

Enthusing Young Minds



The Caravan Darkroom

Chris G Smith

The Enthusing Young Minds project, led by Chris G Smith, is an integral part of a Master's Degree project with Falmouth University.

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J.Doyle – Age 10



B.Roberts – Age 10

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The Caravan Darkroom

As part of this project, I have created a series of photographic workshops designed specifically for young people. These workshops aim to provide a valuable learning experience for the participants, allowing them the opportunity to gain hitherto unavailable access to photography and to develop their creative skills. In sharing my knowledge and passion for darkroom photography, I want to provide young people with the opportunity to learn valuable skills which help to foster their creativity and self-expression.

Using an old caravan, I have created a mobile darkroom that can be taken to a variety of different locations. By reaching parts of the country not often provided by extra-curricular arts education, I hope to help by breaking down barriers of travel and cost for young people wishing to take part in the workshops. A mobile darkroom can be a transformative tool. For many young people in economically disadvantaged areas, it can offer them a multitude of benefits and skills. Firstly, it provides an accessible and affordable opportunity to engage with the art of photography. Having a darkroom on wheels eliminates the need for expensive equipment and studio space. It also makes it feasible for those with limited resources to participate. Furthermore, the process of developing film and printing photographs in a darkroom fosters a range of skills. Patience, attention to detail, and problem-solving all become crucial as they navigate the intricacies of film processing. The “hands-on” nature of working with chemicals and enlargers enhances their understanding of science and optics. Moreover, the art of composition and storytelling through visual imagery is honed, encouraging self-expression and critical thinking.

By bringing a mobile darkroom to deprived areas, I hope to offer young people an opportunity to engage with photography and story-telling in an affordable and supported environment. The mobile darkroom can serve as a catalyst for personal development and artistic expression but can also help with the acquisition of invaluable skills, paving the way for a brighter future for young people in economically deprived areas. Together, we navigate the fascinating world of darkroom photography.



Part 1

The Making of the Caravan Darkroom



The Making of the Caravan Darkroom

My first darkroom experience is a memory that I've never forgotten, a feeling like no other. The moment the first image appears before your very eyes; only one word comes to mind. Magical. That was when I realised; for the first time in my life, I was in full control of the outcome, I was empowered, I was nurturing my own creation. The process gave me a structure I so desperately needed.

My family was poor when growing up and we didn't have much, so things like photography and the arts in general were not accessible to me. I'd often use left over wax crayons or pencils I'd brought home from school to do drawings, but this really was the limit until I got older.

I left my family when I was only fifteen which was a turbulent time in my life. Many of the young people in a similar situation turned to drugs, alcohol and crime. I found photography through girl I'd met. She introduced me to the darkroom and from that moment I was hooked. Photography was a way for me to explore the world around me but at the same time keeping something; the camera; between me and the subject, almost like a shield.

I now want to pass on that magical experience that empowered and saved me to the next generation in the hope that it empowers and improves their lives as it did mine.









The process of converting an old caravan into the Caravan Darkroom has been a remarkable and fulfilling adventure. Despite its challenges, the journey has proved to be immensely rewarding. Not only have I had the opportunity to share my knowledge with others during the workshops, but I have also acquired invaluable skills throughout the creation of the darkroom itself.

In the realm of DIY projects, I have often struggled to achieve satisfactory results. However, this experience has been a transformative one, teaching me a multitude of skills within a short span of time. From carpentry to problem-solving, I have expanded my repertoire and gained new knowledge. The act of turning my vision into a tangible reality has shown me that the value lies not only in the final product but also in my journey of transforming of the old caravan into a functional darkroom.

This journey has proven that the transformation extends far beyond the physical space. It has become a symbol of my own journey, reflecting the progress, resilience, personal growth and empowerment.

Part 2

The Workshops



The Workshops

In this inspiring project, young people were invited to join as collaborators, embracing the power of photography to share their hopes and dreams, or a message to the world. Each collaborator was entrusted with a Kodak Box Brownie camera, loaded with film, as a tool to capture their unique visions.

The collaborators were taught the art of film development using Caffinol, a sustainable and eco-friendly homemade developer. Through this process, they gained a deep appreciation for the importance of sustainability in their creative endeavours.

The culmination of their journey unfolded in the Caravan Darkroom, where they experienced the joy of printing their own images. As they meticulously transformed their captured moments into tangible prints, they discovered not only newfound skills but also a profound sense of accomplishment and growth.

I've always been an outgoing and energetic character growing up. I was always the most confident and wanted to constantly be seen by everyone. I loved making up dances as a child or singing and showing them to people and for them to applaud me.

I struggled throughout school with academic subject so when I discovered performing arts, I instantly knew that it was what I wanted to do. I wanted to perform on stages in front of big audiences, doing what I do best; acting, singing and dancing. I realised that performing arts helps me to connect to characters that I would play in the shows and that I'd become attached to musicals and movies. I could relate to them and use them as prompts, using their techniques to improve my own acting.

I describe acting as being stood on a blank canvas, looking into a mirror and imagining the person staring back at you; the character you're going to play. Then by taking that character and walking around the canvas, you start painting your own story with the character, putting on the mask of different personalities and personas.

