



DOINK

A part of the Beatfreaks collective

Arts Council England
An ACE Future Research
Summary Report



An ACE Future - Our Brief



- Arts Council England (ACE) are engaged in a large scale research project to gain an understand of what their funding priorities should be in the future.
- They are also interested in gaining a better understanding of what ‘arts and culture’ means to the public and how their perceptions of the phrase might differ from that of the ACE and what implications these differences might have when developing future programmes and strategies.
- One specific arm of this research project is focused on young people, particularly those from traditionally under engaged communities.
- ACE understand that a lot of arts engagement happens in unquantifiable settings; people’s living rooms, at family gatherings, or at home on the computer, and also that individuals engaged in those activities might not see that the things they do in those places can, and do, constitute ‘arts and culture’.
- Doink proposed a program of qualitative research which focused on asking young people ‘what makes them come alive’ and then viewing those responses in light of ACE’s own policy on what arts and culture mean.

Our Approach - Building Marbleous Insights



- In response to this brief, Doink developed 'Marbleous Insights'.
- Marbleous insights was an opportunity to engage young people in conversation to understand the world as they see it, and not as we assume that they see it.
- We worked alongside the ACE team to develop a set of key questions which would help us to understand culture as young, disengaged communities see it.
- These questions were:
 - What participants liked to get up to
 - Where they did this
 - Who they were likely to do things with
 - Motivation behind taking part
 - What they feel is currently missing in ACE's offering
 - What 'arts and culture' means to them
- These questions formed the basis of a deeper conversation, asking young people about their thoughts, feelings, and aspirations.
- Importantly, we could also ask them whether it mattered if they don't see arts engagement in the same way as institutions such as ACE

Our Approach - How Marbleous Insights works



1. Participants were invited to answer the series of questions listed above.
2. The activity was introduced with a short intro to ACE, their work, and the aims of this research
3. As they answered questions, they added drops of a chosen colour into a water bath, creating a bespoke colour palette
4. Once they had answered all the questions, they were invited to dip a keyring (or another item of their choosing) into the water bath. This marbled the item with their data set.
5. Once dried, participants were able to keep their marbled keyring as a reminder of their involvement.
6. Participants were also invited to leave video or written comments responding to the question ‘what makes you come alive?’ or ‘what is arts and culture?’

Successes



- The team were able to collect over 200 responses
- Students were very enthusiastic about taking part.
- This resulted in queues to share data with us!
- College staff at several locations commented on the particularly high engagement the installation received
- High levels of enthusiasm meant that our facilitation team were able to engage participants in lengthy conversations about complex topics such as ‘the nature of culture’ or ‘how art helps us to express culture’
- Through facilitation, students who had been reluctant to engage found that they were able (and confident) to comment on the highlighted topics with clarity and maturity
- We were able to collect a series of short video responses to the question ‘what is arts and culture’. These will be useful for use on social media
- We were able to promote ACE and the organisation’s aims to a huge number of young people, many of whom were not aware of ACE or the support that is available through them

