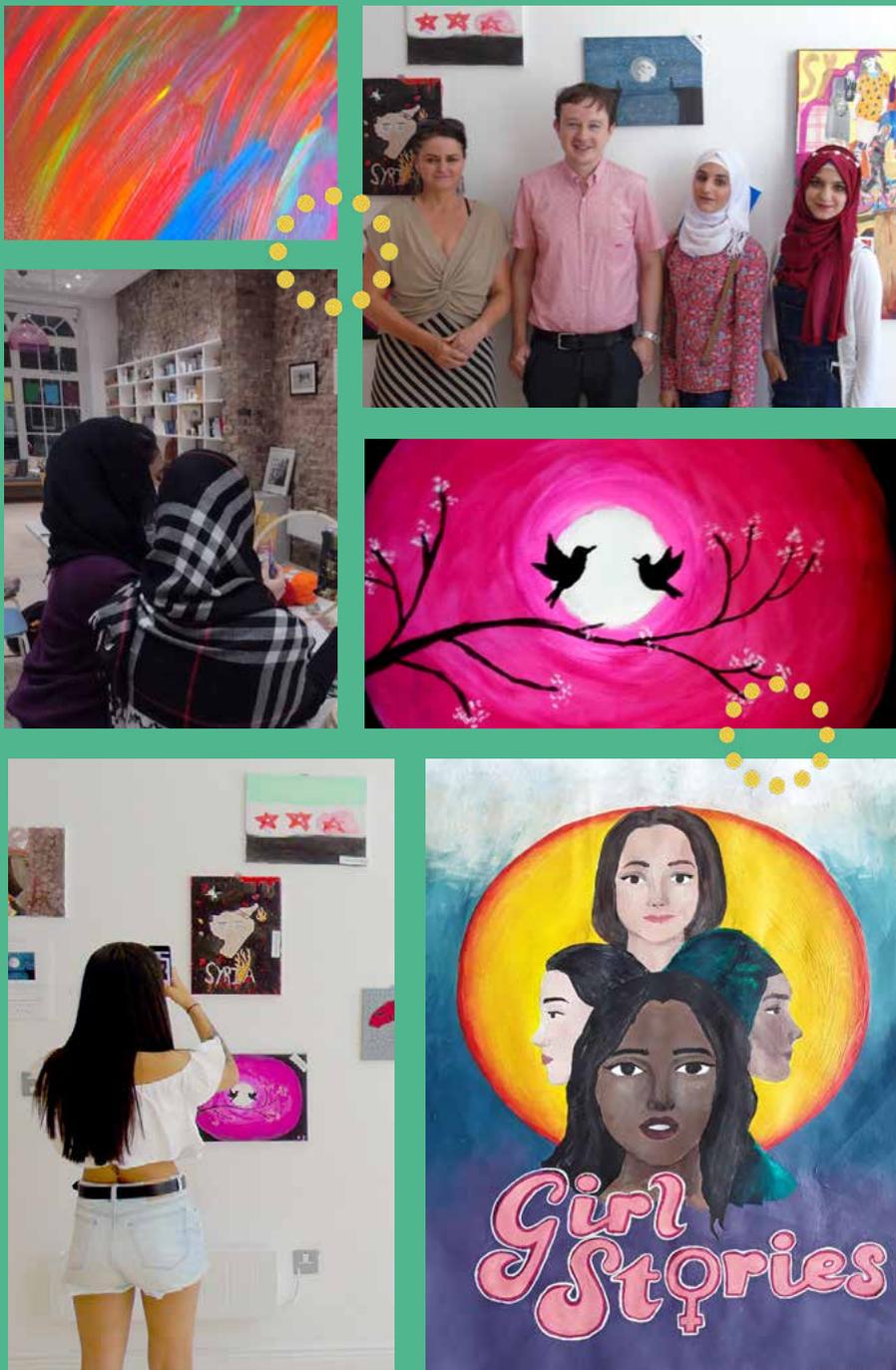


N4 NARRATIVE 4

Girls Stories Annual



LORNA BYRNE
Children's Foundation



Contents

Introduction: Girls Stories Project	01.
Project Art-iculate	03.
Art Exhibition “A Safe Space: Identity and Stories”	04.
Hot Topics: Raising awareness of the environment	05.
Garden Party	07.
A Day in Lockdown	09.
Story Exchange	10.
Weekly Workshops	11.
Creative Writing	13.
Paula’s Recipe: Windcakes from Latvia	15.
Thank yous	16.



