

## Ultra-red with St. Marylebone C.E. School

*In fact, two conceptions of citizenship are opposed here. [One] can claim to advance the objective of social transformation and equality, but in the final analysis it always limits itself to the statist axiom, 'the law is the law'... The other attempts to form a concrete articulation of the rights of man and the rights of citizens, of responsibility and militant commitment.*

— Étienne Balibar

Ultra-red's project, *RE:ASSEMBLY* has been a multi-year collaboration with the St. Marylebone C.E. School community and representatives of constituencies in neighbourhoods adjacent to the Edgware Road. Ours is the latest of many Serpentine Gallery-initiated school projects. Among the primary lessons Ultra-red drew from our review of these past projects is that Education, like Art, is a manifestation of fundamental social contradictions, including the constantly recalibrated relationships between rights and responsibilities, and social well-being and wealth. Within schools, these contradictions are a border between past and future, between what a society insists the young carry forward and the images of the world they are charged with making. Today, these concerns are expressed in the language of citizenship. Citizenship has its own curriculum while also being a theme that runs through all the other curricula. It is good citizens that schools are charged with producing above all else.

As with many schools in London, the St. Marylebone student body is diverse. A significant number of the students are refugees, asylum seekers or new immigrants to the United Kingdom. Consequently, the legal issues surrounding citizenship have a particular urgency within the school. It is however, the elision of this regime of citizenship with the ideologies of social good embedded in the curriculum and the implicit and explicit rules of the

school and city that make this a particularly overwhelming concern. This elision is also the opportunity for expansive solidarity. At the very least, citizenship entails a negotiation between a young person's legal identity, the sense of self derived from the pathways she has traveled to reach this place and this moment, and the promise of membership, rights, freedoms and participation.

While school curricula narrow increasingly to testable knowledge and the needs of financial entrepreneurialism, the art room remains, for the moment at least, a space for expansive investigation and the exploration of complexity.

Ultra-red's facilitation of this investigation of citizenship has involved what Paulo Freire – the Brazilian popular educator – describes as, 'people's thinking about reality and people's action upon reality'. Our work has been to identify how the conditions of citizenship are materialised in the everyday and then to work together to identify new citizenships, ones we make by questioning the power in established forms. Our process is simple Together we listen to each other, the school, the city. We ask what we have heard, organise our responses and reflect on what have we learned. Then we compose the reality we have analysed into songs for new collectivities.

— Ultra-red

Ultra-red worked in collaboration with **Gabriella Alberti, Nelly Alfandari, Sajad Al Hairy, Polly Brannan, Gill Clarke, Charlie Dark, Alexandra Donofrio, Alberto Einstein, Chris Jones, Robbie Lockwood, Howard Matthew, Katie Pearce** in addition to **the faculty of teachers at St. Marylebone C. E. School**

RE:ASSEMBLY:  
*Civis Sum – Hymnal*, excerpt  
from 'Songs of Citizenship'  
2009  
Courtesy of the artists

30.

**11<sup>th</sup> May 09 Monday**  
Why did the government  
want the schools to teach  
citizenship? Lesson in school.  
It makes people feel like they are part of  
something Human rights  
Passport Something the government  
made up Why did they make it up?  
Its about reality,  
right and wrong, global issues . . . etc.  
Rights and responsibilities  
of a countries citizen . . .

31.

**Community Certificates Citizen**  
littering. (picking it up) sharing.  
(ideas). recycling. charity.  
Love. giving to the poor caring art.  
Projects with youths. Talents.  
Save the world. Creativity. Changing  
your self(?) Only if you want to!

A wide and varied art education is critical to the rounded development of young people. The diversity of the curriculum can be developed by using outside artists and institutions to broaden experience and teaching and learning methods. The Serpentine Gallery, Ultra-Red and St. Marylebone School have been working in collaboration on the Edgware Road Project since 2008. Students, staff and artists have together explored the social and cultural aspects of the local area, migration patterns, citizenship and their own personal connections to the locality. What makes this project innovative is that the school, the gallery and the artist collective planned and developed ideas together. We were all deeply invested, and developed strategies to make the project work. The project has reached many of the students in the school, crossing many subject areas and year groups. Some aspects have been large-scale events that involve 150 students over a three-day arts event, or artists team-teaching History, Geography, art and drama lessons, hosting a summer school and work experience. It has been fully embedded into the life of the school. This piece was created with Ultra-Red, 150 Year 9 pupils, 6 subject areas, 11 artists and many teachers. The role of art in schools is largely dependent on the head teacher and senior team who would support it with time, resources and – importantly – by encouraging innovative projects with a different educational experience for students.

*Stephanie Cubbin, Head of Art, St. Marylebone C.E. School*



RE: ASSEMBLY: *Civis Sum* –  
*Songs for Edgware Road*  
2012  
Five-channel video  
Courtesy of Bevis Bowden



RE: ASSEMBLY: *Civis Sum*, Ultra-red with  
Year 9 students at St Marylebone C. E.  
School  
2009  
Photography: Mark Blower