed by the steering group.

Magdalena, India and Jack are all artists based in Orkney. Jack and India studied art in Newcastle and moved to Orkney in 2018 when India secured a graduate placement to teach weaving. Magda moved to Orkney in 2021. Magda’s background was in visual merchandising in fashion and gradually moved towards horticulture and botanicals.

Jack and India had delivered programmes together previously. India and Magda met through the Pier Arts Centre and had been working together to deliver workshops for Orkney Art Club. When the artist role for ART evolution at SP was advertised, they felt it was an ideal opportunity to work together to deliver the project. Their specialisms and interests in different areas of printmaking as well as their different approaches felt like a strong offer for the young people.

Their motivation was threefold: to find a way of working together; to work with older young people – a group they felt is often forgotten – and to explore different printmaking techniques in detail in a professional studio. In addition, the

project offered the opportunity of in-person working after a life of online delivery throughout lockdown.

As part of the recruitment process, artists were asked to run a workshop. The three artists planned and rehearsed their workshop using kitchen litho (a simple printing technique).

The artists created a project outline for the steering group, taking into account their skills and availability and the brief. Whilst they had applied as a collective, they would each lead different sessions, rather than all being present for each workshop. The group agreed to the plan, with additional self-directed aspects which took place over the final two sessions. The group had identified some themes to explore (the sea, mental health, folklore and family).

The steering group took some time to establish what they wanted from the project. The artists introduced a Miro board as a planning tool to ensure ideas were shared across the whole group. They also felt it was a useful tool to draw in the quieter members of the group.

Co-creation was about a balance of facilitation and leading. The artists were able to guide the group – for example, the printing techniques explored were the ones the artists had expertise in. At the same time the artists felt it was important for the group to be inspired by other artists to understand their approach, what they do and how they live.

The artists wanted to build in as much flexibility as possible, but they also needed to create a structure, so there were moments where the artists had to lead or create a boundary, to create a safe space for everybody. The artist or artists running a session would write up a report to inform the plans for the following sessions.

There was a break in the project caused by the rise of Covid-19 as well as geography and weather. Sessions could not go ahead due to ferries being cancelled. The artists felt this affected the creative momentum of the project and introduced a mid-point evaluation to counter this. Having flexibility within their programme proved vital.

The increased confidence of the group was apparent as the project developed. The artists felt that they helped to create a depth around the themes as well as a safe space for the steering group to evolve in. They could see the group making brave artistic decisions and see the development in their portfolios.

India wrote a blog about the project [here](#).

#### **The artists' advice to other artists co-creating with young people:**

'You need a structure even if you don't use it. Strike a balance between facilitation and guiding; giving room for young people to explore their own ideas.'

'Not everyone communicates and responds the same way – you need to have different ways of doing things.'

#### **One word to describe the project:**

'Refreshing'  
'Energising'  
'Challenging'

#### **What's next for the collective?**

The artists are keen to find other ways of working together. Magda has since signed up as a member of Soulisquoy Printmakers.

### **8.3 Emma Grady, Trainee, Highland Print Studio**

Emma Grady has been a member of Highland Print Studio (HPS) since she was 12 years old. She was too young to attend unaccompanied, so her mum attended with her and together they learned printmaking. In 2021 Emma graduated with a degree in Graphic Design from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. As Covid-19 hit, the final part of her third year and final year were all experienced online and the opportunity for work placements was no longer available.

The team at HPS approached Emma to ask if she would be interested in joining the ART evolution project as a trainee. Her remit was to be a teaching assistant and to take on responsibility for the project blog. Emma felt grateful for the opportunity and at ease with the traineeship because she knew the studio and the team well.

The HPS ART evolution project focused on helping to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the young people engaged – recognising the impact of Covid-19 on their lives. Each group began with a tour of the studio, highlighting the different techniques with examples of work of what they could make. Their choices were focussed around three techniques (that could lead to completed work in the timescale): screen printing, lino cutting and etching.

There wasn't much deliberating – participants chose quickly. Emma observed that the young people started off as shy and nervous but opened up and became very chatty. She noted: 'they have so much potential and creativity'.

This was Emma's first teaching experience. '[I] can see the opening up of people – they want to learn and find it relaxing doing everything at their own pace.' HPS created a relaxing space with tea and biscuits; talked to the participants as adults and took them through what they needed to do stage by stage. One participant was interested in modelling and computer games but nobody had ever told him about the possibility that could be his career. Emma shared information with him about the courses at Abertay University. He has since applied to do a portfolio course locally to help gain access.

