



Making that remembers...

*a correspondence
between emotion
and materials*

Emotional Learning Cards with commentary and questions *exploring themes* relating to *our sense of place* and the *stories we tell* including those without words.

Featuring artworks and work in progress by *Maria Amidu*

Produced in partnership by iniva and A Space for Towner Eastbourne as part of the *Future Collect* Project

Future Collect

Initiated by *iniva* (Institute of International Visual Arts), *Future Collect* was a dynamic three-year programme designed *to transform* the culture of commissioning and collecting within galleries and museums *to reflect the diversity of Britain*. Each project in the programme partnered *iniva* with a national/regional museum or gallery to commission an *artist of African or Asian descent*, British born or based. These commissions gave the selected artists an *opportunity to develop* their practice and to be collected and exhibited by a major institution, as well as *contributing to a wider public debate* on collections and whose heritage is being preserved.

In addition to the commissions and public programme, *Future Collect* also supported an early career curator at each of the partner organisations, as well as making space for *Future Commons: a peer-led curatorial network*.

Providing a vital platform to ask questions about power, representation and the civic role of public museums and galleries in the 21st century, *Future Collect* aimed to shape the future direction of public collections, displays and acquisitions, demonstrating how they can be used for maximum public benefit.

Future Collect was generously supported by Art Fund, Arts Council England and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Emerging/Submerging

Towner Eastbourne partnered *iniva* for the third *Future Collect* project, selecting *Maria Amidu* as the commissioned artist. Her artistic concerns are influenced by the complexities of the relational – *between people and between people and place*. Through writing as artistic practice she tries to substantiate what might be going on in collective situations, paying specific attention to *what is hidden, obscured or unspoken*. She privileges fault lines and weak spots as essential components in her artworks – *fragility, fracture, instability, dissolve, impermanence, residue, mess, breaks, risk* – and is currently working with papermaking, printmaking, audio-visual recording and indigo dyeing to realise her artistic ideas. At the same time, she shows us that emotionally potent recollections, *'felt'* experiences and memory traces are always in a state of *emerging/submerging*. Seen through the lens of layered histories, they can never be taken at face value.

Maria's Future Collect commission, *26,778,780 minutes*, is a text-based installation exploring a *dialogue between paper and writing*, featuring over 1000 sheets of laser-etched handmade paper. Evoking a sense of longing and absence, this work considers the nuanced meanings of the term *'desire lines'*, referencing this form of human intervention in the landscape in *relation to memory* and a kind of retrieval and reclamation of the artist herself. Audiences are *encouraged to physically engage* with the work through participating in its care and restoration.

Maria Amidu

During the development of her *Future Collect* commission, *Maria* investigated Towner's existing collection with a focus on artworks which stylistically represent the everyday and remind us how *ordinary objects* can be *a potent catalyst for recollections* of the past. This was a starting point for *Maria* reflecting on ideas relating to the paradoxical nature of memory: *factually unreliable yet emotionally truthful*. She exhibited work in an interim show, *Untitled: an INDEX exhibition of work in progress by Maria Amidu*, at the *Stuart Hall Library, iniva* from 14 February to 28 April 2023. A public engagement programme also ran alongside the development of the commission, including study days and workshops. The study days provided a critical context for the commission, offering the artist an opportunity to test out ideas and invite others to *share and exchange thinking and practice*. *Maria* exhibited her commissioned work *26,778,780 minutes* in a solo show, *in the perpetual back and forth*, at *Towner Eastbourne* from 4 May to 8 September 2024. Hollie Douglas, *Future Collect* Curatorial Trainee worked closely with *Maria* to realise both exhibitions.

Based in East Sussex, *Maria Amidu* completed a first and second degree in glass and ceramics before embarking on a *PhD in the School of Arts and Humanities at the Royal College of Art*. Her *Towner Eastbourne* commission speaks of the ways in which individual and collective perceptions of *past, present and future selves* are always in a dynamic relationship, *shifting and reforming* over time. Embedded in her practice is a preoccupation with the ways in which *experiences, memories and places* with a particular emotional pull shape our sense of ourselves, often *outside of our conscious awareness*. The approach *Maria* takes is experimental, allowing for the materials she uses to influence the direction her ideas move in and vice versa. This *'to and fro' conversation* between what is known and what is felt, and what is recollected or only sensed, *leaves space for us*, as viewer, to find *fragments of our own story* in hers.

"To be the third artist selected for Future Collect has been such a privilege – it was an incredible opportunity to develop new work. iniva is an organisation that is very close to my heart, both professionally and personally, particularly because I had the honour of working directly with Professor Stuart Hall during the development of Rivington Place and the Stuart Hall Library. Towner Eastbourne is a gallery I visit often, it's a place I go to, not only to see work, but also to gather my thoughts, and I have wondered many times about the possibilities of exhibiting there. It was enlightening to delve into the artistic and archival material both organisations hold."

Using the cards

This resource has been designed to be used in a variety of ways. The cards can *stimulate discussion, art making, personal reflection, diary writing, storytelling, or creative play*. The text on the reverse can help to open up *new ways of thinking* relating to belonging/‘unbelonging’, *reframing memories*, processing the past, and *rewriting* the stories we tell to ourselves about who we are so that our *self-talk* is more *positive and affirming*.

PREPARATION

It can be helpful to read through the commentary and questions provided on the back of each card as part of your own professional development and to familiarise yourself with the ideas discussed. You can then decide on key themes to focus on in your workshop or group session. It is not necessary to stick to the provided text. You can lift out concepts that you feel will resonate most for your target audience.

Suggestions & Ideas

FREE ASSOCIATION

Lay out the cards on the floor or on a table with the images facing upwards. Ask a participant to select an image and to say why they chose that particular card. Encourage the participant to associate freely with the image, expressing whatever first comes to mind.

Then you can either summarise key information off the back of the card and pose questions or ask the participant to read the card text aloud and respond to the questions posed. Repeat the process, asking each participant to take a turn until the end of your allocated time.

POSTER PROJECT (1)

Give each participant a card and invite them to read the commentary and questions on the reverse. Ask them to select a few words or a sentence or a question from the text that resonates for them, or make up their own and then create a poster featuring their text using a simple graphic image or collage.