Who we spoke to



221 Respondents



Gender

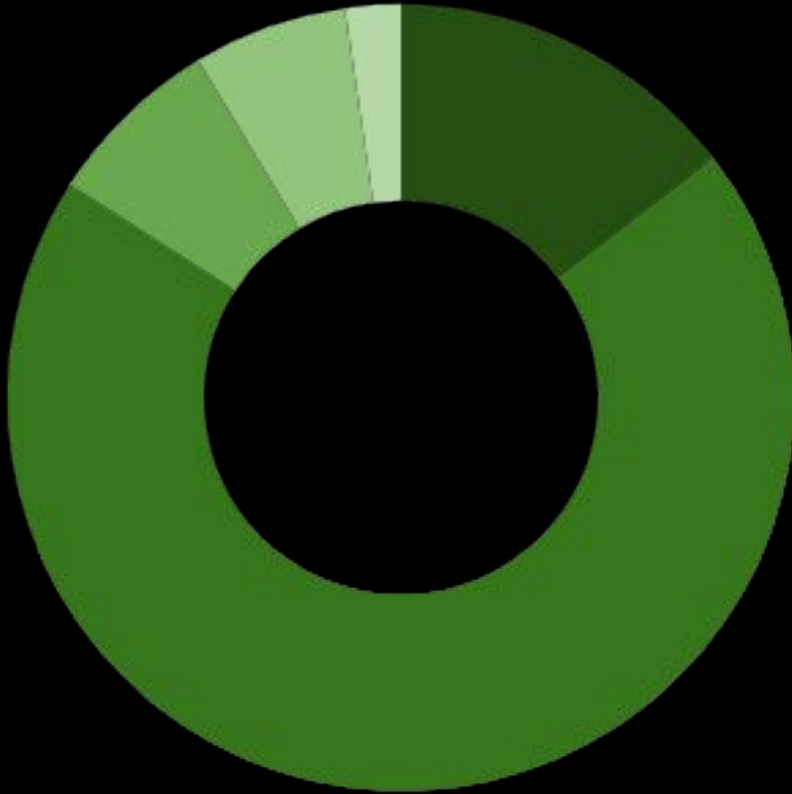


Gender	Number of participants	%
Female	127	58%
Male	82	37%
Rather not say	8	4%
Non-Binary	3	1%

- Rather not say
- Non binary (androgyne)
 - Male (including FTM Trans Male)
 - Female (including MTF Trans Female)



AGE

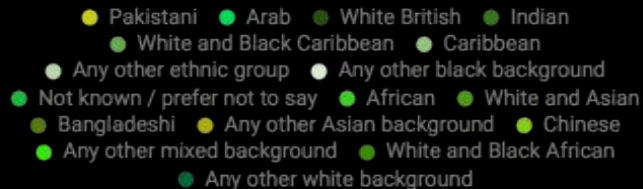
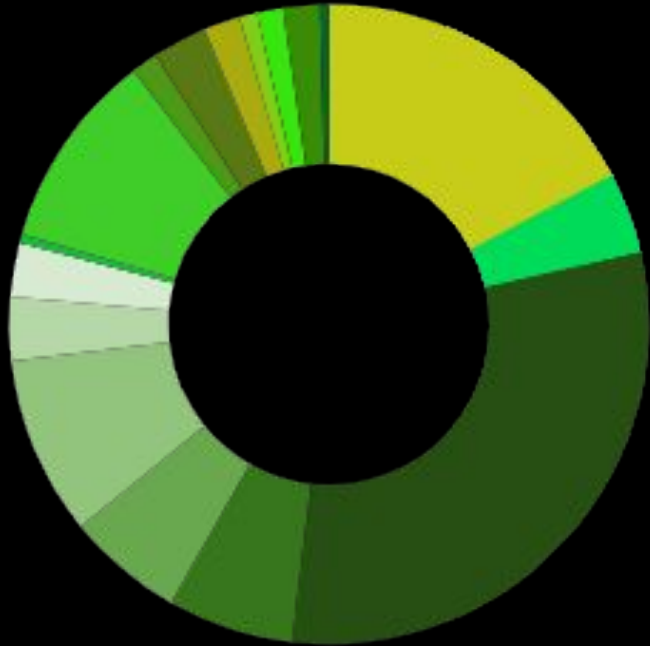


Age Group	Number of participants	%
Under 16	5	2%
16 and under	32	15%
17-19	153	70%
20-22	16	7%
23-25	14	6%

