

MUNIA BEOIR – A travelling tea chest of secrets

Designed and facilitated by Kathy Marsh working with Newry Young Women's Traveller Group
September – December 2007
Funded by SELB

I began a project in Newry city, working with a group of female teenagers from the Traveller community. The Travellers, a minority community indigenous to Ireland, have existed on the margins of Irish society for centuries. Working in association with the Southern Education and Library Board and the Art Council's Creative Youth Partnership Scheme, I devised a project with the group to coincide with National anti bullying week. The project's theme was, 'Faith, Race and Culture'.



Using disposable cameras, participants captured significant images relating to the home, family, work and school, leisure time, journeys etc. The photographs revealed visual elements that gave an insight into their outer and inner worlds.





We wanted to create a multi-layered animation, reminiscent of a pop video. We achieved this by using a variety of processes, a combination of photography, costume design, image theatre and performance, digital photography, photo shop, text and sound art.

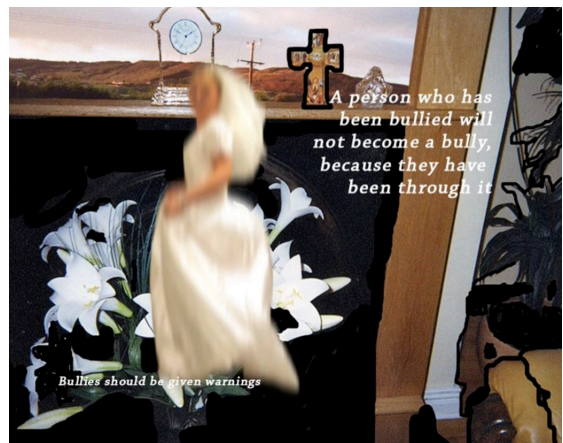


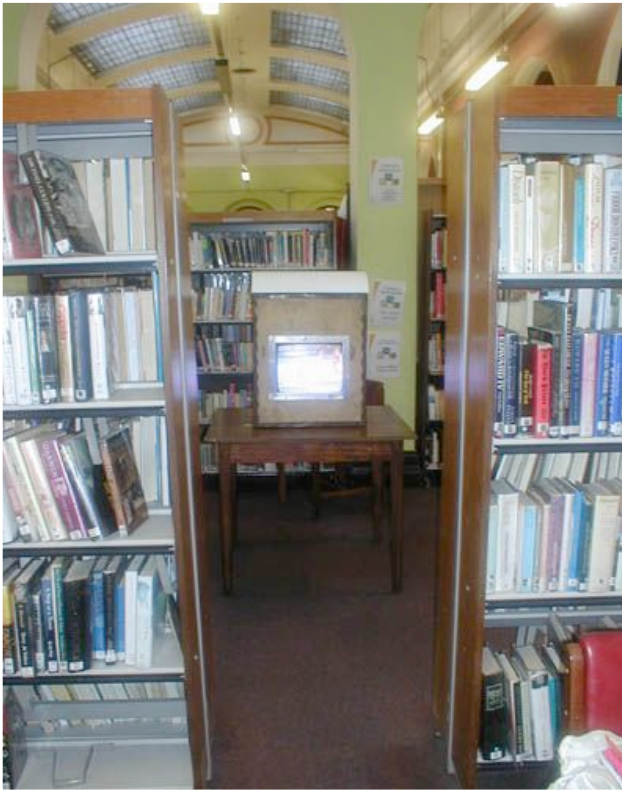
We explored Augusto Boal's methods of image theatre, a branch of Theatre Of The Oppressed. Image theatre involves communication through the sculpting of our own bodies. For the photo session, participants wore wedding dresses and veils - a symbol of rites of passage, escapism, aspirations and dreams. Using the principles of stop frame animation, resulting photos captured a sequence of movement, a dreamlike dance that would be used as an integral layer within the animation.



The animation is interspersed with statements and messages that connect with the visual narrative. During the project, participants played a bullying awareness game called, 'Beat The Bully'. The game was recorded and participant's reactions and verbal statements were transcribed and abbreviated into the pure form of truisms.

The group titled the film, 'Munia Beoir' which means, 'Good Woman'. They also decided to add a soundtrack to the piece and chose a version of the vivaciously unbridled song, 'Girls Just Want To Have Fun'.





Using an already existing public address system, it was planned for the film to be shown via the network of community TV's throughout Newry and Mourne. 'Munia Beoir' was further developed in tandem with the International 'Travelling Tea Chest Of Secrets' exhibition, a project jointly curated by Boomerang Productions and the Dofla Art Foundation in Amman, Jordan. It is interesting to condense a very public artwork into a small dark space such as a tea chest. The theme of the journey persists by showing the work as a moving image installation (without sound) via an enclosed monitor inside a tea chest. Continuing the journey and the use of the tea chest is a metaphor for a community that has a nomadic mindset even when settled. A house is considered only a stopping place between journeys. The tea chest is a vessel that carries our personal artefacts out on their journey. It is a symbol of transition that goes beyond the present and offers a glimpse of larger, new horizons.

Within a busy public space such as Cork city library the viewer is invited to write on the tea chest, to covertly respond to the statements that silently appear on the screen. Along the journey of the tea chest, this repeated action generates a continual accumulation of responses.

When I began the process of altering the tea chest, at the bottom I discovered an old colour photographic negative. It's origin and Date are unknown. I added the 'discovery' on to the end of the 'Munia Beoir' film. The tea chest is a container of personal belongings and secrets. In it's transience, the tea chest accumulates fragments of memories, people and places. As an entity it can capture, contain and reveal.



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