POSTER PROJECT (2)

As above, give each participant a card. Ask them to think about the key concepts featured. Invite them to come up with personal qualities and ways of being that help us to create memories of people, places and experiences that reinforce our sense of self (e.g. being willing to share our stories, being open to experimenting (i.e. making new friends and trying out new things), balancing our self-talk, talking through difficult memories, processing our past and so on).

WORLDS WITHIN / WORLDS WITHOUT (1)

Before your workshop or session, trace out circles of differing sizes representing our different worlds (e.g. inner world/outer world, personal world/social world, real world/online world etc). If your budget permits, use watercolour paper. Next, print a selection of personal qualities and positive attitudes such as those illustrated below:



Ask participants to paint their circle or a couple of circles using *Maria's* indigo-dyed paper as inspiration. While the watercolours are drying, ask them to cut out the pre-printed words in circles. Once the watercolours are dry, participants can stick a word or a constellation of words on their painted circle. If they have made a couple of circles of differing sizes, you can suggest they create a mobile out of them.

WORLDS WITHIN / WORLDS WITHOUT (2)

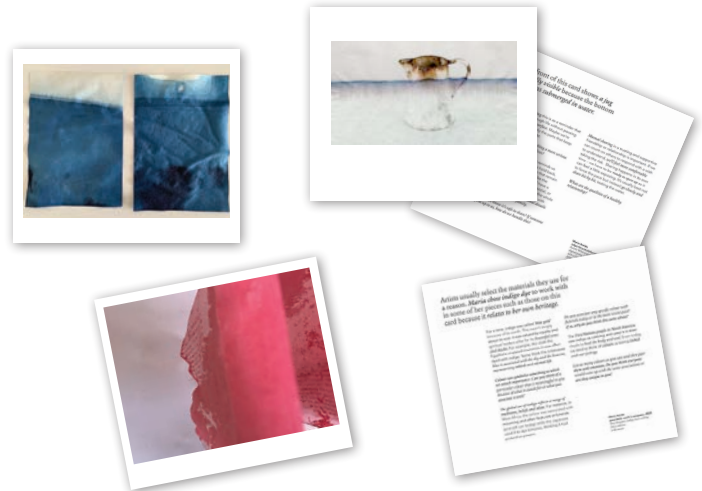
Prepare for this workshop in the same way as described above. Create collage material by making available different papers, words or text, images from magazines and downloaded from the internet, fabrics, sequins and anything else you feel would add to the creative process. Ask participants to make a collage on their circle which includes a selection of the pre-printed words in circles (as shown above).

CREATING AN ORIGINAL SET OF CARDS

Using white or coloured card, make up a set of blank cards that are the same size as the cards in this pack. Ask the participants to illustrate these with their own images in response to themes featured in *Maria's artwork* and to compose their own descriptive text and questions. The completed cards can be photocopied and printed to make original sets. Alternatively, they can be used to make a poster or wall display, or they might function as an individual's 'diary' or become a set of reflection cards.

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

Hand out all the cards or spread them out onto a surface and invite each participant to pick one. Ask them to write a short story that relates either to the image on the front or to the text and questions on the reverse. Suggest that they try to use descriptive writing and metaphor that relates to the artist's image.





Making that remembers... a correspondence between emotion and materials is the title of this set of emotional learning cards featuring artwork by *Maria Amidu*.

Maria Amidu was commissioned by iniva to work with Towner Eastbourne. This title captures the way in which evocative memories and feelings can unexpectedly spring to mind when we're in the middle of doing something, just letting our thoughts come and go. It could be while making art but, equally, it can happen in a more everyday situation.

Can you think of a time when something brought up a memory or an emotion that took you by surprise?

Maria's artmaking is based on experimentation and research. She is drawn to themes which reflect aspects of personal experience. For example, she's noticed how we all know things about ourselves but may hold back from talking about them, perhaps because sharing openly can make us feel uncomfortable or too vulnerable. At the same time, most of us have a wish to be known and might like to be able to express the less obvious parts of ourselves now and

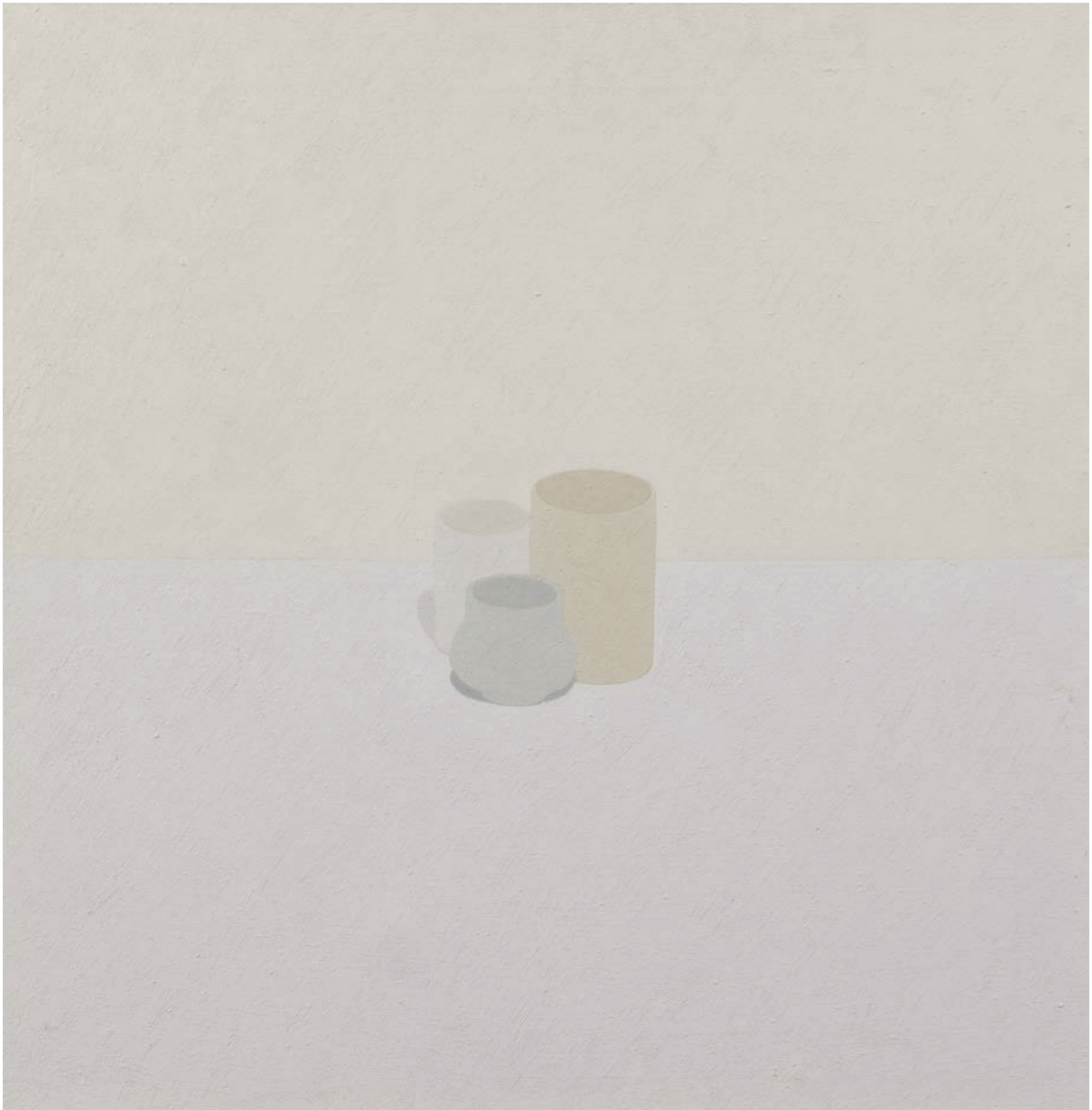
again. Everyone can feel pulled in different directions like this!