● 16 and under ● 17-19 ● 20-22 ● 23-25 ● Under 16



Ethnicity

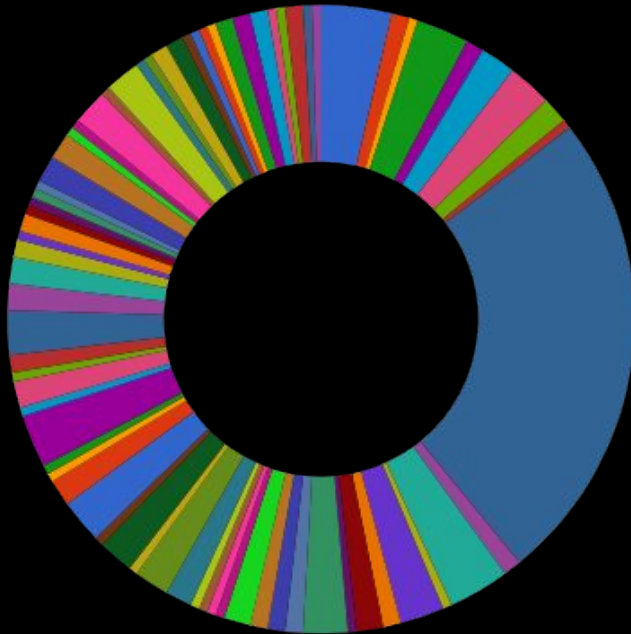


Ethnicity	Number of participants	%
White British	67	36%
Pakistani	38	17%
African	22	10%
Caribbean	20	19%
All other*	74	18%

*see data sheet for further breakdown



Areas



College	Number of participants	%
Halesowen	61	28%
Sandwell	107	48%
Birmingham Metropolitan	47	21%
Other	5	2%

*Please see data sheet for postcode breakdown



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Some Observations



‘Arts’ and ‘Culture’ not ‘Arts and Culture’

Subtle difference/Big differences



'Arts' and 'Culture' not 'Art and Culture'



Our first question to participants was 'what is arts and culture?'

This question provoked blank faces and disengaged shrugs. Interestingly, when our facilitation team broke this down and asked the same participants 'what is art' and 'what is culture' they were able to provide eloquent and insightful definitions of both those terms.

Young people understood 'art' to be an opportunity for self-expression or connection, and in the first instance linked that opportunity to mediums such as drawing or painting. However, when questioned they were willing to expand their definition of what mediums constitute art to encompass a wide range of practises ranging from film/media to abstract installation, to fine art and dance.

If art was an expression of 'the self', then the young people we spoke to were in agreement that 'culture' represents the expression of 'the wider self'. Young people from minority backgrounds in particular viewed the notion of culture as being related to their heritage, or to a wider set of practises they adhered to within their communities.

Once they had defined both terms separately, they were able to explain how the two intersect and one can help to communicate the other.

‘Arts’ and ‘Culture’ not ‘Art and Culture’



Without further provocation, they made reference to several art forms which helped them to communicate culture.

In this context, music and dance were by far the most accessible forms of expression (59% listed music or dance as the art form they were most likely to engage with).

Many young people shared stories of intergenerational culture exchanges; dancing in their living rooms and listening to their parents favourite songs being common theme amongst responses. This was a major contributor to the 142 (40%) of young people who said that one of the places they were most likely to partake in culture was at home.

There was a noticeable difference in responses to the question of ‘what is culture’ between young people from minority or mixed backgrounds and those from of White British backgrounds.

Young people from BME communities were more likely to link the notion of ‘culture’ to rituals or practises they shared with their families, and centered this around a celebration of traditions or practises from their parent’s native cultures. In all 35% of young people who were from BME or mixed backgrounds cited their family as someone they would engage in culture with for this reason.

'Arts' and 'Culture' not 'Art and Culture'



Young people from White British backgrounds responded similarly with 33% of WB backgrounds telling us that they engaged in culture with family, but their responses focused more on the consumption of arts and culture; going to the cinema, or a concert for example.

The grey space between what is perceived to be arts and/or culture presents an interesting opportunity for ACE to explore what constitutes 'art' and what constitutes 'culture' with an aim to take these concepts out of their silos.