My hopes and dreams for the future is to continue acting throughout college and get my A levels. Further on, I want to go to a drama school to progress and gain experience in my performing arts career. During this I will still be acting, dancing and singing throughout my time in university.

My biggest dream would be that I want to become an A list celebrity actor. I want to direct and create new movies and musicals and want to be well known and noticed for my talents and work.

I hope to get to where I want to be in the next 10 years. I hope to become more confident within my acting and gain more trusting and meaningful friendships along the way, because an acting family is the best you can have. This is because we aren't judgemental. We accept everyone and match each other's energy.

D.Welham – Age 16



There is a massive world out there, a massive one, but why stay home when you can explore it? I decided to travel in my future.

My home will always be where my travels start and end. It's comforting, welcoming and nice. As they say, there's no place like home.

But how do you get around? I get around by car, plane and very rarely, on a train.

I love food. Absolutely love it (except cream, yuck!) Chinese, Italian, and Indian are some of the highlights I can't wait to try more!

Now, where to stay.... hmmm. Some of you might stay in caravans or cabins but I love hotels, they give you buffets, BUFFETS!

Now, many people see the same thing, but in a different way. I want to see the world through other's eyes. There is a lot to do on holidays; swim, play, run. I like these all and are really fun to do. At the end of my travels, I pack my bags and go home, knowing I had a good time. Now anywhere is possible, as long as you work hard for it.

B.Roberts – Age 10







My message to the world is that you should never judge someone because you don't know what struggles they are facing.

C.Stothard – Age 17



Football, Scarf and Gloves

A football and a pair of gloves are the
key to 90 minutes of concentration and
a muddy field.

C.Wilkinson– Age 16



My message to the world is that the world is beautiful through every lens. I chose this as my message because I think the world needs to know if they sit back and relax, they will notice all the beautiful streets and nature. I took pictures of the things I love.

E.Bailey – Age 8



The beauty of nature has been around for centuries, over time, through generations, many individuals have failed to pause and look around at what the natural world holds and all the beauties it holds within itself. From the earliest years of civilisation and even before humans, there has been captivating, majestic wonders of the world. The diversity of the environment we all live in is being consumed for the materialism of humans and taken for granted.

The trees are the lungs of the world, the birds make the silence less lonely, and flowers give us the opportunity to show love for others. Our world gives every opportunity for exploration through its unique features that it holds every day, that we ignore. Every season brings in a new variety of colours and moods. Spring is filled with fresh blooms and new life, bright green leaves and a calm breeze.

Autumn leaves, a fiery colour of red and orange, scattered within parks and the air is crisp. Within every single day, light and shadows can change the way we see the world around us. Perhaps the most beautiful aspect of our world is the warm sunsets and the way we see the world around us; the horizon that is looked upon to find vast mountains, or the deep blue sea. There is something within that, that makes it feel alive and reminds us of how small we are in the grand scheme of the entire globe and all the characters in it. This needs to be cherished, the wind in your hair, the flowers you pick, the horizons on the beach, it is all connected, we have our own place within it together.

E.Shore – Age 15



“You Can Do It”

Believe in yourself! We are all different, we all have different strengths and weaknesses, that's what makes us special. If you really want something, you have to work hard to achieve it. Success takes effort, you need to work hard and try your best.

Practice makes you better, even if sometimes you think you're not improving. You are.

Everyone struggles and needs help sometimes. We all worry that we can't do things but believing is achieving, just be confident and GO FOR IT.

When I first started boxing, I was really nervous. I have trained hard, improved; made friends, and I am a lot more confident. At school, I'm confident too, but I struggle with Maths. I have to try really hard. Maths is a weakness for me, it's a lot of effort and even though I get frustrated, I keep going. If I work hard, I can achieve anything. So can you.

J.Doyle– Age 10



My hopes and dreams for the future is to be a police officer because I want to make the community I live in a safer place. I would also like to be an Irish Dancer because I really enjoy doing it. Irish dancing makes me feel happy, I'm not sure why, but it does.

I would love to move to Scotland because I am part Scottish and I've been to Scotland many times. I've also lived in Wales for 5 years and I loved it there, so I wouldn't mind moving back there either. I would also like to travel the world to see new places and explore and have adventures so that when I get older and settle down, I'll have many stories to tell and memories to share.