We all have sides to ourselves that are hidden from view, sometimes unknown even to ourselves. Can you give some examples of this?

As you can see, art is often about subjects that have relevance for everyone. *Maria's* interests led her to study for a first degree in applied art and to do a *PhD in the School of Arts and Humanities* at the *Royal College of Art*. Making art doesn't have to rely on traditional drawing or painting skills. Many artists, like *Maria*, test out ideas through using materials in different ways. Exploring like this can be fascinating!

Describe some themes or emotions that artists might reflect on in art, books, films or songs.

Maria Amidu
RE.THINK, Artist in Residence 2013
National Maritime Museum Greenwich
© *National Maritime Museum*



As part of her research for her new commission, Maria spent time in the collection store at Towner Eastbourne.

One of the works that resonated with her was *Three Jars by Christine Parsons*, shown on the front of this card.

Describe this painting. What is striking about it?

Although *Christine Parsons* will have had her own ideas about her picture, there is no right or wrong meaning to come up with as we all interpret art differently. For instance, we could see the colours used in this work as soft and gentle, perhaps leading us to imagine that the jars grouped closely together represent a family or friendship group. Or maybe the faded tones suggest a distant memory, calling to mind a childhood experience of huddling together for protection. Whichever way you look at it, the relationship between the jars is key.

What do you think this artwork could be telling us?

Maria was drawn to this image specifically because it features commonplace objects. By making something ordinary the subject of a painting, *Christine Parsons* could be inviting us to think about how important everyday life is. Yet, our relationships can be complicated and bring up mixed feelings. Finding the language to describe our experiences can be difficult. We probably all have stories to tell which can't yet be put into words but could be explored in different ways.

What might stop us from freely expressing our thoughts and feelings?

Christine Parsons
Three Jars, 1977
Oil on canvas
Towner Collection
Towner Eastbourne ©The Artist's Estate



At first glance, it is difficult to work out what the image on the front of this card is. The *loosely defined shape floats ghost-like* against a deep blue background.

What do you make of it?

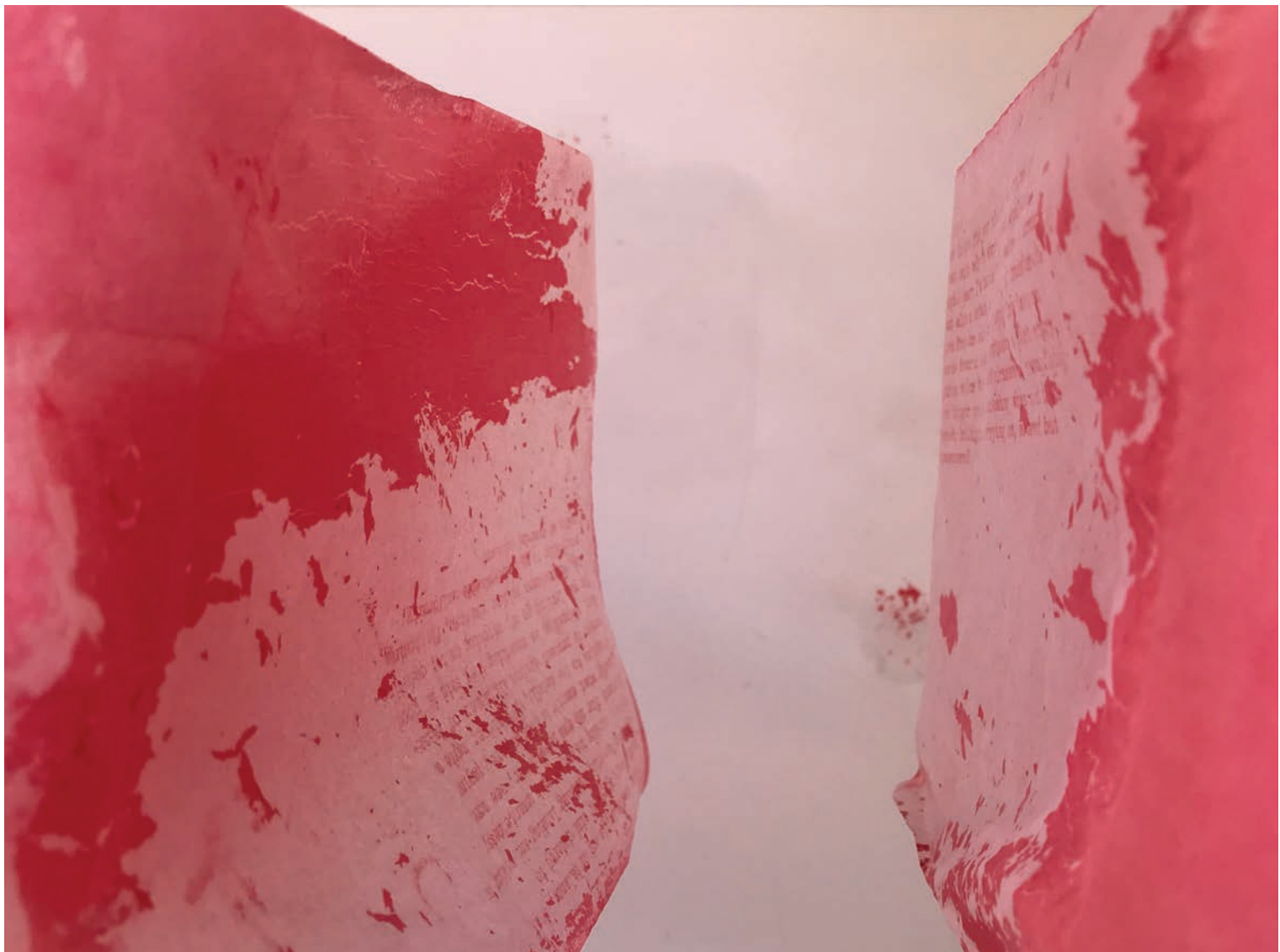
Maria came across this painting by *Anneliese Holles in Towner Eastbourne's Collection*. The subject of this work is a dressing table, a once popular piece of furniture which often included a 'skirt' of pleated fabric for decoration, as you can see. However, *Anneliese Holles* isn't interested in creating a realistic picture. Instead, she could be suggesting that memories hover in our minds sometimes just for the briefest moment, offering us a fleeting glimpse of the past. Phantom-like, they can drift in and out of focus, often bringing in their wake feelings and thoughts that connect us to our history in ways that can be comfortingly familiar or somewhat upsetting, perhaps at times putting us in touch with grief or loss.