Girls Stories Project

The Girls Stories project is an afterschool support group for young adolescent migrant females new to Limerick City.

It developed from a collaboration initiative with Doras Luimní that sought to respond to the social and emotional needs of young Syrian refugees who came to Ireland under the government's resettlement programme of 2015. The group has now expanded to include girls not only from Syria but also Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Croatia and Latvia. The Girls Stories project is generously supported by the Lorna Byrne Children's Foundation.

The migrant teenagers attend weekly workshops in the Narrative 4 Empathy Centre, a purpose built creative community space in Limerick City Centre. Each workshop is based on the principles and practices of creative arts therapies and is facilitated by an arts therapist. This means the workshops are led by young people with an emphasis on cultivating relationships across cultures. Fundamental to the success of the project is the concept of creating a safe space. The safe space is away from the lens of social media, home and living stresses and also school and exam pressures.



“Creative expression as an innate language acts as a unifier in the face of any language or cultural barriers.”

During the year, the participants also took part in the Narrative 4 Story Exchange. This evidence based model increases peer support and instills a sense of resilience and belonging by reducing feelings of isolation. Getting young people to share personal stories is a cathartic experience which breaks down barriers, builds trust and reinforces the idea that they are not alone. Through the project, the girls have met with other groups of young Irish people and exchanged their stories with them.

Creative expression as an innate language acts as a unifier in the face of any language or cultural barriers. The weekly sessions are a time for human encounters and story exchanges. The girls offer mutual support to each other and gain practical skills. They practice their spoken and written English and gain new creative skills working with clay, paint, print-making and art installations. The project facilitates social and emotional integration and cohesion while contributing to their developmental identities and forging new and exciting narratives within a changing world.

Sheila Richardson & James Lawlor



03.

Project Art-iculate

Project Art-iculate was an integration project for Syrian adolescents who had been resettled in Limerick City as part of the Irish Government's resettlement programme. The project aimed to make the displaced young people feel welcome and safe in a time of uncertainty. The weekly sessions took place over a 3 month period culminating in a social occasion and art exhibition at Narrative 4's Empathy Centre in partnership with Doras Luimní and supported by the Department of Justice. The idea of Girls Stories was developed from Project Art-iculate.



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice

Art Exhibition "A Safe Space: Identity and Stories"

December 2019



Dr. Anca Minescu. Researcher, Lecturer and Assistant Dean International of the Department of Psychology at the University of Limerick opened our December Exhibition "A Safe Space: Identity and Stories" in 2019.

The participants paid tribute to their cultural heritage and emerging identities. The girls expressed themselves through a range of media: drawing, printmaking, collage and painting. The show included life-size forms which showed the richness of their cultural heritage through pattern, colour and language.



04.

"Where do you go in the city if you're not a city person, where do you go as a young person to feel connection and to feel rooted? Narrative 4 is a place where you can be yourself and also be with others. It is a safe space and that is very important within this context."

With thanks to the Department of Justice, Communities Integration Fund, who supported this phase of the project.



Hot Topics - Raising Awareness of the Environment & Recycled Fashion

05.

Haleema Nasir

5th Year, Coláiste Nano Nagle, Limerick, Ireland

Half a ton of clothing every minute is dumped into a landfill in Ireland. That amount produces over 12 tonnes of carbon emissions – the same as driving 65,000 kilometers in a car. Buying just one white cotton shirt produces the same amount of emissions as driving 56 kilometers in a car.