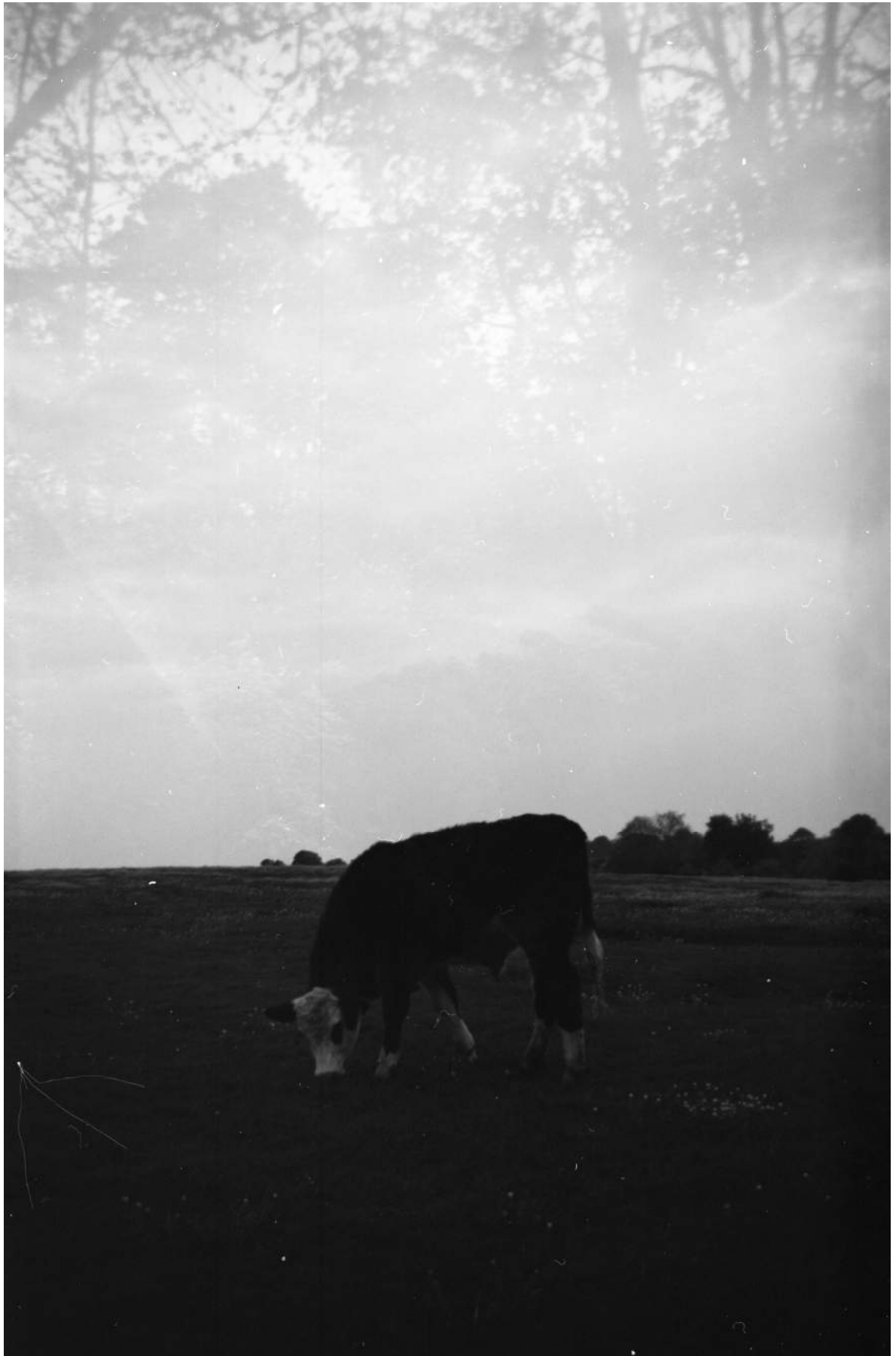
I would love to own a horse because I really enjoyed horse riding when I lived in Wales. My mum and dad took me to riding lessons and I learned to walk, trot and canter and improved my balance. I also learned how to look after horses, and this is why I want to have one of my own.

I really like dogs because my dad had a Labrador and a German Shepherd and I adored them very much. I'm not allowed dogs at the moment, this makes me sad because we're not allowed them in the house we live in. But I hope in the future that I can get a Labrador, German Shepherd and a Husky. I would love them very much.

I.Riley– Age 12







I chose to take pictures of things that contrast,
except the dogs. I just took pictures of dogs
because they're cute. I took pictures of things
contrast because I think that reflects on the world.

E.Bailey– Age 14



F.Dixon– Age 9



I enjoyed using a film camera in this way as it allowed me to focus on moments once, rather than multiple times as you would do on a smart phone or digital camera, as much as I love using those ways of taking photos.

I love the nature of using a film camera, it allows me to remember the photos more and appreciate them more, along with the excitement of waiting until I can see the photos again in their proper form.

When taking photos in my personal work and in these photographs, I focus on capturing people, whether that's of loved ones at family events and in day-to-day life or members of the public, I decided to do that when taking the photos. Whenever I went out with my film camera, I captured people or moments and I appreciated, seeing, living, happening and showing how I see the world around me. It's important to stop and look at your surroundings, to slow down and appreciate the world you're living in and where you are, what you're doing in your own life. As well as capturing others around you, seeing how different everyone can be but also how everyone can be the same.