Anneliese Holles was born in the 1960s, a time when, in some homes, women might sit at a dressing table to do their hair and make-up. Knowing this, and thinking about the painting style Holles used, can you imagine the kind of memories which could have inspired her?

Maria was intrigued by *Anneliese Holles's* image because the subject of memory interests her as well. Like *Maria*, we too may wonder, '*Can memory ever recapture the past exactly as it was, or is it always reshaped by us?*' and '*What might be written out of conscious memory but never forgotten?*'

Have you ever compared memories with family or friends who've shared the same experiences with you? If so, what did you discover?

Anneliese Holles
Recollections: Dressing Table, 1997
Oil and acrylic on canvas
Towner Collection
Towner Eastbourne ©The Artist



The sentences in the image on the reverse are breaking up and *impossible to read*.

Perhaps *Maria* is showing us how memory can be made up of free-floating impressions, *feelings and thoughts* that may be difficult to piece together and make sense of. Not all *experiences from our past or present* can be easily described. Even good moments that leave us with a warm glow inside can be hard to capture.

Feeling we belong can be one of those 'glow-making' sensations. What might give us a sense of fitting in?

The colour of the artwork on the front of this card is often associated with blood. Some of *our life experiences* can leave us with *emotional wounds* which may be as tender as cuts that bleed. Feeling left out or made unwelcome is an example of this.

When might we feel as if we are excluded in some way?

Although '*unbelonging*' is a word we don't often use, its meaning is clear. This feeling can surface in any situation, even within the family where we might imagine we '*should*' belong. It can be a passing impression or last longer term.

What could cause someone to feel out of place at home or in their friendship group?

Maria Amidu
somewhere, work in progress, 2020
Red carbon paper, water
210 x 148mm
©The Artist



Even *small children* can form an *impression of 'home'* although they may not know the word for it or how to describe *what they are feeling*.

A child might, for instance, link home with the view from their bedroom window.

The photograph on the front of this card shows light filtering through a curtain creating an intriguing play of shadows. What kind of mood does this image suggest? Do you find it welcoming or somewhat unsettling? Why?

A particular style of curtains or a piece of furniture or some other feature of our childhood home may always remind us of our growing up years, stirring up forgotten memories.

Give examples of what we might remember most from our childhood. Why do some experiences stay with us and others fade away?

Memories of past experiences or impressions from our early life can colour our *dreamworld* too. Some dreams are pleasant and comforting while others can be *distorted*

and confusing, even troubling or frightening. Childhood is a time when we can feel things strongly but may not be able to make sense of all of our experiences.

What might comfort a frightened child? How do we soothe ourselves as we get older?



The photograph on the front of this card was taken *out of the window of a moving train*, blurring and softening the image.

Each of the beach huts has a uniform shape. Their structure is house-like, perhaps reminding us of home. Yet, unlike the huts in this photograph, *no 'home' is the same as another*. They take different forms depending on the circumstances. A sense of 'home' can be created with a birth/foster/adoptive or step-family, with relatives or with others in a residential setting.

What makes relationships at home meaningful, giving us an experience of belonging?

A family made up of a mother, father and two or three children isn't the only model. There are *many ways of creating families* or family-type groups. Some change over time while others remain the same. There is *no 'right' or 'wrong' or 'best'* model.

Give examples of different family arrangements. Now describe some of the roles within families. Have these changed through the generations?

The word '*family*' is linked to '*familiar*'. You can hear how similar they are. Whatever shape a family or family-type group takes, what is important is the quality of relationships. We don't have to be related to others to feel they are '*familiar*' and emotionally close. Of course, no home setting is ever perfect. This is because relationships are always a little complicated with misunderstandings and miscommunications quite common. *Home life has ups and downs for everyone!*

How might going through difficult experiences with those we're close to strengthen bonds? Can you give some examples?