There are several industries that slip under most of our radars in terms of their negative environmental impact. Clothing is another example of an

industry that does not always come up in conversations about sustainability, possibly because most of the clothing purchased in Ireland is made elsewhere. This gives the clothing industry a feel that the products come from nowhere and only rarely, like in the case of the 2013 Rana Plaza factory building collapse in Bangladesh which claimed 1134 lives and left over 2000 injured, is the real cost of fashion revealed to us. In China 80% of workers are young women. The average working day is 13 hours, 90

“The synthetic fibers being the biggest source of microplastics in our oceans releasing 1900 micro plastics per wash is jaw dropping.”



06.

hours a week with two days off a month. The garment workers refused to enter the factory when they saw a big crack in the building. The employers threatened them with a month's salary cut which would mean no food for their families. Why did this happen? It is because of our need for cheap fast fashion that caused this tragedy. It has led to safety measures not being followed and the workers themselves not being paid properly with poor working conditions.

The fast fashion industry is very damaging by many metrics, it is polluting, wasteful, and growing yearly. The water footprint of cotton is enormous and has contributed to severe

water shortages in many parts of the world. A single cotton shirt requires around the same amount of water as one person would drink in two-and-a-half years.

Whatever way we move forwards as a society one thing is certain: there is no room, environmentally or socially, for fast fashion anymore. Climate change is a reality and must be combated by the world together. The earth cannot be carelessly used in order to keep it from being destroyed.

Garden Party

In the Summer of 2019, Girls Stories held a party in the garden of Narrative 4's programme space on O'Connell Street, Limerick City.

The girls created a mural on the theme of growth including flora and fauna elements which they had worked on during the weekly workshops. Friends and family were invited to view the work and had mint tea from the garden itself and some traditional treats from the array of traditional foods stores in the locality.

07.



08.

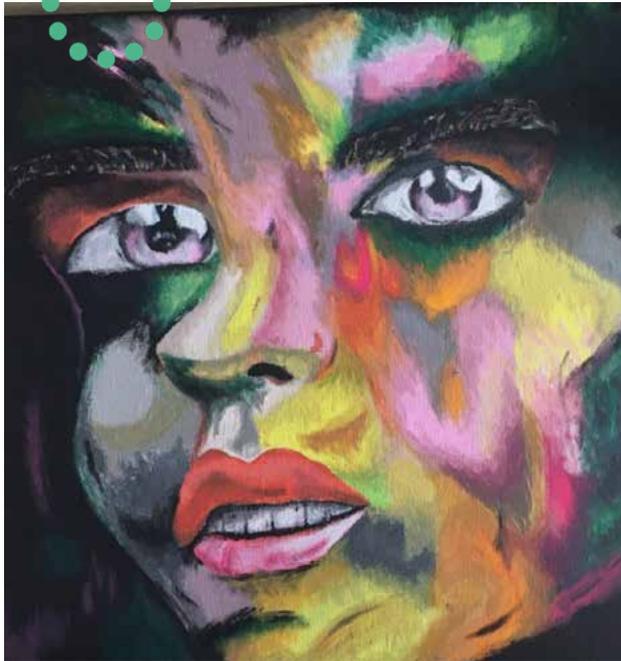


A Day in Lockdown

Stories and Painting

I was inspired by my personality. I decided to draw a little girl's face (which represents no matter what age I am, being silly is always possible). Then I decided to draw big purple eyes with a lot of fear in them (which represents my fearful vision of the situation that's happening in the world at the moment). Then I decided to draw a black background but with a lot of colourful splashes (which represent no matter how dark the situation gets, you must always try to see the bright side). - Paula

09.



Title: "My Fearful but Positive Self"

Paula

Materials used: Canvas fabric, makeup brushes, acrylic paint, walls and ceiling colour samples.

Size: 30cm x 30cm



10.