ACE is well placed to develop project and programmes which guide people through the process of understanding the intersectional nature of the two ideas. This would help to connect the things people are doing in their homes with the wider arts and culture community, strengthening both in the process.

“I didn’t know this was a thing”

Connecting with young people



“I didn’t know this was a thing..”



As part of our introduction, the facilitation team asked if participants had heard of the ACE, very few responded that they had (less than 5 responses)

This was true of students engaged in arts subjects and non arts subjects alike and despite some of the college infrastructure that we visited being funded by ACE (the PUBLIC)

This is important to note, as a lack of awareness of available support and platforms prevents young people from pursuing and building development opportunities for themselves.

It also meant that many young people were lamenting a lack of engagement opportunities despite opportunities being available to them locally.

This is reflected in the 31% of students we spoke to suggesting that ‘better communication’ is one of the things that is missing from arts provision in their communities. The question itself related to marketing of ACE funded projects, but participants were keen to express a need to hear more about arts provision in a wider sense.

When questioned as to what ‘provision’ they wished to hear about, they were sure that this should include training opportunities as well as opportunities to consume culture

“I didn’t know this was a thing..”



When questioned about what that communication could look like common responses were around social media (Twitter, Instagram, etc). Our facilitation team were able to push back on this, and referred them to an ACE’s active social media presence and asked some further questions such as:

“If ACE already use social media to connect, and you aren’t seeing that, what needs to change?”
“What else could ACE do to connect with you”

Once they’d taken some time to consider the idea, many arrived at the conclusion that ‘hands on’ interaction was a useful way to connect with young people. The Doink installation they were engaging with was provided as an example on several occasions. This is reflected in the massive 65% of young people who suggested that ‘more participation opportunities’ were a thing that is missing from arts provision in their areas.

Young people are calling out for a chance to engage, but there are obvious frustrations in working out how to go about doing that.

A related pattern here is how linked young people’s engagement in arts and culture are to their academic environments, more on that [here](#)

16+ Drop Off

Schools and Colleges as curators and
engagement gateways



16+ Drop off - school as engagement gateway



The vast majority of young people we spoke to fell into the 16-19 age bracket, this is a group of young people who are experiencing massive periods of change in their lives, personally, socially and academically.

When asked what creative pastimes they engaged in outside of their studies, many were able to share experiences which involved their school experience, either as organized after school clubs or through their school curriculum and lesson environments.

Of the 93 young people who told us that they engage in 'literature', 'theatre', almost all of them went on to discuss course texts or productions they had been involved in. College students in their second year were still talking fondly of books they had studied for GCSE, and sadly many struggled to mention other books they had read outside of class since then, even if they ranked 'literature' in their 'top 3 things they like to do'.

They spoke of how their engagement had tailed off since starting their FE course either due to constraints on their time, new focuses, or crucially due to a perceived lack of opportunities for participation.

This lapse in engagement is difficult to recover from, and as students move from college and into work, this engagement can cease all together.

This is especially true for young people who have to manage the expectations of strict parents and might not have the freedom to go out and engage in the arts like others in their peer groups. This point is the focus of the next observation.

‘I’m not allowed...’

The need to bring arts and culture within reach



I'm not allowed...



For many young people we spoke to, 'arts and culture' is something that they engage with mainly in the home. (32% of respondents told us that they engage in culture at home only)

This was attributed to a number of different reasons, but a prevalent one was ease of access to opportunities.

Many young people felt unable to access opportunities based on both time and place. That is, they were not allowed to stray too far from home, too late in the evening. This was especially true of females with 35% of the young women we spoke to claiming to solely engage in culture at home. This is contrasted to 29% of young men saying the same.

This gap grew when ethnic backgrounds were taken into account, with 72% of young women from BME backgrounds citing home as a space they engage in culture, contrasted with 63% of young women from White backgrounds.

