Heads Up
Creativity through Reuse and Repurposing of Surplus Materials

Carmel O’Sullivan
Carmel O’Sullivan is the Head of the School of Education and Director of the Arts Education Research Group in Trinity College. Carmel’s research interests are in the areas of arts education and inclusive education.

She has particular expertise of working with children and young adults with autism spectrum disorder, through a form of educational drama which she has pioneered and developed over many years, called Social Drama. Her most recent publications include a series of three books written especially for China, and designed to introduce Chinese early years teachers and educators to the use of creative drama in their classrooms.

About the Research

Heads Up was a pilot study designed to explore the benefits of creativity through the reuse of materials in inclusive educational settings.

Adopting an ‘artist in residence’ model within 18 educational and community based groups where children, young people and adults with diverse learning needs worked together in inclusive educational settings, Heads Up examined whether reuse materials encouraged greater flexibility and creativity in inclusive classrooms.

Run over a 16 week period, the workshops were facilitated by 11 visual artists using clean, high quality open-ended materials that had been salvaged from business.
ReCreate is a national social enterprise that takes end of line and surplus stock from businesses and makes it available to all sectors of the community for creative reuse. Inspiring curiosity, creativity and care for the environment, ReCreate was established 3 years ago to champion awareness around reuse and diverting materials from landfill.

Funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, Heads Up was evaluated by the Arts Education Research Group (AERG) who examined the role of visual arts integration in an inclusive society, and the creative connections between visual arts, ecology and environmentalism.

Framed within a discourse of inclusive and sustainable arts practices, this presentation will report on the major findings from this partnership pilot study.

Following the presentation, there will be a short panel discussion chaired by Dr Nicholas Johnson, Convenor of the Creative Arts Practice Research Theme in Trinity College.

The panel will feature Dara Connolly (Executive Director of ReCreate Ireland), Deirdre Rogers (participating artist and Arts Coordinator for ReCreate), Dr Michael Flannery (AERG and Head of Arts Education, Marino Institute of Education), and Heads Up participants, participating teachers, adult educators and artists discussing models of best practice in social enterprise where creativity is fostered, people are valued and the environment is cared for.

This event marks the launch of a book to celebrate the Heads Up programme, which will immediately follow the research seminar.