

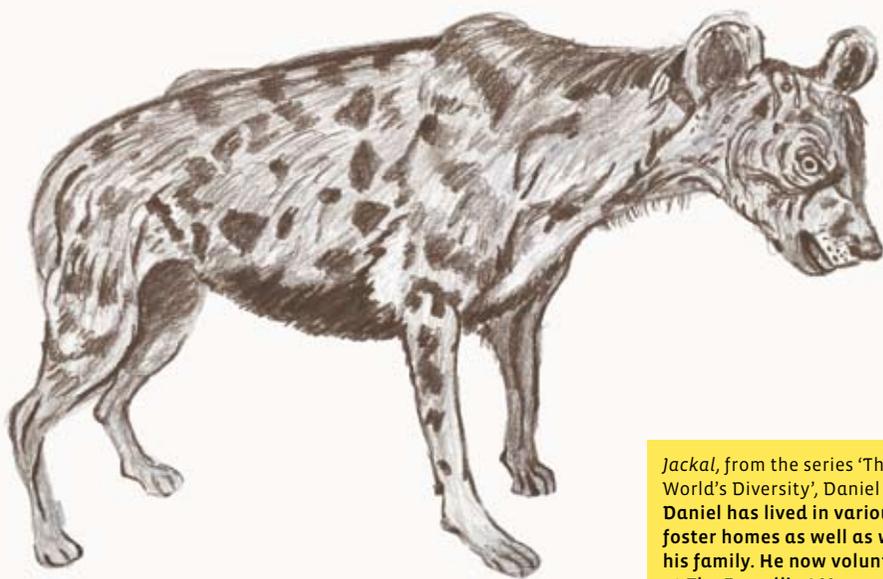
This is what happens
when you put
looked-after young
people in frames
instead of boxes

flourish

THE IMPACT OF FLOURISH
2006/07



Untitled, Tabitha Newman
Tabby is 17 years old and attends a special needs school in Norwich. She will have her first solo exhibition in August 2007



Jackal, from the series 'The World's Diversity', Daniel Defoe
Daniel has lived in various foster homes as well as with his family. He now volunteers at The Foundling Museum, having been part of the Flourish exhibition there



Life in Portsmouth, Danny Wortington
Danny is 18 years old and has been in care for seven years. He is now settling into a career as a photographer

What started as an exhibition now has a life of its own

Flourish started in 2006 as a one-off exhibition, showcasing the work of over 25 young artists, who were all 'looked-after' in some way.

It was initiated by Robert Maragh at Newham Children and Young People's Services with two main aims: to show just how much children and young people in care can achieve when their talents

are nurtured, and to provide those same young people with confidence, skills and a meaningful sense of achievement.

The Flourish show has since toured several exhibition spaces around the country. But it's not just the venue that's changed; it's the whole idea of what Flourish could – and should – be.

Flourish has pioneered a successful working model for how to motivate and include young people in creating and staging a highly professional art event.

It positively encourages professional development as those taking part can pick up all manner of transferable skills – from dealing with the public to arts administration.

Plus, according to Arts Council England, artists themselves are 'the source of work that sustains whole industries'¹ – in broadcasting, in publishing, in fashion, in design, in advertising, in architecture... The trouble is, people who start off 'in care' seldom get to make that transition.

Flourish sets out to challenge this – but to succeed, it needs ongoing support.



Blue (detail), Nikou Nazaripour
Nikou is a 22-year-old punk from Portsmouth who decided to enter care when she was 16 because of family problems. She has just been accepted to study illustration at Maidstone University

'Living proof that all children have potential and a vibrant reminder that our job is to give all children the opportunities they need to succeed in life.'

Beverly Hughes MP, former Minister for Children, Young People and Families at the Department for Education and Skills who opened the first Flourish show in Brighton, October 2006

Can you see the potential?

According to a recent Green Paper, having ‘things to do and places to go’ can make an important contribution to the wellbeing of looked-after young people, ‘not only helping to improve educational achievement and emotional and mental health but also by increasing their confidence, motivation and self-esteem’.²

If Flourish continues, it could have a significant impact, not just on the artists involved, but also on the public’s attitude to young people in care.

Flourish has already been met with great enthusiasm by the artists, carers, and those who work in local authority and voluntary sectors. The question now is, ‘where next?’

Flourish has the potential to go from being a one-off event, to being an ongoing source of independent support for looked-after young people.

Curator Beatty Hallas has brought together a board of young people to help develop Flourish – and to select work for a second show.

But as Flourish has outgrown its original remit, it is now on borrowed time.

Right now, Flourish needs:

- associate project champions – to take Flourish forward as an organisation, or as a charity, or as a template for national roll-out...
- practical help – in the form of funding, or other support.