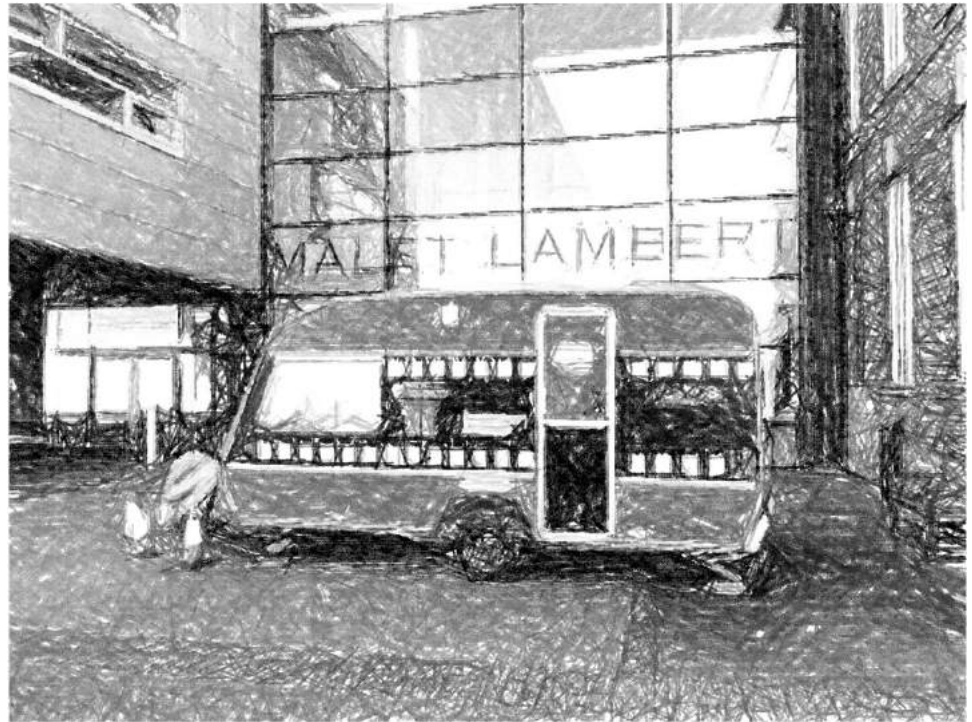


P.Elliott– Age 15



Part 3

Working with a School



Working with a School

Malet Lambert High School in Hull, UK extended a warm welcome to the Caravan Darkroom, initiating the Year 10 GCSE Art class to be collaborators in the Enthusing Young Minds project.

This exciting opportunity was presented to the students as an afterschool club that spanned several weeks. Each student had the privilege of borrowing a box brownie camera and embarking on a two-week journey of capturing photographs.

The students eagerly learned the process of developing their films using Caffinol, gaining valuable insights into alternative and environmentally friendly methods. By exploring the unique characteristics of this developer, they were able to witness the transformation of latent images into tangible photographs.

In a grand finale, the students were invited into the Caravan Darkroom. This invitation granted them the opportunity to witness the enchanting process of printing their own photographs, which they had meticulously crafted from scratch. The experience allowed the students to see their artistic visions come to life before their very eyes.

Overall, this collaboration between Malet Lambert High School and the Caravan Darkroom provided the Year 10 GCSE Art class with an immersive, hands-on and memorable journey into the world of photography, film development, and the joy of bringing their creations to fruition.





