

HEA NORTH SOUTH RESEARCH PROGRAMME

TOGETHER

Collaborating across prison walls and borders: researching the impacts of prison-university partnerships North and South to co-create with incarcerated and university students an all-island Curriculum that builds empathy and mutual understanding between diverse communities



TOGETHER : COLLABORATING ACROSS PRISON WALLS

What are the challenges TOGETHER wants to address?

- Incarcerated persons north and south are amongst the most marginalised members of our societies whose voices often don't get heard or are *mediated by others*
- Criminology and other university students and researchers both north and south often research and write *about* but rarely *with* incarcerated persons
- Models of emancipatory prison-university partnerships both north and south are based on US and UK models of practice

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What previous work is *TOGETHER* building on?

In both Cork and Belfast: Incarcerated students and university students learn side-by-side in the prison education classroom

Belfast *Learning Desistance Together* (2019-ongoing):

- QUB School of Social Sciences, Education & Social Work at QUB and HMP Hydebank Wood (women and young men aged 18-22)
- Theory and research around prisoner rehabilitation and desistance from crime
- Affiliated with UK based *Learning Together* network

Cork *Inside Out Criminal Justice and Social Justice* (2019-ongoing/interrupted by Covid-19):

- UCC Department of Sociology and Criminology and Cork Prison Education Unit
- Critical Criminology and Sociology of Punishment and Crime
- Based on US model of *Inside Out*

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What does ***TOGETHER*** aim to achieve?

- To develop an all-island approach to prison-university education that can contribute to **building empathy and mutual understanding** between incarcerated and university students from different communities
- To facilitate incarcerated and university students in Cork and Belfast to **enter into dialogue** with each other across both project sites to collaboratively create a public catalogue of learning artefacts
- To **transcend imported models of prison-university education partnerships and co-develop with incarcerated and university students an all island TOGETHER curriculum** for convivial learning for Irish prison-university partnerships usable across academic disciplines
- To build an **all island research and practice network** on Irish prison-university classrooms

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Principles of emancipatory **research and praxis central to *TOGETHER***

- Collaborative knowledge is produced **through participatory**/action-oriented teaching and research praxis- **facilitating space for marginalised voices to speak and be heard** (O'Neill and Webster 2005).
- The emancipatory prison-education classroom and research is characterised through the fostering of **meaningful relationships** and **conviviality**
- **Creative, sensual and multi-modal** ways of learning, documenting and analysing of knowledge are deployed
- Modes of collaboration are based on rigour, validity and an **ethic of care**

Examples of Cork Prison Education Classroom led by **TOGETHER** team member Dr. James Cronin: Making thinking visible

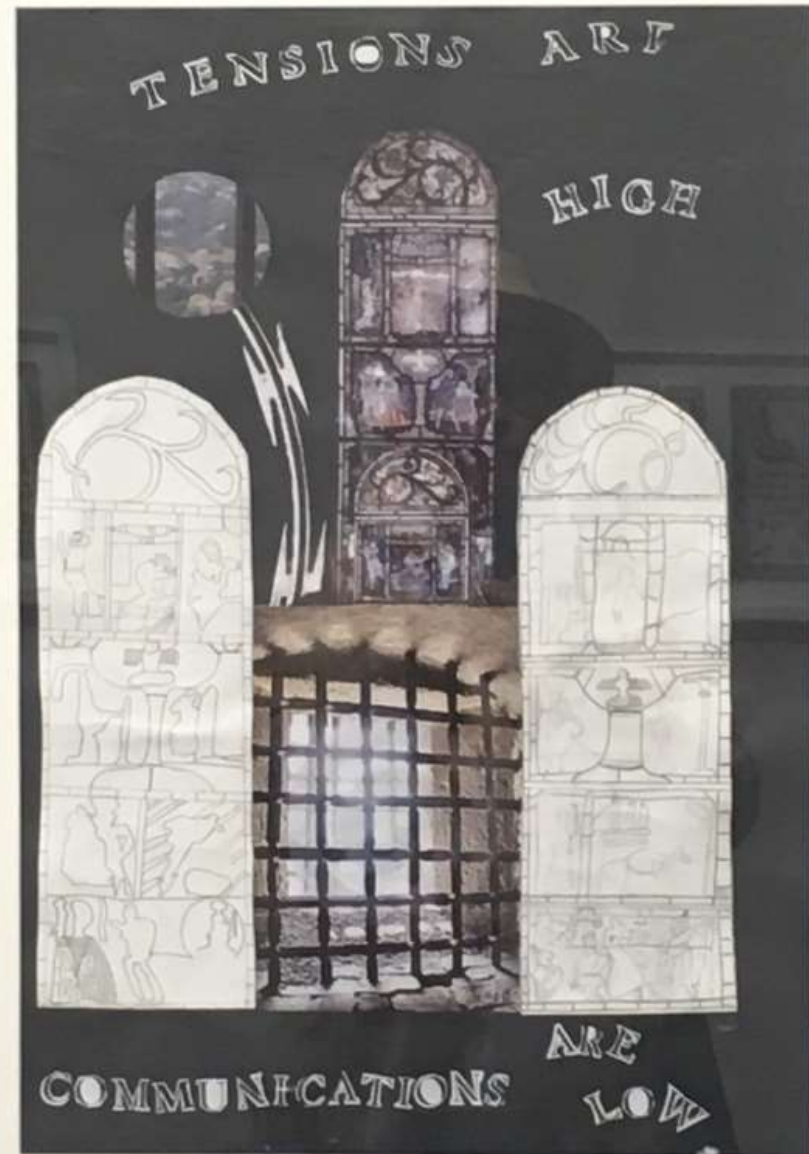
Student response to Paul Henry A *Connemara Village*, 1933-34, on creativity as freedom.