Story Exchange

with Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh and Girls Stories Participants, 2020

The Narrative 4 Story Exchange is an evidence-based methodology, which teaches young people empathy skills and improves wellbeing. The girls met with a group of students from Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh and took part in a Story Exchange. Both groups had prepared true stories about their lives based on the theme; 'our journeys through education'. After swapping stories with their partner, the participants had to retell their partner's story in the first person as if it was their own.

Weekly Workshops

Clay Workshop

The girls created bird boxes for the Narrative 4 garden out of clay using the technique of the slab method of clay making. The girls noticed the birds chirping in the garden as they attended this workshop. They each created a unique bird home and carefully decorated them with acrylic paint and a coat of varnish and placed them in the garden.



11.

Mask Making: Working with Culture and Identity

The girls participated in a mask making workshop. They used papier maché and mixed media materials. Each mask is a representation of an aspect of themselves, their history, religion, culture and the joys of their everyday life.



Henna Tattoos

Henna refers to the tradition of body painting with a paste made from the powdered, dried leaves of the henna plant. Typically done on the hands and feet, henna appears to have roots in various parts of the world but is perhaps best known for its significance as a pre-wedding staple throughout India where it is also an important part of many festivals. For our Henna workshop, the Girls from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan brought in some of their own henna materials to show the rest of the group and experimented with different designs.



12.

Printmaking

The Girls had the opportunity to participate in a printmaking workshop with a specialized printmaker from Limerick Printmakers, a vibrant printmaking studio and creative space located in the heart of Limerick City's cultural quarter. They experienced the art of etching and monoprinting.



Creative Writing



As well as exploring visual art, the girls also worked on creative writing. It helped them with their written and spoken English. They gained confidence in retelling their story, utilised their creative imagination, while exploring their emerging identities.

13.

My First Time at School

by Sima

My name is Sima. I am 19 years old. I was born in a big town in Afghanistan. My house was huge. I lived in an extended family with my parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and cousins. When I was 1 year old I started walking. I used to wake up early in the morning and play with my cousins. When I was 4 years old I went to school for the first time with my cousin. I remembered when we were late for school. We were running so fast that we fell on the road and fell about laughing. It was my best memory in my whole life. I studied to year 9 in my home country but it was very hard to live there. We moved to Ireland. It was life changing. After 2 years I went back to school again in Limerick. The teachers in Ireland helped me a lot. I completed my Leaving Certificate in 2019 and now I will go to art college in 2020. My life is going very well in Ireland and I hope it will be good forever.



I remembered when we were late for school. We were running so fast that we fell on the road and fell about laughing. It was my best memory in my whole life.

The Missing Poster

by Amna Bibi

Last night I went to my cousin's birthday party. I wore a red skirt (fancy) dress. The party finished at 2am. Everyone went home except me, I was anticipating that the bus would come, but it didn't come, I now had a problem! I started to walk home on my own. I was scared. My Mom and Dad were very distressed and worried about me. They thought maybe something had happened to me. I arrived late at home around 3am. My parents reported me missing to the Gardaí and they put missing posters up everywhere around the town. With little sleep and not seeing anyone from my family yet, I got up the next day and I went into the kitchen to make some breakfast, then to make my way to school. People were staring at me and I wondered why? I started to look all around me. There I was, my face plastered all over the place on the missing posters, I was shocked but also happy at the same time that I had made it home in one piece. But I still had a problem, my parent's reaction and what they would say, when I got home...



14.

People were staring at me and I wondered why? I started to look all around me.

Childhood Memories

By Sweira

I started school when I was 4 years old in Pakistan. I don't really remember my first day exactly but I remember one of happiest memories I have is learning poetry. There is one poem I learned which had a dance with it. I had to bend down from side to side as I recited the poem. I wasn't wearing a scarf at that age and my hair touched the ground. My hair was sooo long. I remembered it very well.



Paula's Recipe: Windcakes from Latvia

For the dough:

1 cup of water.
100g of unsalted butter.
1 cup of flour.
5 eggs.
Powder sugar for decoration.

For the filling:

500ml double cream.
500g cottage cheese.
Sugar to taste.
Vanilla sugar to taste.