Theo

Neve



Millie



Lucy



Eve



Aliye



Alex

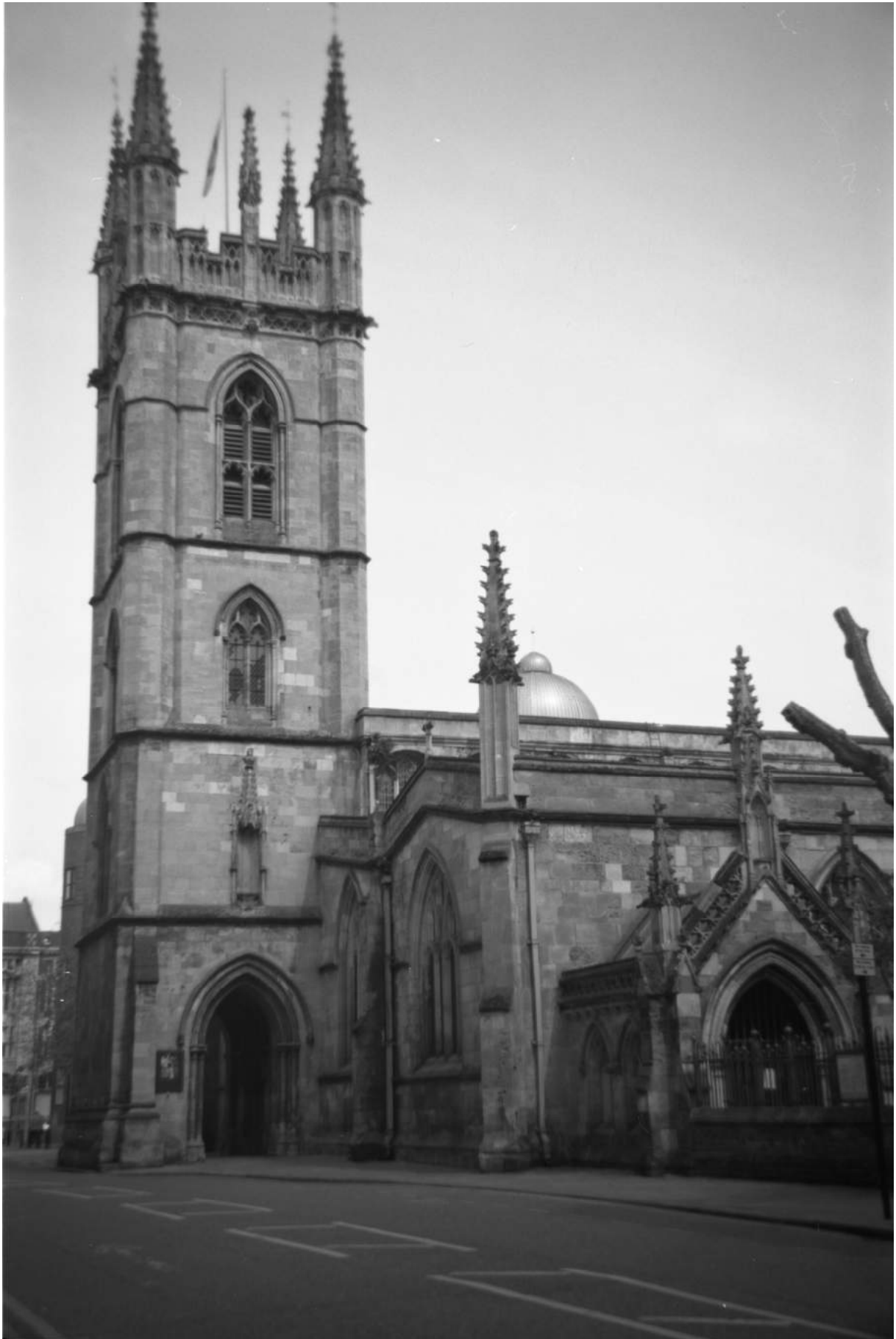




Emily H



Ethan



Emily F



Ruby



Part 4

The Collaborators



The Collaborators

A total of 27 young people have collaborated on this project with me. Among them, 11 came from Malet Lambert High School and the other 16 came from the local Hull and East Yorkshire Community.

The youngest collaborator was 8 years old with the oldest being 20 years old. The average age of the collaborators was 14 years old.