When asked if programming during the day (at college maybe), or more localised events would positively affect what they engage in the vast majority agreed that it would.

This presents a huge opportunity to engage a whole cross sector of society who are otherwise disenfranchised from arts provision in the UK.

The Data



What are young people doing?



Most Popular 1st Choices

Music	105
Dance	24
Visual Arts	15

Most Popular 2nd Choices

Digital Media	44
Music	44
Dance	29

Most Popular 3rd Choices

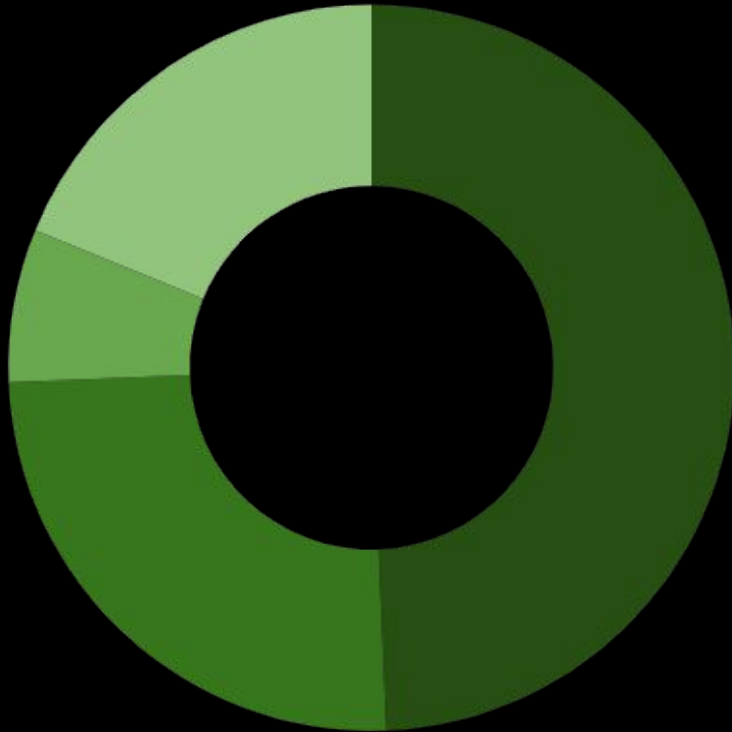
Digital Media	38
Theatre	24
Visual Arts	22

*see data sheet for
further break down

Who are they doing it with?



With who?



	Number of Responses	%
Friends	152	69%
Family	77	35%
Organised Groups	21	10%
By Themselves	58	26%

