

# RE: ASSEMBLY

## Ultra-red residency

*The Edgware Road Project brought together artists, school children and the Serpentine Gallery to collaborate on a research project looking at state and social citizenship. Steph Cubbin, head of art and SLE at St Marylebone School explains*

From 2009 to 2013 the St Marylebone School, the Serpentine Gallery projects team and the Ultra-red Sound Artist Collective collaborated on a research project called The Edgware Road Project. Looking at state and social citizenship, this work took place against a backdrop of government policies that had the potential to marginalise arts subjects. It was hoped that the collaborative approach would achieve a diverse range of cross-curricular work.

The project first began when the Serpentine Gallery invited a range of groups and institutions to participate in a project that would centre on the Edgware Road, a district rich in social and cultural history. The idea was that schools, businesses, community groups and artists would participate in small investigations that would contribute to a larger body of research and creative outcomes.

An open publishing platform ([edgwareroad.org](http://edgwareroad.org)) was created by the digital artists collective Camp to be used for local research, which could then be distributed as journals, pamphlets and webcasts.

The St Marylebone School is an all-girl non-selective state school in central London. It is a multi-faith Church of England school, partnered by the adjoining St Marylebone parish church. It has a mixed cohort of students from different socio-economic backgrounds and impressive academic results, a specialism in the performing and visual arts, and a head teacher who is passionate about creativity. All this played a part in the successful turnaround from an underachieving to overachieving school twenty years ago.

And so, St Marylebone began a four-year residency with the Serpentine Gallery and Ultra-red, a sound-artist collective that works in the heart of communities, using their practice of 'listening' as a central protocol.

Ultra-red are a group of artists, musicians, educators and researchers who focus their practice within different social movements, including the struggles of migration, anti-racism, participatory community development, housing, gentrification and the politics of HIV/AIDS.

The group's approach to participatory investigations is inspired by the Brazilian popular educationalist Paulo Freire. The audio, textual and visual representations of collective investigative processes and the knowledge it produces is an essential element of his approach and led to Ultra-red moving into a secondary educational setting in which those protocols sat in a natural home. Ultra-red had a series of protocols that were followed as part of its intrinsic practice.

The Ultra-red 'sound art' practice of listening is an integral part of its process in working with communities, and so it listened...to pupils, teachers, support staff, in school, in church and in the surrounding community. Ultra-red member Robert Sember listened to staff talking about the changes to policy by government and the huge implications on their vision and passion for their vocation. He listened to students about the devaluation of the exams that they were studying, the pressures to achieve when they had an undefined future, particularly after the huge financial outlay in further education. The resounding focus of discourse concerned areas of state and social citizenship.

During the period of the residency there were many research projects with many year groups and subjects that all contributed to the bank of investigations undertaken. The aim of the work was similar to the whole aims of the Edgware Road Project, in that there were many smaller studies contributing to a larger investigation.

A year 12 (ages 16-17) project mapped land ownership and the economy of the Edgware

