An international project on the visual language created, used and interpreted by and for the global refugee population
According to the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR, one in every 113 people on the planet is now a refugee. Around the world, someone is displaced every three seconds, forced from their homes by violence, war and persecution. There are 65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. Children below 18 years of age constituted about half of the refugee population in 2016. In the next 25 years, experts estimate that the world refugee population will likely be between 150 to 300 million people. Which constitutes a population made up of several hundred nationalities speaking as many languages, the majority of them children alone, often who can’t read nor write.

Knowing basic details about these populations is vital to the understanding, help and integration of refugees across the world. The British Medical Journal has identified language as one of the major barriers for refugee populations. Effective communication is absolutely essential, without it, progress made in front of one of the biggest problems that humanity has to face, is almost impossible.

1 UNHCR’s Field Information and Coordination Section track these figures and release every year their Global Trends and Global Appeal reports. For more information, contact: stats@unhcr.org
2 According to a 2015 study carried out by the Institute for Environment and Human Security of the United Nations University. Similar figures have also been forecasted by the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM).
Introduction of Yesterday Today Tomorrow

This project, created by Bryan Mc Cormack in September 2016, started out as a conceptual art project with the intention of giving the refugee population their own singular, common voice by creating a visual language that can be communicated by every man, woman and child, independently of nationality, education, language or dialect spoken.

So far, Yesterday Today Tomorrow has visited and worked in 27 camps and squats in 8 countries across Europe, collaborating with several hundred refugees. Each refugee receives 3 sheets of paper and colored pens and is invited to draw 3 sketches: One of their life before: Yesterday. One of their current life: Today. And one of their life imagined in the future: Tomorrow.

These drawings define a Visual Language and like most languages they have three main tenses: the past tense (Yesterday), the present tense (Today) and the future tense (Tomorrow).

All of these drawings, along with some basic information (age, gender, nationality and current location, etc...) have been collected, filed and scanned and now make-up a digital database of thousands of voices – communicating with one language. All participants in YTT are anonymous and volunteers. The YTT digital database made-up of their drawings, with completed questionnaires, has been developed under their agreement.

However, as Yesterday Today Tomorrow has developed, so too has it’s objectives. What was once a conceptual art project has now become a fully-fledged International Project with very specific goals that are broken-down into 3 main categories.
3 sections of YTT

1. The creation of educational/pedagogical tools to increase the global awareness of the refugee crisis.

Since the beginning, YTT has collaborated with Dr. Henry Bell of Sheffield Hallam University along with Dr. Ashley Barnes and Dr. Tom Payne from the Performance for Stage & Screen department of the University. This collaboration consists of an on-going series of masterclasses, research modules and workshops with the performance students of the university to put into place a pedagogical tool (a schools workshop protocol) by combining refugee drawings and performance techniques (that were inspired by Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*) to educate students on the refugee crisis through the exploration and embodiment of the refugee drawings collected as part of YTT. These methods encourage young people, in both a school and a university setting, to debate the issues surrounding the current situation as well as to consider their own yesterday, today and tomorrow in the context of the lives and voices from refugees to which they are introduced during the workshop. So far, 10 of these workshops have been delivered in the north of England (including 4 different high-schools) to approximately 250 students, from ages 13 to 24 years old.4

This is a continuing research collaboration between Sheffield Hallam and YTT and it forms part of the compulsory module Applied Theatre at Sheffield Hallam University’s BA Performance for Stage and Screen.

Simultaneously, YTT has also started to collaborate with Professor Paola Perucchini, Vice-Director of the Department of Education at Roma Tre University with special expertise in Child Development, Cognitive Development, Developmental Psychopathology and Nonverbal Communication. This collaboration has begun with the analytical study of over 300 refugee drawings within the framework of creating psychological and educational barometers of this visual language to further develop modules that can be used in school and academic environments. This collaboration will develop further with the implementation of an educational program for primary-school pupils and the training on that program for the pre-service teachers.

These dual on-going research projects have one objective which is to create educational/pedagogical tool(s) that can be used, in schools around the world, to further the understanding of the refugee crisis.

2. The creation of psychosocial programs and clinical assessment tools for refugees in war zones and refugee camps.

Also as part of the collaboration with Professor Paola Perucchini of Roma Tre University, YTT will begin the research on clinical assessment tools, protocols and psychosocial programs that can be used, through the YTT drawing workshops and it’s digital database, by volunteers in refugee camps and conflict zones around the world. With the aim to help refugees cope better with war and displacement and signal mental health complications for which refugees, and above all children, are at an extremely high risk of suffering from. And/or as a “first-contact/presentational tool” for refugee comprehension suitable and adaptable to most refugee initiatives around the world.

This research will involve further collaboration with universities, academic and specialized institutions and also broaden-out to psychological and linguistic development research. As well as involving future educators with training on the use of YTT as a tool to create emotional and comprehensible contact with refugee/migrant population and as a visual language “platform” to share their experiences.

