

‘One Shot Wonder’ Creative Partnerships London North Project
Perspective of the artist: Film Maker Pinny Grylls

‘Where am I? In a chair staring at bright blue sky, walking around inside my own computer game, floating weightless in a swimming pool, listening to Nina Simone REALLY loud, or laughing at the shadows on a wall? Invisible Films (Pinny Grylls and Gavin Marshall) were lucky enough to be chosen to work with the pupils of two Special Schools in North London to make one-minute films that somehow answered that question. The resulting workshops were magical, mind altering, exhausting, but always inspiring.

At William C Harvey where the pupils have more profound and multiple learning difficulties, it quickly became apparent that each child was a box of exciting creative potential just waiting to be unleashed. Their individual experience of ‘being’ - be it how they see, feel joy or interact was something we got very excited about helping them to communicate. It was however a challenging brief that stretched our problem solving skills both on a practical and a conceptual level – what does the world of that child feel like and how do we get them to communicate with us about it? Furthermore how do we help them get this ‘world’ of theirs onto film?

We knew that conventional modes of communication such as the spoken word, or the physical dexterity needed to hold and operate a camera were not an option. After meeting the kids we put together a ‘box of tricks’ to give us maximum flexibility to adapted to different pupils needs. This included a mini LCD screen attached to a camera to maximise the visibility of what was being filmed, magic arms for mounting the camera onto wheelchairs and the ‘Kaos Board’, whose touch sensitive pad is used by DJs to alter live sound and music. This helped students with limited manual dexterity or/and sight-impairments to experiment with creating soundscapes. The results were better than we could ever have dreamed of.

At Durrants School - whose pupils have mild to moderate learning difficulties, we got the pupils to draw pictures and ideas associated with their ‘perfect world’ and ‘worst nightmare’, and used these as a starting point for their films. One 14 year boy wrote as follows:

‘My perfect world is loads of bears and birds attacking everyone, being in Egypt. My worst nightmare is when people talk too fast, living forever, or being surrounded by empty black nothingness.

As a filmmaker I became very excited about all the potential of their imaginations, and was delighted to see them learning to use the camera to express themselves. The students also enjoyed watching and assessing their work as we went along.

The resulting films from both schools turned out to be highly personal, creative and at times deeply moving pieces of film making that eloquently expressed the unique worlds of the students involved. Furthermore as filmmakers their minds were an inspiration to us both.

Pinny Grylls. Invisible Films. April 2005.