● Friends ● Family ● Organised Groups ● By Themselves

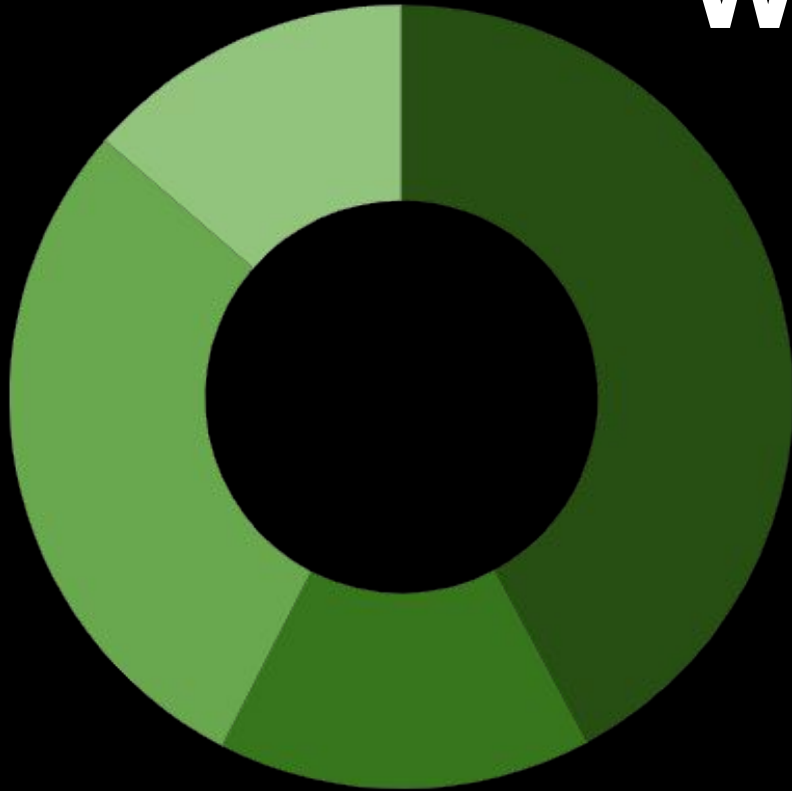


Where are they doing it?





Where?



● At home ● Online ● Local Area ● Outside Local Area

Number of Responses

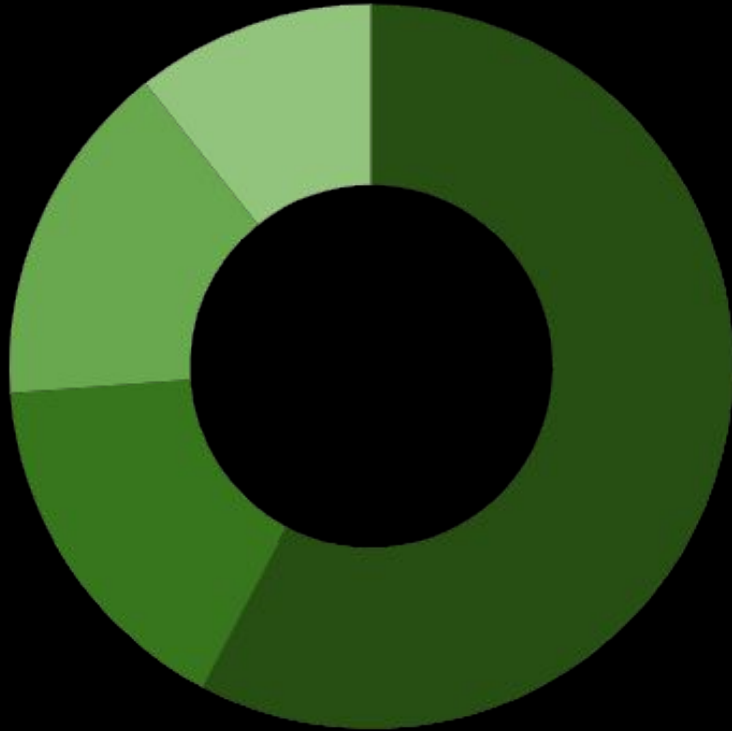
%

At Home	142	64%
Online	52	24%
Local Area	97	44%
Outside the Local area	46	21%

**Why are they doing what they
do?**



Why?