3. The artistic interpretation of this visual language to give a voice to a people who does not have one.

The first step in front of this tragedy must be to understand it, therefore the people who should visualize and give voice to this humanitarian disaster are the refugees themselves. YTT maps out, as a cultural and visual memory, the global exodus of people. Moreover, by participating in the creation of these drawings, the refugees are leaving their own trace, creating their own contemporary culture and voice whilst simultaneously losing all traceability of their inherited culture. Traceability is credibility, without it, the existence of a people disappears. Each refugee drawing counts. Each refugee drawing is a voice. Every voice counts.

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4 Brazilian theatre visionary and Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Augusto Boal (1931-2009). *Theatre of the Oppressed* is a form of popular community-based education that uses theater as a tool for social change.

5 YTT Educational Workshops: Sheffield Hallam University, the Performance for Stage & Screen department, as part of the Applied Theatre lessons and the gallery sessions. Six workshops to 95 students aged 19-24, leader: Dr Henry Bell. High Storrs School, High Storrs Road, Sheffield, Yorkshire. One workshop to 35 students aged 16-17, leader: Dr Henry Bell. Hall Cross Academy, Thorne Rd, Doncaster. Yorkshire. One workshop to 20 students aged 15-16, leader: Ashley Barnes. Vision West Nottinghamshire College, Derby Road, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. One workshop to 20 students aged 16-17, leader: Ashley Barnes. New Mills School, Church Ln, New Mills, High Peak, Derbyshire. One workshop to 80 students aged 16-17, leader: Dr Henry Bell and Ashley Barnes.
The Giorgio Cini Foundation is an international cultural foundation founded April 20, 1951, it is located in the former San Giorgio Monastery on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, Italy.

The Venice Biennale is a contemporary visual art exhibition, held biennially. Established in 1895, it has been for over 120 years one of the most prestigious cultural institutions in the world.

The Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery is a nationally and internationally recognized university art gallery in Sheffield, U.K.

The Brownstone Foundation is a Paris-based foundation that was created in October 1999 to support and accompany social and humanitarian projects in favor of cultural and educational development.

Exhibitions & Performances

Pluridisciplinary installation and Performance, Fondazione Giorgio Cini® 57th Venice Biennale®, Italy Video-Installation, Sheffield Institute of Arts® Sheffield, U.K. Performances at The Brownstone Foundation® Paris, France Performance at Gallery Jordan/Seydoux Berlin, Germany

Conferences & Masterclass

Sheffield Hallam University Sheffield, U.K. Villa Médicis Rome, Italy The Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia Venice, Italy The Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities in collaboration with the School of Law, Birkbeck, University of London Convened by Dr Gavin Keeney, Londres, U.K. Venice Art Night at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini Venice, Italy TEDx Talks Czech Republic Fondation Engie Paris, France Design for Social Impact Paris, France IFM Paris, France Roma Tre University Rome, Italy iCEE.health Forum Bucharest, Romania Meltingpot Forum Ostrava, Czech Republic

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6 The Giorgio Cini Foundation is an international cultural foundation founded April 20, 1951, it is located in the former San Giorgio Monastery on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, Italy.

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8 The Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery is a nationally and internationally recognized university art gallery in Sheffield, U.K.

9 The Brownstone Foundation is a Paris-based foundation that was created in October 1999 to support and accompany social and humanitarian projects in favor of cultural and educational development.
Impact

Impact is at the centre of all the facets of YTT. YTT’s drawing workshops + digital database with participation from several hundred refugees has had a direct impact on the well-being of one of the world’s most vulnerable populations. The development of this research project into clinical and comprehension tools and psychosocial programs has the potential to reach, and therefore impact upon, the health and economic situation of millions of future participants.

This impact also extends to having a societal effect on how non-refugee populations perceive and act upon the Global Migrant Crisis. Exhibitions, performances and conferences have been attended and participated in by over 15,000 people across Europe - future events planned for 2018 and after, in the Czech Republic, Romania, Germany and the UK will continue to cause this number to grow. Further broadening this effect also, is the social media impact of YTT expressed through regular posts on three social media sites, resulting in reaching over 280,884 people (see annex for an exact analytical study of social media impact) with the potential scope of hundreds of thousands of people more, as it develops.

By working with the future generations, the pedagogical programmes at the heart of YTT enable change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia. The global nature of the development of these programmes enable this impact to happen above and beyond a national or European level.

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10 This figure consists of: Over 11,000 people that have visited/participated in the installation and performance at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini for the 57th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy. Over 1,000 people visited/participated in the video-installation at Sheffield Institute of Arts, Sheffield, U.K. Over 250 people participated in the performances at the Brownstone Foundation in Paris, France. Over 2,100 people have attended/participated in the conferences and masterclasses. Over 250 people have participated in the YTT workshops that have been delivered in high-schools and universities in the north of England. And several hundred refugees/migrants that have participated in the YTT workshops in over 27 camps and squats around Europe.
Refugee Camps & Squats visited and/or worked in