Maria Amidu
1973, still (train), 2022
Single-channel video, 27:45
©The Artist



Conflict can flare up in *any area of life*.
When it is ignited, constructive
communication can be momentarily lost
with *words often being* used as weapons.

The possibility of *talking things through*
and reaching an understanding can break
down, just as the torn and unravelling text
in *Maria's artwork* pictured on this card
suggests.

What are some common causes of conflict?

The fact that we are *all unique individuals*
with our own likes and dislikes, beliefs and
ideas, makes conflict unavoidable. One way
of turning it into something more positive
is to change *how we respond* to it. Instead of
striving to get our point of view across, we
can try to *understand the other's*.

*What personal qualities are needed if we are to
make this switch?*

Shifting our mindset can transform conflict
from a negative experience into one we can
learn from. Avoidance, withdrawal, or giving
in is never the answer. Nor is escalating a
conflict or trying to dominate. Instead, if
we are prepared to step back and become
curious about the other's feelings and
perspectives, new understanding on both
sides can become possible.

*Why is conflict considered necessary? What is
its role?*

Maria Amidu
episode(s), work in progress, 2022
Tosa shi paper, indigo, laser etching
210 x 148mm
©The Artist



Although the photograph on the reverse is *softly lit* and *beautiful in its own way*, the clothes pegs pictured are very ordinary.

As there are only two of them, perhaps we are being invited to think more about what is not there, rather than what is.

What is missing from this picture?

By focusing on these humble household objects, *Maria* might be showing us how the everyday can take on *new meanings* and associations. For example, these two pegs on their own with no laundry clipped to them, could hint at what might be *left behind when moving on*. Maybe *Maria* is telling us something about *voluntary and involuntary moves*.

Voluntary means we 'volunteer' or choose to do something and involuntary is the opposite. In what circumstances might an individual, a family or a group face an involuntary move?

When those who are *forced to flee* their birth country due to war, conflict or natural disasters or have to *relocate* for some other reason, they leave behind more than household possessions. Their *sense of the familiar* and the everyday is lost. They may become refugees as a result of a situation that is outside of their control. With little or no contact with those they've left behind or who have fled elsewhere, they are faced with making *a new life* in an unknown place.

Picture waking up and being told you had to pack a small bag and leave, never to return. What might you feel in the moment? If you were made welcome in a new country, how would that feel?



Maria's papermaking process is illustrated in the photograph on this card.

The movement of the water becomes a '*hidden*' part of the handmade paper. The fibres, once dried, are a tangible record of the process.

Our memory also works in a similar way. Life experiences leave behind feelings and impressions as well as the meanings we make of them. What types of experiences leave the strongest imprint?

Papermaking reminds us that we, too, are *shaped by our environment* just as the abaca fibres are moulded by the papermaking process. All our experiences go into making us *who we are*. The difficult challenges that life can throw up aren't what determines the kind of person we become – how we *make sense of our experiences* is what makes the difference!

Why might it be hard for someone to take the risk and share their more difficult feelings or thoughts?

Maria's papermaking technique is experimental: she works with the *imperfections and mishaps* that can happen through each stage of the process. Letting the materials '*speak to her*', *Maria* keeps some '*mistakes*' in her work rather than trying to completely control the outcome.

Life, like aspects of artmaking, also has *experimental moments* including times when something fails to go as we'd hoped but *we learn to adapt and adjust*. For instance, whenever we try something new or make a new friend, *we're experimenting*. We can't always influence how things will turn out, but this shouldn't stop us from *taking a step into the unknown!*

Give some examples of new beginnings. What kinds of hopes and anxieties might be stirred up?

Maria Amidu
26,778,780 minutes, work in progress,
2023
Abaca fibres, water
©The Artist



The image on the reverse shows us the results of *Maria's experiments* with indigo dye and paper.

Some artistic projects, such as the pieces on this card, do not include anything we recognise. This invites us to *bring our own responses and personal memories* to them. Maybe looking at the soft texture and colour in *Maria's* artwork brings pleasure. We might find it relaxing just to gaze at it and enjoy the shifting shades of blue, letting our mind wander.

*What are your associations to the colour blue?
Do colours suggest certain feelings to you?*