In return, it offers immediate, tangible and exciting results.

‘Too often, we hear negative reports surrounding children and young people who have been ‘looked-after’. This exhibition offers the public a glimpse beyond statistics, to witness how art can create positive means of expression no matter what an individual’s background may be.’

Amanda Murphy, participating artist, who is now pursuing a career in the music industry

PLEASE GET INVOLVED

If you can help, or would like to know more, call **07905 789 547** and speak to Beatty Hallas, or email info@flourish-art.org

You can also find out more about Flourish, see work from previous exhibitions, and read about Flourish in the news at www.flourish-art.org

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Why Flourish must have a future

Looked-after young people get a pretty raw deal – just look at the evidence:

‘For many of the 60,000 children who are in care at any one time, childhood and adolescence are often characterised by insecurity, ill health and lack of fulfilment... we can hardly be surprised that it results in many children underachieving educationally and getting nowhere near fulfilling their potential as adults.’³

‘Over 30% of care leavers are not in education, employment and training at age 19 as compared to 13% of all young people.’⁴

‘The life chances of all children have improved but those of children in care have not improved at the same rate. The result is that children in care are now at greater risk of being left behind than was the case a few years ago – the gap has actually grown.’⁵

In the face of hard facts, the arts offer more than a cosy refuge:

‘Opportunities for... expressing creativity are recognised as important factors for enhancing emotional wellbeing and combating a low sense of identity and self-esteem.’⁶

‘The arts offer young people unique opportunities to explore and learn, helping them become engaged members of the community.’⁷

The potential is there. Let’s make it Flourish.

↳ *Wolf*, from the series ‘The World’s Diversity’, Daniel Defoe (detail)

↳ *Untitled*, 2006 Tabitha Newman (detail)



Confidence, motivation, skills and achievement. How's that for starters?

Flourish may have started as a short-term exhibition, but for those who took part, there are tangible long-term benefits.

Some went on to university, or college, or out into the world of work with increased confidence and self-esteem. One is about to have a solo exhibition – at the age of 17. And all were treated as artists in their own right with something important and interesting to say.

What's vital now is that Flourish remains a stable and reliable source of support for looked-after young people. The talent is there. And having high expectations is one of the best ways to encourage it.

‘Resilience is not so much a fixed trait in a person, but a quality which may be displayed when sufficient support of the right kind helps the person to withstand the impact of adversity.’

Robbie Gilligan, Professor of Social Work and Social Policy and Director of the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College, Dublin

According to recent research, there are five factors which are critical to the success (or otherwise) of looked-after children⁸:

- Being given high expectations
- Having people who care about you
- Experiencing stability
- Receiving encouragement and support
- Being able to participate and achieve

Flourish scores highly on all five points. But if it is to carry on inspiring success, it needs a future.

If you could become a project champion, or offer practical help in the form of skills, advice or funding, please get in touch.

PLEASE GET INVOLVED

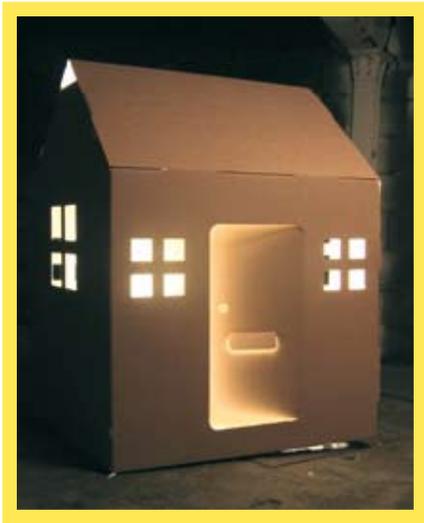
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showcasing artworks
by looked-after children
and young people



↑ *House of Our Own* (detail), a collaborative project giving a group of socially-excluded young female offenders an opportunity to explore their life experiences in a creative context

→ *Untitled*, from 'Tree Studies', Cherie Cargill (front)

NOTES

- 1 *Local Government and the Arts: A Vision for Partnership*, 2003, Arts Council England
- 2, 3, 4, 5 *Care Matters, Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care*, 2006, Department of Education and Skills
- 6 *Promoting the Health of Looked-after Children*, 2002, Department of Health
- 7 *Local Government and the Arts: A Vision for Partnership*, 2003, Arts Council England
- 8 *Celebrating Success: What Helps Looked-after Children Succeed*, 2006, Social Work Inspection Agency

WWW.FLOURISH-ART.ORG

With thanks to our champions, supporters and partners:



Care Services Improvement Partnership **CSIP**

Children and Families Programme