Number of Responses

%

For fun

172

78%

For their careers

46

20%

To be sociable

48

22%

For their health

32

14%

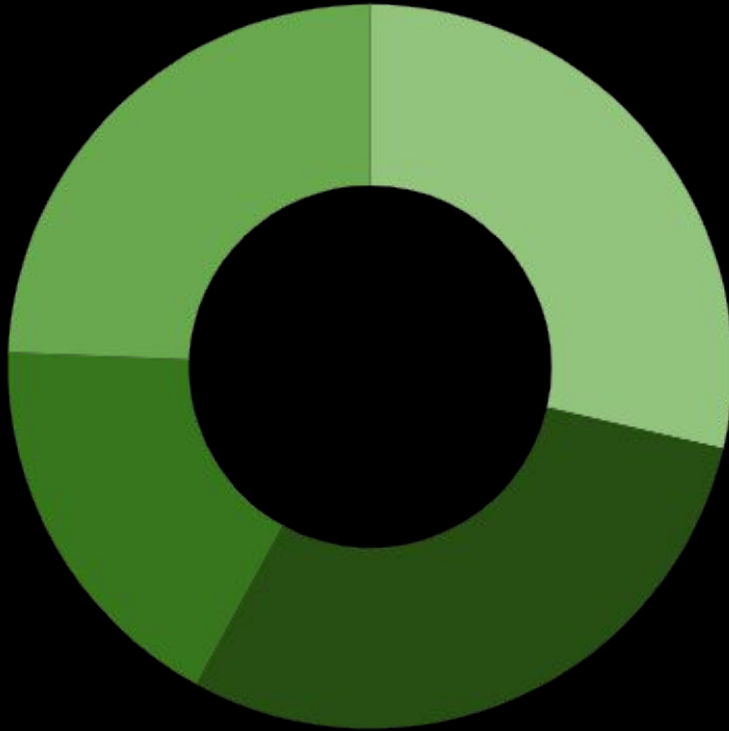
● For Fun ● To Be social ● For their careers ● For their health



What's missing?



What's missing?



Number of Responses %

More learning opportunities	81	37%
More participation opportunities	83	38%
More performance opportunities	50	23%
Better comms	69	31%

● More learning opps ● More participation opps ● More performance opps ● Better comms



Key Quotes





“Music is therapy”

“Art is nature, I see them as the same thing”

“Art isn’t just about drawing or pictures, it’s a way to show how you’re feeling”

“Sports and arts can intersect. I’d like to be able to show how sports can be art themselves”

“We use Arts and culture to break through society's chains. To be creative and be ourselves”

On art as expression...



“Art is the way people express themselves, even in everyday life”

“Arts and culture is expressing yourself without fear”

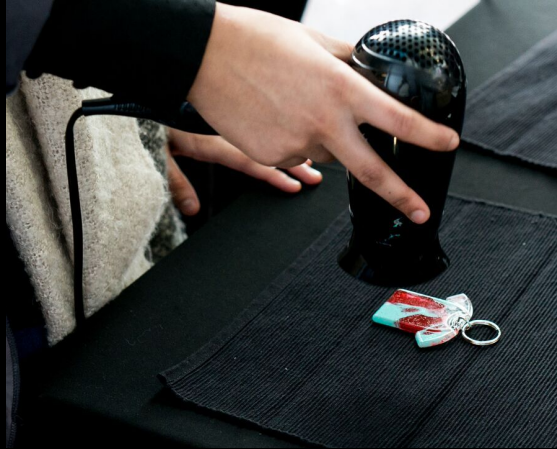
“Arts and culture is a love for being able to express creativity”

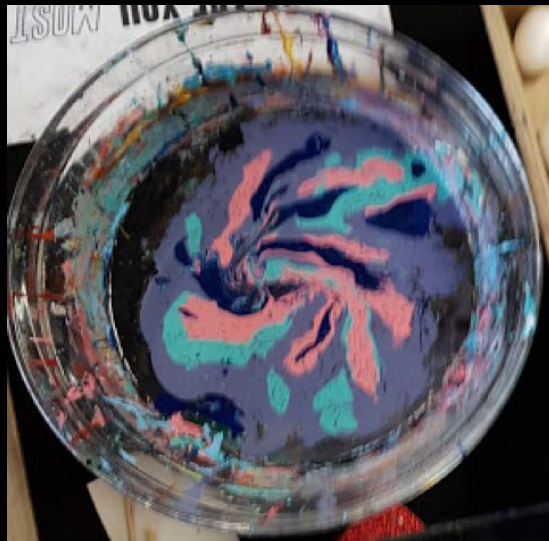


“I believe art is a type of community”

“It's a way to bring the community together and give a voice even if they're not confident in themselves. It's a way to give them that confidence”

“Art IS culture...culture formed within a community”







Want to dig deeper?

Ask Tony about our data labs
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