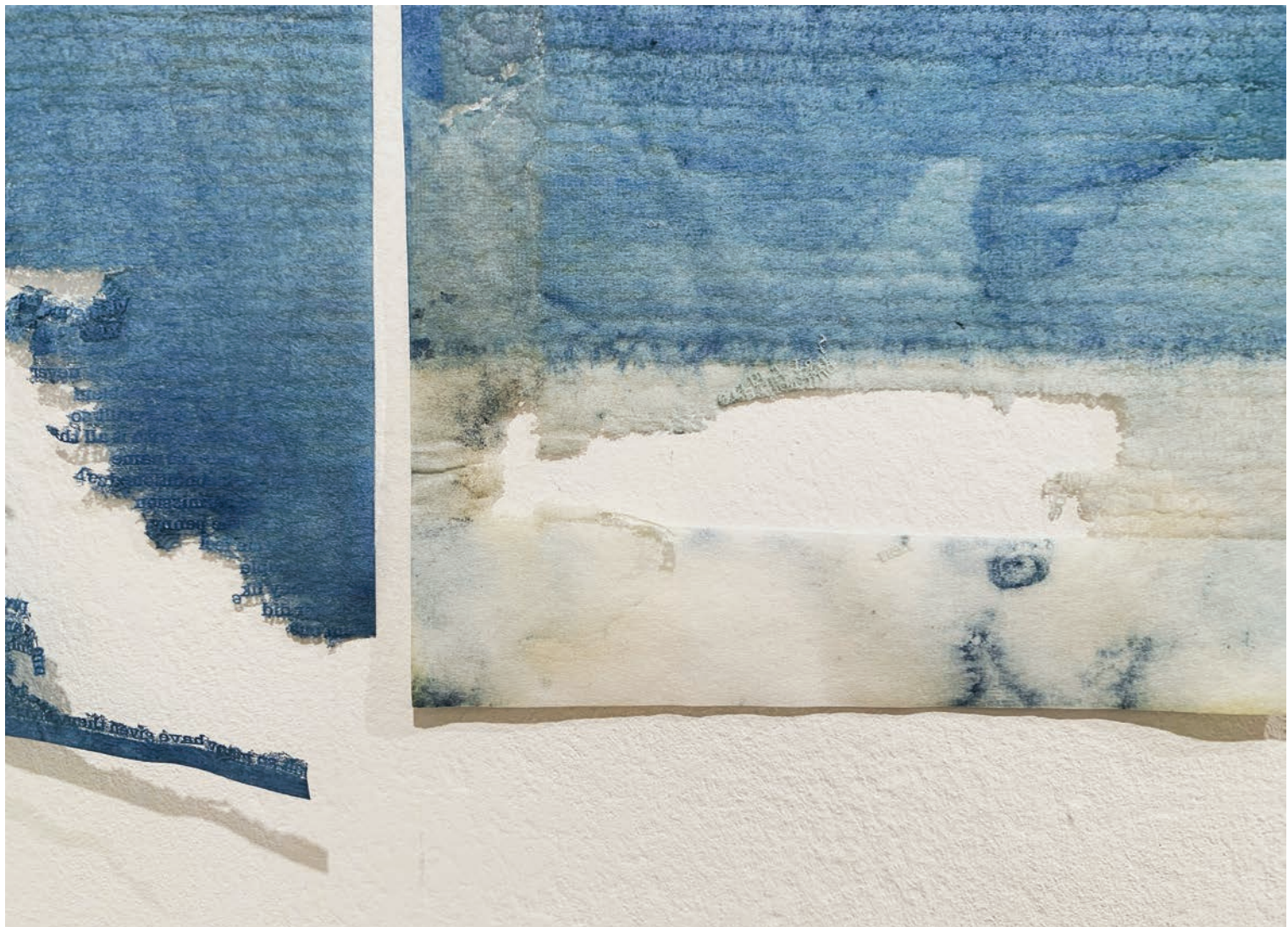
There is a type of freedom in looking at artworks that are still in progress. These two pieces of dyed paper could resemble photographs of a coastline taken from an aeroplane reminding us of an important *journey we took*. Or they might bring up something completely different such as folded items of clothing *evoking memories* of what we wore as a child.

What do you see in these images?

Perhaps our *curiosity is sparked* – maybe we're left wondering what *Maria* was thinking about as she made them.

Do you find this image pleasurable to look at or more like a puzzle to solve?

Maria Amidu
Work in progress, 2022
Tosa shi paper dipped in indigo dye
210 x 148mm
©The Artist



Artists usually select the materials they use for a reason. *Maria chose indigo dye* to work with in some of her pieces, such as those on this card, because it *relates to her own heritage*.

For a time, indigo was called '*blue gold*' because of its worth. This wasn't simply about its cost: it was valued by royalty and spiritual leaders alike for its *beautiful tones and shades*. For example, the cloth the Egyptians wrapped mummies in was often dyed with indigo. Some think this is because *blue is associated with the sky and the heavens*, representing *rebirth and eternal life*.

Colour can symbolise something to which we attach importance. Can you think of a particular colour that is meaningful to you because of what it stands for or what you associate it with?

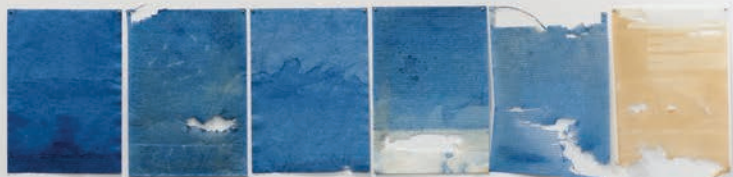
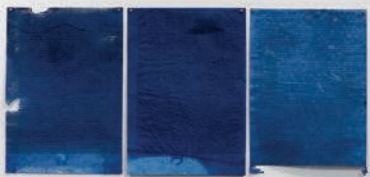
The global use of indigo reflects a range of traditions, beliefs and ideas. For instance, in West Africa, the colour was associated with mourning and often featured at funerals (and still can today) while the Japanese used it to dye kimonos, thinking it had protective powers.

Do you associate any specific colour with funerals today or in the more recent past? If so, why do you think this came about?

The *First Nations people in North America* saw indigo as calming and used it in their rituals to *heal the body and soul*. Even today, we tend to think of *colours* as being *linked with our feelings*.

List as many colours as you can and then pair them with emotions. Do you think everyone would come up with the same associations or are they unique to you?

Maria Amidu
episode(s), work in progress, 2022
Tosa shi paper, indigo, laser etching
210 x 148mm
©The Artist



The *indigo dyed prints* in this image are shown *hung next to each other* on a white gallery wall.

By lining them up like this, maybe we are being invited to see them as an on-going narrative. Yet there is a gap between the third and the fourth print.

What does this space suggest to you?