- La Cimade Refugee Center
  Massy, France
- City Plaza Hotel Refugee Squat
  Athens, Greece
- Notara 26 Refugee Squat
  Athènes, Grèce
- Skaramagas Refugee Camp
  (including Hope School)
  Athens, Greece
- Estia Refugee Shelter
  Arsis, Athens, Greece
- Irisa Refugee Shelter
  Athens, Greece
- Stalingrad Street Refugee Camp
  Paris, France
- Samos HotSpot Refugee Camp (with Medin)
  Samos Island, Greece
- Centre d'accueil La Cimade
  Béziers Refugee Shelter
  Béziers, France
- St. Denis Street Refugee Camp
  Paris, France
- Kara Tepe Refugee Camp
  Lesbos Island, Greece
- 5th High-School Refugee Squat
  Athens, Greece
- Society For The Care of Minors,
  Center for Unaccompanied Minors
  Athens, Greece
- Moi Refugee Squat Turin, Italy
- Humanitarian Centre for Migrants
  Paris, France
- Sheffield Refugee Center
  Sheffield, U.K.
- Moabit hilft Refugee Association
  Berlin, Germany
- Trampoline House Copenhagen Refugee Community
  Copenhagen, Denmark
- Adasevi Refugee Camp
  Sid, Serbia
- PIN Refugee Center Belgrade, Serbia
- Principovac Refugee Camp
  Sid, Serbia
- Obrenovac Refugee Camp
  Belgrade, Serbia
- CPR: Bobadela Center for Refugees
  Lisbon, Portugal
- CAS Fiuggi (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria)
  Refugees Camp Fiuggi, Italy
- Refugee Camp Petit Forêt
  Calais, France
- Centre Secours Catholique
  Calais, France
- Old Lidl Refugee Camp
  Calais, France
- SOS Children's Village
  Serbian Division
- PIN Psychosocial Innovation Network
  Serbia
- The Hope School
  Greece
- Arsis
  Greece
- Medin
  Greece
- Association MOI
  Italy
- Notara 26 Association
  Greece
- The Sheffield Conversation Club U.K.
- La Cimade
  France
- 5th High-School Association
  Greece
- City Plaza Hotel Association
  Greece
- Society for the care of minors
  Greece
- Kara Tepe Camp Direction
  Grèce
- Emmaüs
  France
- CPR
  Portugal
- The School Bus Project
  Calais, France
- CAS Fiuggi
  Italie

YTT has collaborated with

- SOS Children’s Village
  Serbian Division
- PIN Psychosocial Innovation Network
  Serbia
- The Hope School
  Greece
- Arsis
  Greece
- Medin
  Greece
- Association MOI
  Italy
- Notara 26 Association
  Greece
- The Sheffield Conversation Club
  U.K.
- La Cimade
  France
- 5th High-School Association
  Greece
- City Plaza Hotel Association
  Greece
- Society for the care of minors
  Greece
- Kara Tepe Camp Direction
  Grèce
- Emmaüs
  France
- CPR
  Portugal
- The School Bus Project
  Calais, France
- CAS
  Fiuggi
  Italie

Awards, journals & research papers

Yesterday Today Tomorrow (in collaboration with the Performance for Stage & Screen Department) was awarded First Place in the category of Shaping Futures at Sheffield Hallam University, Faculty of Development and Society Team Awards 2017.

Dr Henry Bell, Bryan McCormack, Image Theatre: “Transforming Perspectives Through Embodied Responses to Refugee Drawings in Yesterday Today Tomorrow (Traceability is Credibility) at the 2017 Venice Biennale.”


Dr Henry Bell, Bryan McCormack and Tom Payne: “The Omnipotent Spectator: The politics of participation in Bryan McCormack’s Yesterday Today Tomorrow (Traceability is Credibility) and the global refugee crisis.”

Masters Thesis (30 Credits), MA Design for Social Impact, Paris College of Art

Elizabeth Pennington: “An exploration into the ethics of involvement and representation through multimedia, in relation to survivors of war and violence”
Undergraduate Dissertation (40 credits), BA Performance for Stage and Screen, Sheffield Hallam University

Alessandra Sau: “My Work Experience as Translator and Interpreter for the International Project Yesterday Today Tomorrow (Traceability is Credibility) by Bryan McCormack”
Work Placement Report’ (20 Credits, Post-Graduate), Erasmus Mundus Masters, Crossways in Cultural Narratives. Bergamo/Sheffield/Perpignan University
Press Listing

a selection

Art Monthly
may issue
Aspekte
German cultural television
show: TV ZDT
arts.it
huma3.com
contessanally.blogspot.fr
myartguides.com
cini.it
estherartnewsletter.wordpress.com
accademiavenezia.it
4.shu.ac.uk
culturacittametropolitana.ve.it
pressreader.com
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corrieredelveneto.corriere.it
zedinfo.it/?p=1492
art.world/bryan-mc-mc-mack
e-venise.com
marsilioeditori.it
theveniceinsider.com
unospitedivenezia.it
ilgiornaledellefondazioni.com

Sponsors
& Collaborators

Fondation ENGIE
Paris, France

Sheffield Hallam University
Sheffield, U.K.
Performances and individual performance education workshops are currently supported by departmental funding from Humanities at Sheffield Hallam University as well as their research fund.

The Roma Tre University
Rome, Italy

YTT is a Paris-based and registered non-profit organization made-up of 10 volunteers.