Emma was excited by the opportunity to teach and inspire: 'I get to be in an art studio and I get to be teaching something I love and inspire young people to be creative. I feel passionate about making sure the young people are happy'. The opportunity was particularly important for Emma because she understood the



ABOVE: Highland Print Studio  
BELOW: Highland Print Studio

impact of Covid-19 on young people's lives and felt lockdown was detrimental to the lives of young people.

Because of the pandemic there were no work placements or interactions for her, and she felt this made getting a job harder: 'This role 100% brought back my creativity'. The ability to be in person and hands on was important.

**Emma's advice to other organisations thinking about working with young people:**

'Working with young people will inspire you: you will learn. It gives [you] good energy.'

**Emma's advice to young people considering getting involved in an arts project:**

'School might not be the best place for your creativity – it's the curriculum not providing enough creativity. Don't think it isn't for you, just do it! Try it once – art is so broad, [it's] not just about painting and drawing.'

**Emma's one work to summarise the project:**

'Life changing'

**What's next for Emma?**

Emma has secured her first graduate job in Aberdeen as Trainee Picture Editor for DC Thomson. She says that the experience of ART evolution undoubtedly helped her get the job.

**8.4 Rumpus Room, Organisation, Glasgow**

Rumpus Room (RR) was set up in 2018 by three artists, Nadia Rossi, Rachel Walker and Catrin Jeans, and is supported by an advisory board. They have a studio space in Govanhill, Glasgow.

*'We'd done loads of socially engaged work across Scotland with different organisations but we were disappointed by the short-term nature of them. We wanted autonomy, to create something where we live and develop longer term, meaningful work.'* – Nadia Rossi

The aim was for Rumpus Room to be led by young people – so their voices could be heard – and to create a space for mutual exchange. They brought together some young people they had worked with to explore how it could work. Some of the young people from that first meeting are still involved. RR is also about supporting artists, and building ongoing relationships.

RR wanted to build a sense of community and it was important to collaborate and not to compete or duplicate what was already happening and working in the area. It took time to build up relationships and programmes. In the first year they received funding from Awards for All which they used to create a programme. It took a year to build up, and just as they were establishing themselves, Covid-19 hit.

ART evolution was serendipitous for RR. Early in 2020, they had begun working

with curator and producer Camilla Crosta on a project, 'Around the Table', having received a Food for Life grant from the Soil Association (RR does not receive any core funding, it is all project based).

When Covid-19 hit, they switched to online workshops with the aim of creating a zine exploring what it means to be a food citizen; using food as a social practice. With Covid-19 and increasing food poverty, the young people wanted to continue to talk about food solidarity and civic approaches.

RR maintained the workshops, despite having no money available for ongoing work. They felt a responsibility to their community that they should be 'more than just an art project'. The young people had decided they wanted to work independently so when the Engage project funding was advertised it was perfect timing.

Importantly, the ART evolution project afforded the opportunity to pay young people to lead through the traineeship. At RR, the opportunity was promoted amongst studio members and six of the 14 members applied. From these, they selected two trainees for the project, with two young people assisting them and an additional young person working specifically on the film and videos.

Nadia and Camilla's roles were to support the trainees with their planning and support them to select other guest artists to work with. The two had responsibility for budget management but they were completely open about it with the young people. There were a lot of different dynamics at play – anxiety around Covid-19, their first time back indoors, different languages spoken and general group dynamics. Nadia and Camilla were able to help the trainees and group through this; they were there to step in if needed.

The important ingredients for RR in co-creating with young people are respect, honesty and being interested in the young people. Mutual respect is key and whilst friendship is important, boundaries need to be in place. At Rumpus Room, the team create a space without hierarchy but they are authoritative in order to ensure the safety of the group. Their philosophy is that everybody is a teacher AND a learner.

The project allowed RR to explore expanding responsibilities of young people and pay them for it. This generated questions in the group about the place and extent of this approach – an ongoing discussion for the collective.

Covid-19 impacted on the project in terms of group dynamics, absence due to self-isolation and illness, changing guidance and the completion of the final films. This all required flexibility, but as Nadia points out, flexibility is what is always needed for working with young people – their needs and situations can change very quickly and Rumpus Room has to be able to respond to that.

### **One word from Camilla and Nadia to sum up ART evolution:**

'Process'

'Fruitful'

### **Next steps for RR:**

RR will be developing the paid opportunities for young people through Creative Scotland bursary funding for three young people. Concurrently, they will be building on the 'Young Studio', helping them to deliver a new programme. Most of all they want to develop their visibility within their community.

ART Evolution was supported by Creative Scotland.  
The Highland Print Studio project was also supported by  
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The logo features a large circle composed of four concentric, overlapping bands of purple in varying shades, from light to dark. A white horizontal band bisects the circle, containing the text 'ART evolution'.

**ART** evolution