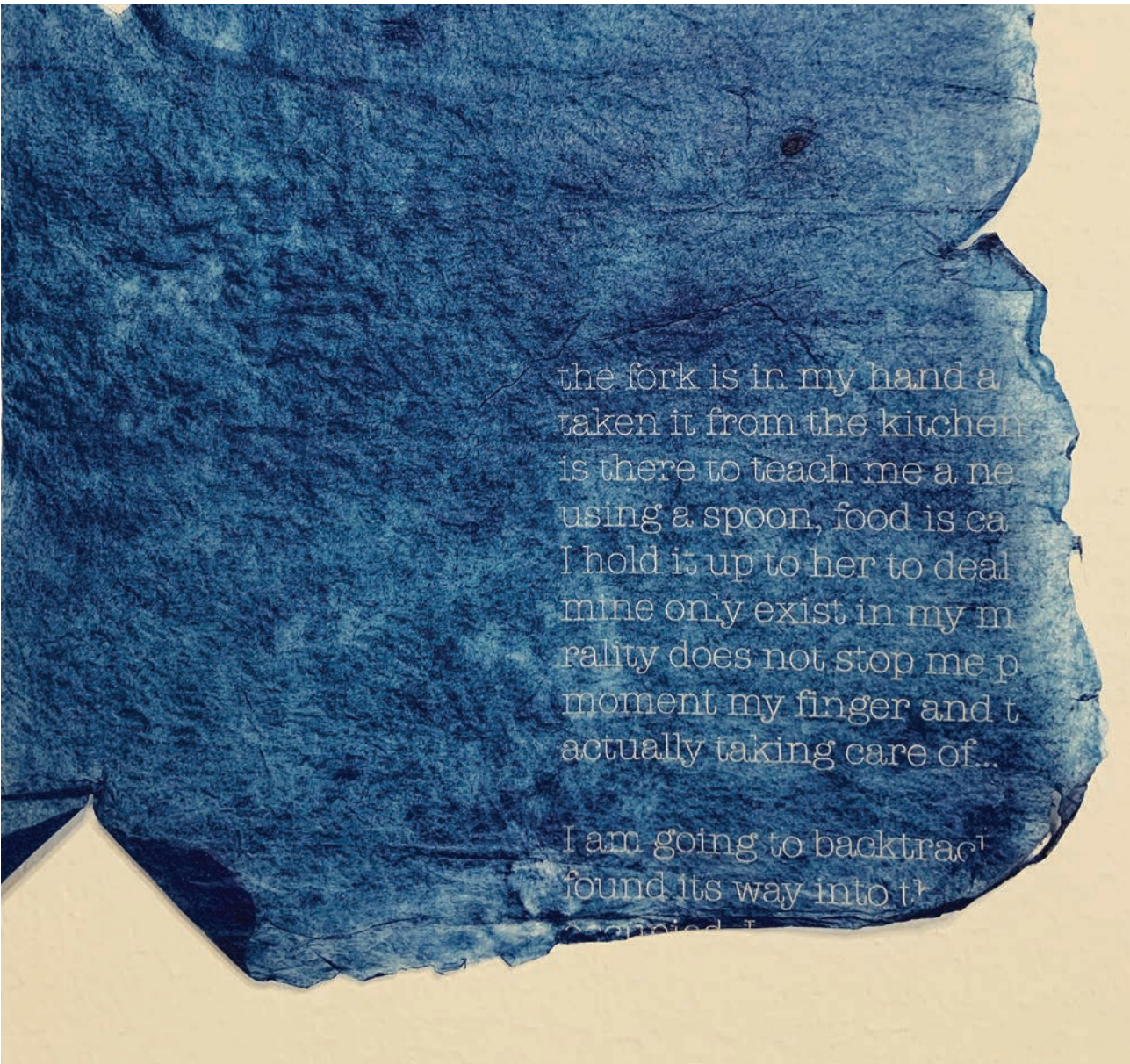
The word 'narrative' comes from the Latin term 'narrat' which means to recount, tell or explain. If we don't see ourselves represented in narratives around us such as in art, films, books, history, politics and so on, then our sense of self, like the space in between Maria's prints, is left open to interpretation. The meaning we give to this will differ depending on how we see ourselves and how we are seen in the world.

If someone never sees people in the public eye who have a similar background to them, what might they feel or think?

A sense of 'unbelonging' can be fleeting or more persistent. This word captures different experiences ranging from feelings of not fitting in to being unnoticed or never welcomed by those around us.

Picture experiencing 'unbelonging'. In what situations do we feel this way?

Maria Amidu
episode(s), installation shot, 2023
Untitled: an INDEX exhibition of works
in progress, Stuart Hall Library,
14 February - 28 April 2023
Photo: Jonathan Bassett
©The Artist



the fork is in my hand a
taken it from the kitchen
is there to teach me a ne
using a spoon, food is ca
I hold it up to her to deal
mine only exist in my m
rality does not stop me p
moment my finger and t
actually taking care of..

I am going to backtrac
found its way into th
carried I

The artwork on the front of this card is constructed out of *handmade paper with writing* that was *laser etched* into it.

The fragments of text placed in the far corner of the piece are *incomplete sentences* which means we are not getting all the details. This may be reminding us that we'll *never remember everything* that happens in our lives.

Why might some experiences leave an impression while others don't?

Early disruptions in our childhood relationships can lead to *gaps in our memory* and difficulties in giving words to feelings leftover from those years. One reason for this is that children have not yet developed the capacity to think things through and therefore aren't able to *name emotions or understand* and process unsettling experiences.

What do we mean when we talk about processing our experiences?

Some describe *disturbances in childhood* as leaving them with a permanent sense of '*shifting ground*'. These words capture the kind of insecurities and vulnerabilities that can be stirred up if we've had situations to cope with when we were too young to understand their context. This might leave behind a *lingering feeling that comes and goes* of being on our own, unable to make sense of our world.

Alongside some of the more positive aspects of childhood, big or small experiences of unpredictability or confusion are common. Give some examples of this.

Maria Amidu
Work in progress, 2023
Abaca paper, indigo dye, laser etching
210 x 148mm
©The Artist

The handmade paper in *Maria's artwork* on the reverse is *so delicate* that you can see through it. The *edges are frayed*, as if the sheets are *disintegrating* before our eyes.

We can just make out *faded lines* of text, perhaps reminding us of letters sent long ago. In the past, for those who chose to *emigrate* or *had been forced* by circumstances to move, letters offered an important link with all they'd left behind.

Do you think distance makes the bond with a birth country stronger or weaker? What influences this?

We all have an awareness of our everyday environment. Even without noticing it, we become *accustomed* to the weather patterns, the natural landscape, the streetscapes and so on. Without *familiar sights and sounds*, it's easy to feel disorientated, even if we've only moved to a new neighbourhood. In days gone by, a letter, or, in today's world, a social media message from relatives or friends, could make a real difference.

What might someone miss when they've moved home or country?

Before the written word, memories and personal or group histories were captured in songs and other art forms. This was an important way of *weaving connections* across generations and countries. Even today, following a band or a singer can create a sense of bonding and being understood that is rooted in shared feelings.

Do you have a song or a singer you feel drawn to? What is the appeal?

Maria Amidu
26,778,780 minutes,
work in progress, 2023
Abaca paper, laser etching
210 x 148mm (each print)
©The Artist

the fork is in my hand a
taken it from the kitchen
is there to teach me a no
using a spoon, food is ca
I hold it up to her to dea
mine only exist in my in
rality does not stop me p
moment my finger and t
actually taking care of...