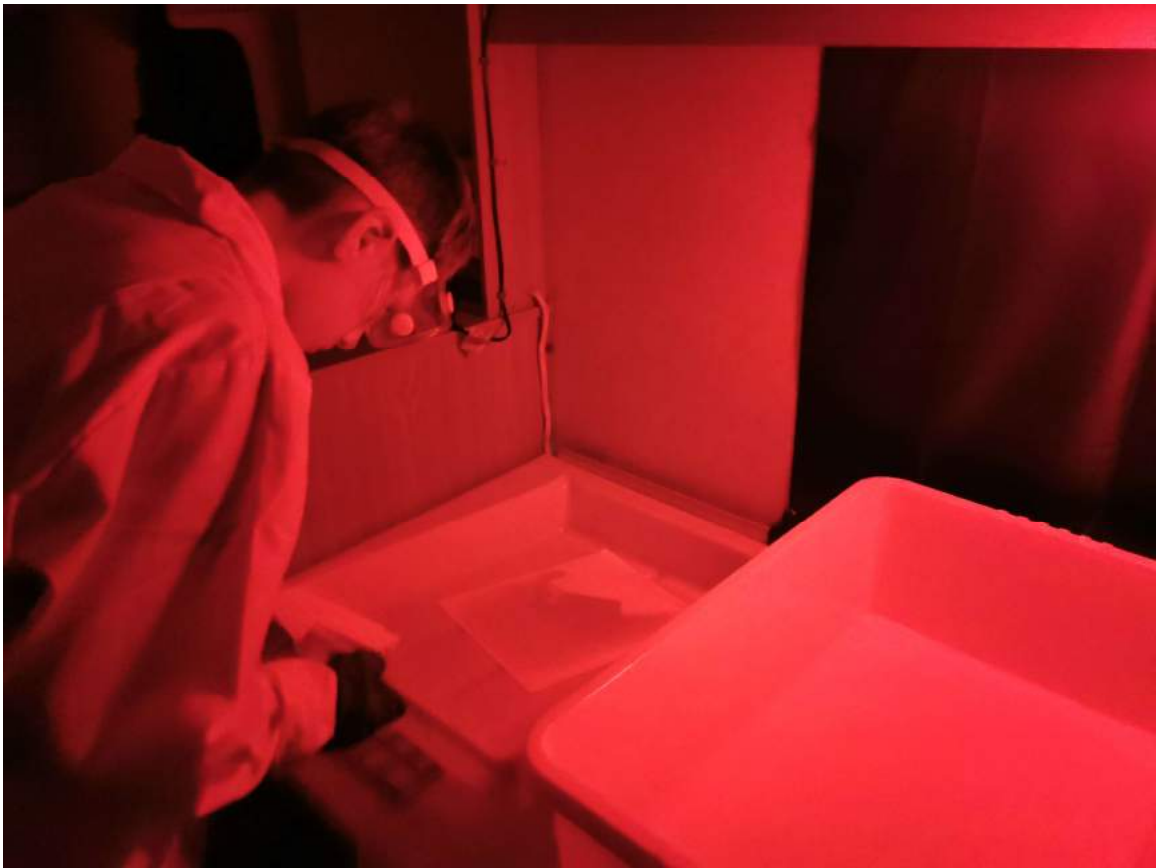


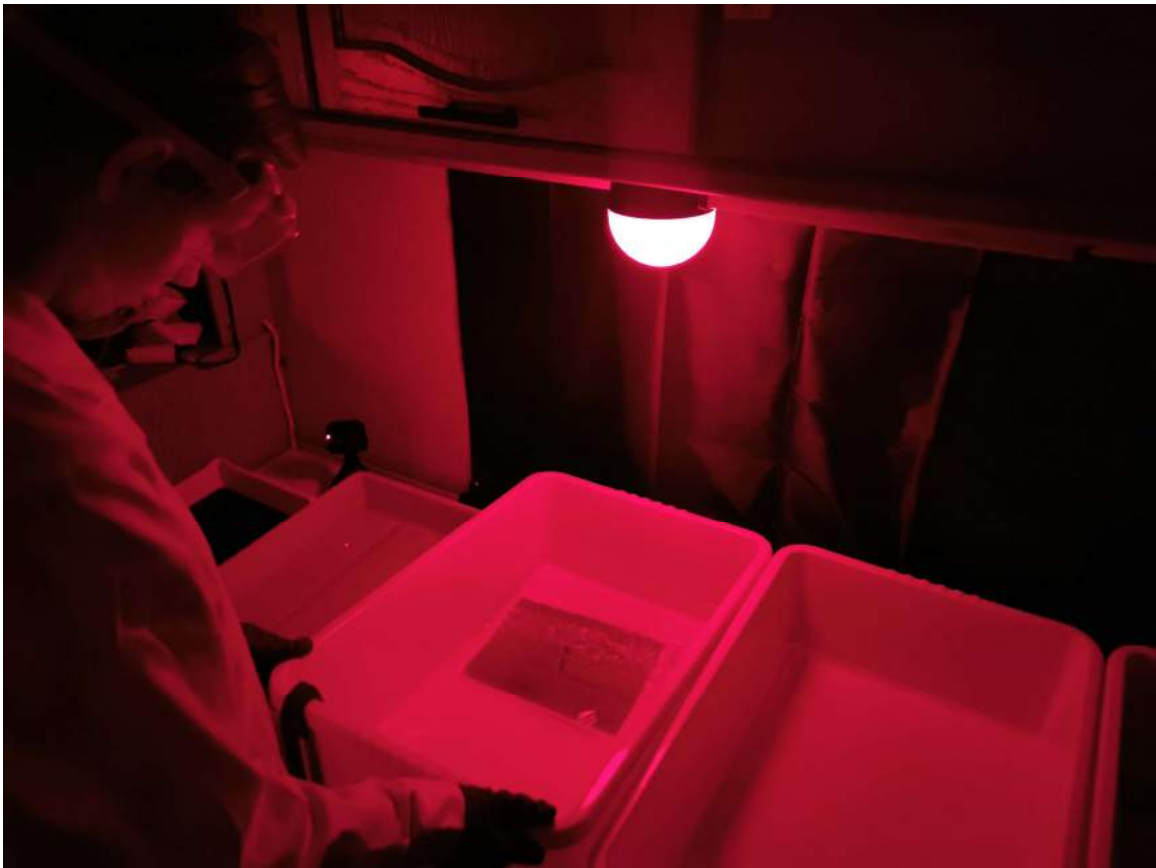








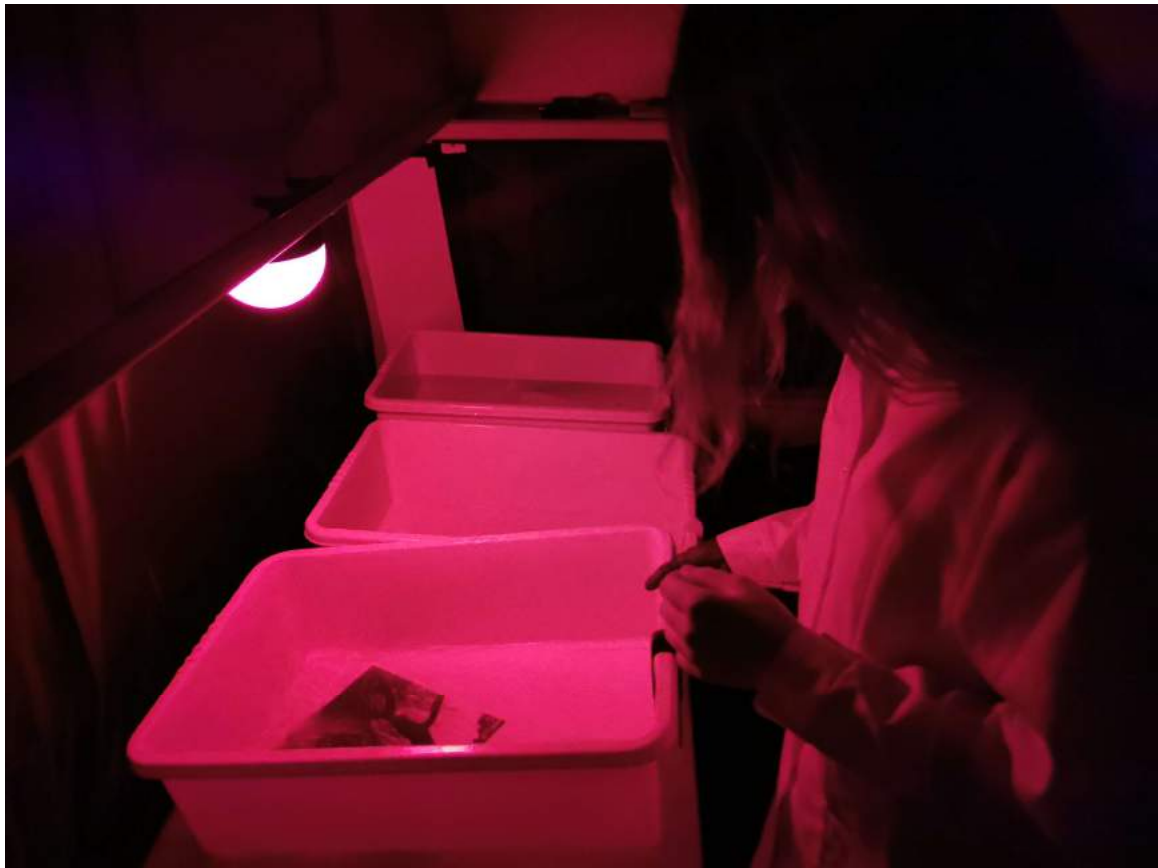


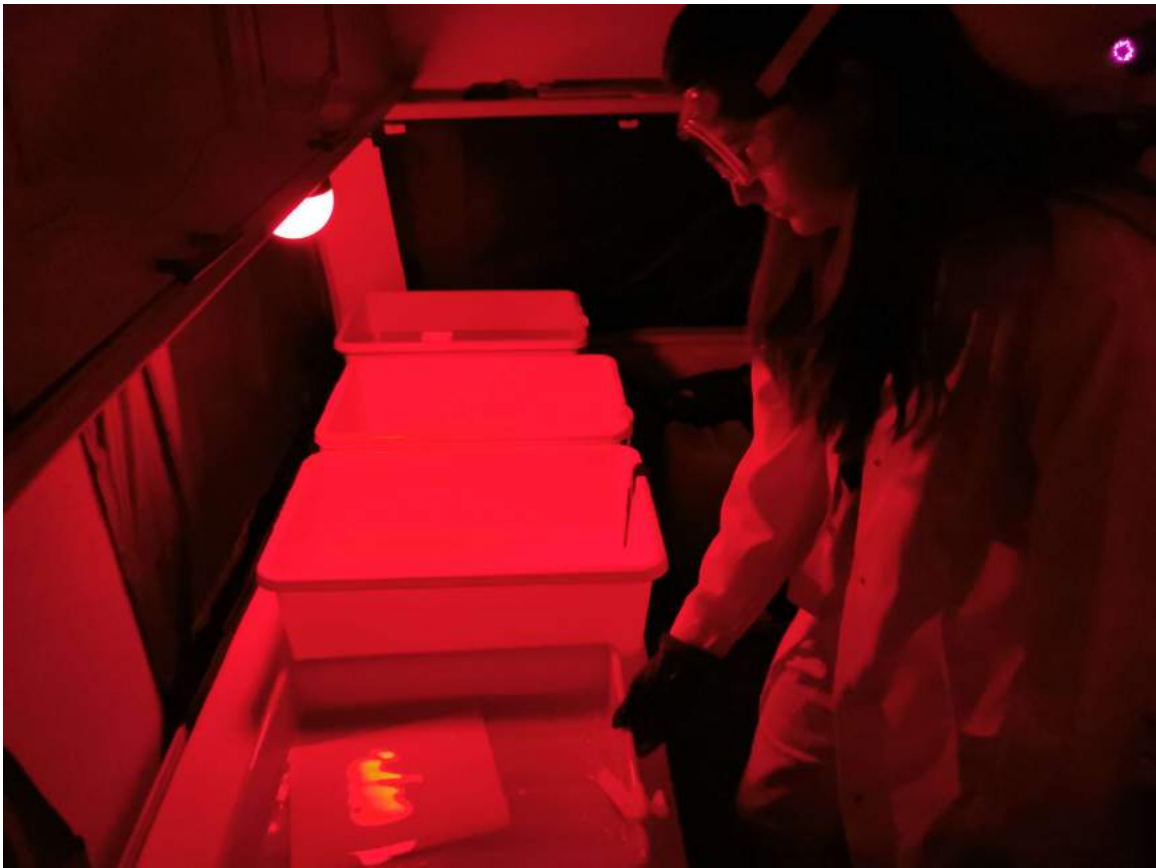


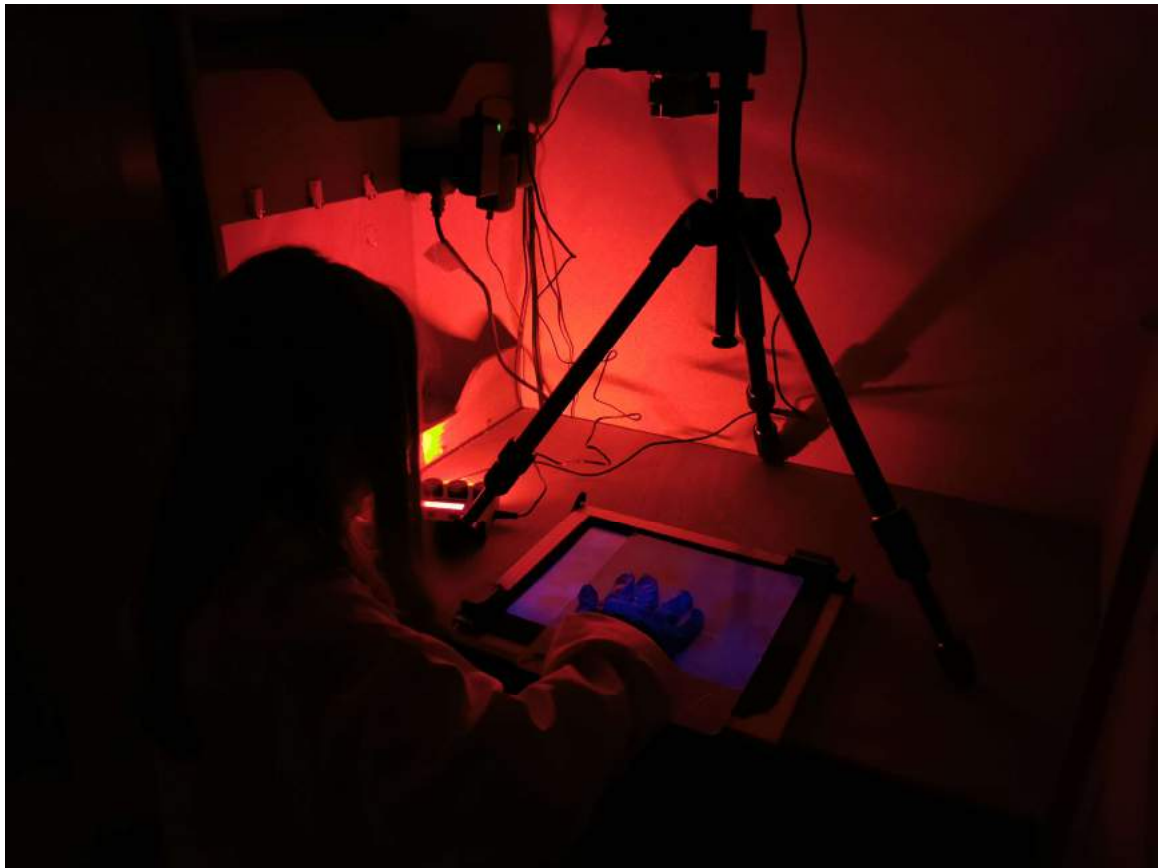






























I would like to extend my gratitude to my collaborators for their time and effort. Without them, the Caravan Darkroom workshops wouldn't be where they are today.

Izzy	Paige
Gus	Eve
Erin	Neve
Elsa	Aliye
Jack	Emily F
Benjamin	Emily H
Sophie	Ruby
Chloe	Ethan
Poppy	Millie
Demi	Lucy
Charlotte	Alex
Faith	Theo

I would also like to extend my thanks to the parents and guardians of the collaborators.

Finally, a big thank you to Malet Lambert School, Miss Ruffy and Mr Curlon, for their efforts in helping me to facilitate workshops with their students.

Enthusing Young Minds

The Caravan Darkroom

Introducing Enthusing Young Minds – The Caravan Darkroom.

An initiative dedicated to empowering young people in Hull and East Yorkshire with the captivating art of photography. This innovative endeavour brings a mobile darkroom directly to the doorstep of young aspiring photographers, providing them with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to explore the enchanting world of analogue photography.

Equipped with vintage box brownie cameras, these young enthusiasts embark on a transformative journey of self-expression, capturing the essence of their surroundings through a lens of creativity. Guided by Chris G Smith, they delve into the intricacies of film development, learning the secrets of crafting captivating images from start to finish. But the true enchantment lies within the darkroom, where the magic happens.

Witnessing their photographs come to life as they master the delicate art of printing, these young artists discover the immense joy and satisfaction that accompanies every meticulously created print.

The Caravan Darkroom Project ignites a flame of inspiration, sparking a love affair with the timeless beauty of analogue photography and nurturing the creativity of a new generation to the art. Through this mobile darkroom adventure, the power of art and self-expression finds a home, fostering a community where imaginations run wild, hopes and dreams are explored and developed, and the young collaborators are free to use their photovoice to deliver a message to the world.