The index finger melting the liquid prison window bars acts as a metaphor expressing the transformative capacity of creativity as a form of resilience. This is visually communicated by means of a landscape collage assembled to evoke the student's memories of a secure childhood beyond a threatening urban environment. The mathematical symbols evoke his childhood memories of success at school.



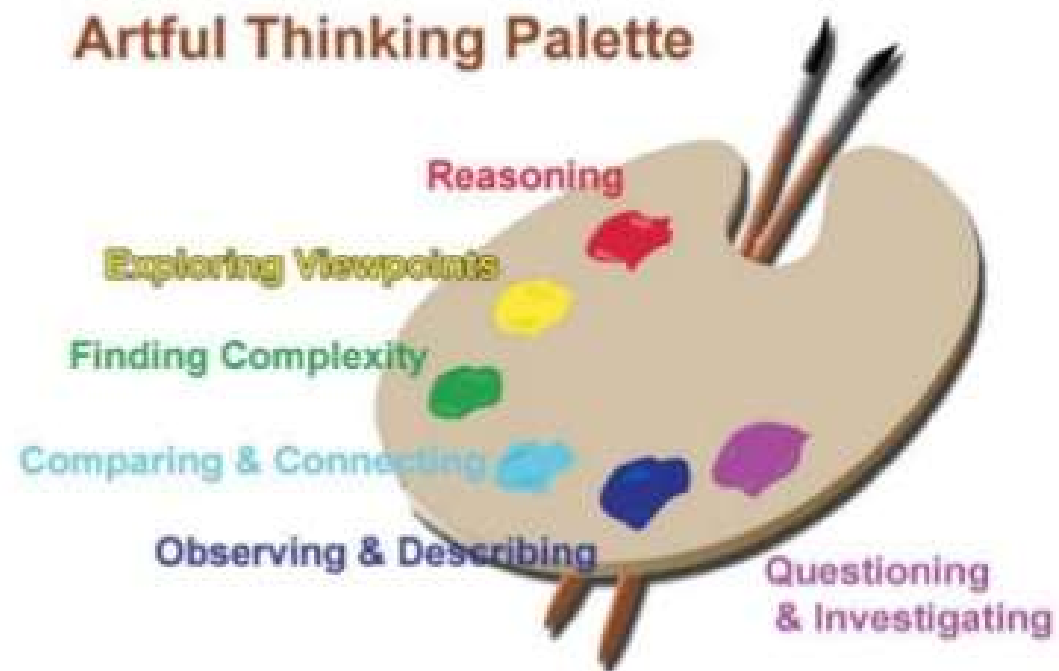
Making thinking visible:

student response to Harry Clarke *The Eve of St. Agnes* (1924) using windows as metaphors to express tensions between imagination (stained glass) and imprisonment (prison window and razor wire). This student reflects on building personal resilience by fostering effective communication strategies. The lesson is that communication diffuses tensions in prison. The student's text reads: "Tensions are High; Communications are Low".



