

# Turner Contemporary

**Presentation to the APPG, Art, Craft and Design in Education  
Wednesday 14 March 2018, 4-6pm. Committee Room 12**

## **Introduction**

Over the past eight years, Karen Eslea (Head of Learning and Visitor Experience at Turner Contemporary in Margate [www.turnercontemporary.org](http://www.turnercontemporary.org) ) and Michele Gregson (Arts Education Specialist) have been working together to explore and champion Children's Leadership through the Arts.

Through working in partnership with children to highlight their powerful leadership, they aim to create a virtuous circle which feeds directly into global research, inspires further support and advocacy for children's leadership and supports children to make more powerful change through art that is meaningful to them and improves their well-being, and communities and society. They are driven by the conviction that children's Rights in the UK (particularly Article 12) will be developed and supported through the arts.

Karen and Michele will explore this work in relation to the UK's global ranking on the Kids Rights Index <http://kidsrightsindex.org/Methodology/Methodology>, the annual global index published by the KidsRights Foundation which ranks how countries adhere to and are equipped to improve children's rights.

## **Opening remarks - affirming shared values & beliefs**

- Everyone in the room believes passionately in the value of the arts. Can you think of a time when children lives have been enriched by the arts? They are fully participating in society through the arts? They have stronger self-esteem and their voices are heard?4
- We are really interested in how this transforming practice through the arts (that we all believe in, we all feel it, it drives us all) has an impact on the rights of children to "survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential." These rights are laid out in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

## **information and context**

- Last year Karen and I came across an organisation called KidsRights. - an international non-governmental organization that promotes the wellbeing of children across the world and advocates the realisation of their rights. KR prepare an annual index that measures how children's rights are being respected and protected in this country and how we compare internationally. It gathers data from 5 domains -
- . Right to Life 2. Right to Health 3. Right to Education 4. Right to Protection 5. Enabling Environment for Child Rights
- 165 countries report into the Kids Rights Index – they all ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

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- Where do you think UK ranks? In 2017, the United Kingdom was ranked at 156<sup>th</sup> on the International Kids Rights Index.[1] That puts us in the bottom 10 globally, of all countries that have signed up to the Convention of Human Rights. Our children currently have fewer rights than children growing up in Senegal. Or Iraq.

When we dug deeper into the index, we saw that the UK had fallen from 11th position on the index. And this was because, when it comes to Domain 5 and enabling environments, the UK scores the lowest possible score on all indicators.

we were shocked frankly. And it made us reflect on where our work around children's leadership as artists might be a way to create the 'enabling environments' where they have voice and influence over their own lives.

- "KidsRights sees children as 'changemakers' who have the power to move the world,"
- We agree with them, and their strong focus on Article 23 of the CRC, the right to participate in communities, and on Article 13, the right to freedom of expression.

## **illustration of principle, compelling examples**

- We are really interested in participation, and the amazing potential of CYP to have positive impact on society. The Conventions on Rights of The Child and KidsRights Index really interested in participation because research shows that it promotes pro-social behaviour, practical skills such as team work, reasoning, problem solving, negotiating . . .
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- We see these skills being developed when children work as artists. We think this is important because when children are enabled to participate fully and creatively in society, society is far better for everyone. The rhetoric in this country is often that children should have creative opportunities as it will be paid back when they are adults – like they are citizens in waiting. Children can contribute NOW. Kenneth Robinson refers to research about divergent thinking in his RSA lecture, Challenging Educational Paradigms – Pre-school children are at genius level in terms of divergent thinking, seeing possibilities for things. And it gets worse as we get older. Why ignore these highly creative members of society? Arts are the key to really transforming lives if we enable it properly. Adults, including us, are often blockers to this. It isn't enough to set up arts projects where children can get involved, we need to step back and work with them on their own terms, so that they don't just participate in the arts, but as artists, participate in their communities - and make the change **they** want.
- An example of this effect was seen in 'Art Inspiring Change', a programme led by Turner Contemporary and Young Arts Leaders from four Margate primary schools. The children worked with artists to explore what is possible when children are placed at the heart of arts led community regeneration. We asked them to work with their

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community to transform four neglected sites across the town. A report is available for anyone who would like to know more.

- AiC artists worked with artists and crossed thresholds on their own terms. When they went to the Council chamber with their proposals, they redefined the space, and the process, playing games, using puppets. They were able to act like children when they were being artists in an adult environment. Childhood, play, breaking rules, making your own rules, is also what artists do. There are lots of examples of how they used creative thinking for the good of others, but we both remember in particular the very youngest group creating a space that was both welcoming space for rough sleepers by night. Their ideas took some council officers by surprise as they are tasked with moving homeless people away from these spaces. It was a moment when ideologies collided, and made everyone think. Why would we want to keep young leaders out of our decisions about where we live, when their leadership is overwhelmingly driven by empathy, creativity and kindness?

## **Challenge to the room**

- We know we have started to achieve something really powerful through children participating in society through the arts. This is a shift. This is more than giving children the opportunity to make art. This is enabling children to work as artists and through this to participate fully in society. We know that this is happening in pockets (for example for example, Heart of Glass), but it isn't connected and is not gaining momentum, not being amplified, and we are not measuring in these terms.
- People are interested in this. People are coming to us. We want to create more power behind this. Through a shift in our practice – moving from brilliant practice of enabling children to make, to taking the next step to enable children to make, and through this to fully participate and contribute to society, we may begin to have impact collectively on children's lives as measured through Kids Rights Index.

## **Why Us?**

- We are at the beginnings of this, and need help to develop our thinking. Not many other people are saying this. Different to participating in the arts, perhaps as ACE see it. This is new and innovative. As far as we can tell, it hasn't occurred to the International committee for the CRC, or our own Children's Commissioner that the arts offer a solution. It wasn't on Kidsrights radar either until we made contact. If we don't do this, it's not going be on their radars, and the arts won't have any profile with these bodies. It won't happen without us. We will keep doing things that we think transform lives through the arts, but unless we connect with them it will continue to be completely irrelevant and independent of these global bodies. An opportunity to influence, and put the arts at the centre of children's rights.

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- KE - We would like to invite you to join us in a kind of 'Think Tank' about Children's Leadership through the Arts. This is a call to arms. An invitation to join us and start to shift the thinking.

## **Article 13**

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

## **Article 23**

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

## **Article 31**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

- "KidsRights strives for a world where all children have access to their rights and are empowered to realise the great potential they carry within them. KidsRights sees children as 'changemakers' who have the power to move the world, and facilitates them in voicing their opinions and taking action in order to bring about change"  
(kidsrights.org)