Method:

Boil the water.
Add the butter.
When the butter is melted, keep on the heat and add flour.
Mix until dough is formed.
Take off the heat and let it sit for 7-10 minutes.
Add one egg at a time and mix.
Put baking paper on a tray and place dough balls onto it.
Bake in the oven for 25 minutes at 180 degrees.
When they are golden brown taken them out and leave to cool.
For the filling, mix the double cream with cottage cheese and both sugars.
Mix until cream is doubled in size and is not wet.
Cut the top off each dough ball and pour some filling in.
Sprinkle some powdered sugar on top for decoration.

Lai labi garso! (Enjoy!)



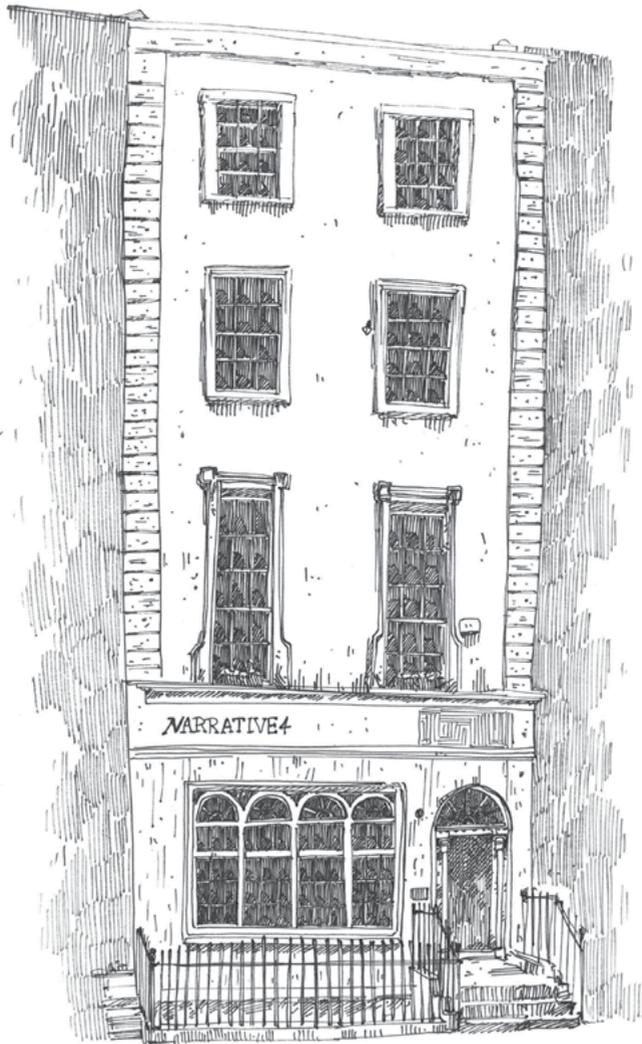
Sheila Richardson
Facilitator

Sheila Richardson facilitated weekly workshops for Girls Stories. Sheila is an Art Therapist, Visual Arts Lecturer, and Visual Artist. Sima Habib and Haleema Mughal assisted Sheila in the coordination of the workshops.

The Girls Stories Integration Project was co-founded by Sheila Richardson and Dr. James Lawlor (Director, Narrative 4 Ireland).

We wish to thank all of the participants and contributors involved in the Girls Stories project, and our generous sponsor, the Lorna Byrne Children's Foundation.





Narrative 4 trains secondary school teachers and youth workers as facilitators of the Story Exchange, an evidence-based teaching tool that teaches empathy and fosters social connection.

To find out more about Narrative 4 Ireland's projects, CPD training and The Empathy School Award visit [Narrative4.ie](https://www.narrative4.ie)

Narrative 4 Ireland – Company Limited By Guarantee – Company Number 594852.
Narrative 4, 58 O'Connell Street, Limerick, Ireland, V94 XV70.
Registered Charity Number (RCN) is 20155254. CHY Number : 22037.



NARRATIVE 4