ARTFUL THINKING

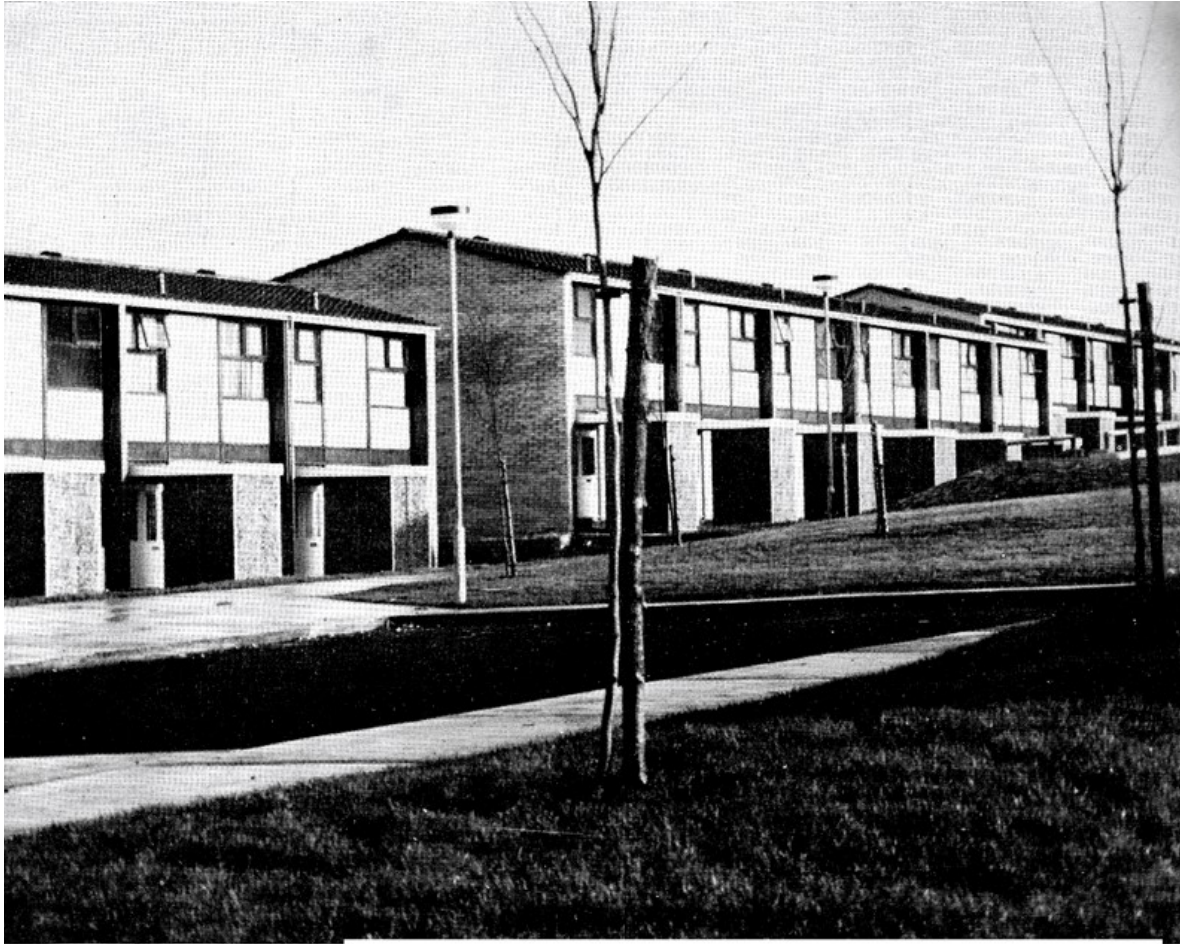
Artful Thinking is a process of looking, thinking and questioning. When added to the art making process, students enter more deeply into the art they see which leads to connecting more deeply to their own art making.





Hearth and home: student response to locality evoking a childhood memory of social housing in Mayfield, Cork in which a “house” became “home”. The sculpture resembles the modernist architecture of the National Building Agency Housing in Mayfield, Cork (1970s). Despite poverty, this social space evoked for the student memories of community and solidarity during a conversation on space as evoking memory.





Above and opposite :
NATIONAL BUILDING AGENCY HOUSING, MAYFIELD, CORK
DELANY MacVEIGH & PIKE



A student response to locality evoking a childhood memory of social housing in Mayfield, Cork (opposite)



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Cork Inside Out Inside Student (2019):

*You can let go of my hand now, the ship
is calling you. I know, it's sad we must
part, but you must go. Don't worry,
honestly, I will be fine, I assure you.
Farewell my academic friend.*

Cork Inside Out- Outside Student (2019):

*I walk away with a different perception of
those in prison as I always felt like I was
sat beside equals. Although we only met a few
people in prison, the acknowledgment,
contributions, and respect shown by the
students which we did meet has altered my
perceptions greatly.*

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