I am going to backtrack
found its way into the di
occupied. I am asking yo

The photograph on this card
was taken while *Maria* was still
developing her piece of work.

The letters are *embedded in the fabric* of the handmade paper rather than written or typed on the surface. This might remind us of how people and places become *imprinted in our memory*, contributing to what we call our internal world, which in turn influences our sense of self.

Can you give an example of a good memory that could influence how someone sees themselves? What about the opposite – what effect might a difficult memory have?

How we see ourselves, and how we are seen by others, *shapes our identity* for better or worse. If, for instance, we are convinced we aren't 'equal to' or 'as good as' others, we might act in ways that convey this, even if we're not aware of doing so. Pausing and noticing our *self-beliefs* offers us a chance to rethink our internal perception of who we are and who we might become.

Describe some common negative self-beliefs and then change them into more balanced statements.

Our past relationships *can influence our sense of self* as well. An everyday example is the way in which our school years affect us. Even when we're older, we might still picture ourselves as the one who the teacher didn't believe in or perhaps the opposite – the confident high achiever or the well-liked student.

If we are carrying negative self-perceptions imposed in our younger years, do you think they permanently define us? If not, what can we do to change them?

Maria Amidu
26,778,780 minutes,
work in progress, 2023
Abaca paper, laser etching
210 x 148mm
©The Artist



From 2008 to 2011 *Maria* worked on an art project *with women* who had spent their *younger years in children's homes* in Australia.

She spoke to *Betty, Pat, Diane, Ivy, Lynette and Bonney* about their *childhood* in these places. *Maria* wanted to hear what they remembered about their *experiences*.

Sharing stories can help us better understand ourselves and each other. What types of experiences might be most difficult to share and why? Which stories or collective histories make us feel proud of who we are?

The photograph on this card is a close-up of old stone stairs, *worn and cracked*, with weeds pushing through, yet *still beautiful*, perhaps more so because of the history they represent. This captures something of what *Maria* was doing with her project. Instead of simply writing down the memories of the women she talked to, *Maria* wanted to convey what looking back in time can be like. For instance, something as everyday as a few stone steps can *spark a memory*.


Perhaps *Betty, Pat, Diane, Ivy, Lynette and Bonney* remembered sitting on these stairs as children, trying *to make sense* of what 'home' and 'family' might mean.

What feelings or thoughts about their life might they have talked about? Can you see how we can all bond over shared experiences, even the difficult ones?

An important theme in all of *Maria's artworks* relates to whose stories are told and whose are *overlooked, hidden, destroyed, denied, erased* or yet to be put into words.

Can you think of any examples of individuals or groups whose experiences have been disregarded or left out of historical accounts?

Maria Amidu
Betty, Pat, Diane, Ivy, Lynette,
Bonney, detail, artist's book, 2011
Iwami White paper, inkjet print
181 x 103 x 30mm
©The Artist

An open notebook is shown from a top-down perspective. The left page features a dark silhouette of a person with long hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, standing with their back to the viewer. The right page is filled with handwritten text in black ink. The notebook is placed on a light-colored surface, and a shadow is cast to the right of the book.

If listening is dangerous does that mean that we are all deaf to our -selves and others? Do we need a new fangled, here age hearing aids?

The subject of this image is *'listening'*, something we do all the time.

Yet, the *handwritten note* next to the photograph of a woman with her back to us suggests that doing so can be dangerous at times. Perhaps this is a reminder to think carefully about *whose views we listen to*.

*Where do our opinions or beliefs come from?
Can we trust the source?*

It can be tempting to take in *only what we want* to and discount or *block out* anything that challenges our preferred ideas about ourselves and the world. This may be why the note in this artwork implies that it is tempting to *'turn our back'* on views which don't match ours.

Give examples of views or beliefs which can divide opinion.

Maria's art piece also opens up the idea of other forms of listening such as paying attention to what is called *our self-talk or inner voice*. Developing an understanding and a positive relationship with ourselves begins with closely listening to *what our thoughts are telling us* and assessing it. The aim is to see where we might need to *alter some of our thinking*. We can all slip into unhelpful thought patterns, including giving ourselves and each other labels.

*Come up with common self/other labels.
Replace any negative ones with more
compassionate and thoughtful language.*

Maria Amidu
a moment of your time, detail,
artist's book, 2013
Zen paper, inkjet print
145 x 140 x 3mm
©The Artist

At the
optimistic
Keepa kicking you in the teeth

The title of the artwork on the front of this card is *things I want known and also do not want to share*.

This stack of paper sheets has been cloaked in *white porcelain* slip which is a watery clay-like substance. It hides most of what is written underneath. On the top sheet we see the phrase '*keeps kicking you in the teeth*'. This expression refers to times when life is already difficult, yet even *more challenges come our way*.

Give examples of when we could feel this way.

Like the words in this artwork, we may go through phases when it seems as if *it's all too much*. For instance, on occasions we might *struggle* with the responsibilities that come *with growing up*. Or maybe we've been *rejected by someone* we've been close to. At such times, it can be hard *to hold onto hope*.

What helps us to stay optimistic even when life is difficult?

If there are opportunities to *share our experiences*, it can make a real difference. Finding others *who can listen* and are also willing to talk about what they've been through helps. It can mean we *feel less isolated* and are given the boost we need to *keep going*.

Can you describe a time when simply sharing a problem made it seem less overwhelming?

Maria Amidu
things I want known and also do not want to share, detail, 2021
Kizuki 4 Monme paper, porcelain slip, typewriter ink
148 x 105 x 5mm
Photo: Jonathan Bassett
©The Artist



The *photograph* on the front of this card zooms in on what seem at first glance to be *sheets of unlined white paper* loosely arranged in piles with a *few typed words visible* here and there.

In fact, these stacks of pages contain 237 of Maria's *personal thoughts and reflections* which she then partly concealed with porcelain slip, allowing us only *fleeting glimpses* of what she's recorded.

Why do you think she might have done this?

Some of us choose to write down what we're thinking in a *daily journal*. This can involve getting in touch with our *inner thoughts* to see where they take us. We all have an internal world made up of *what we think about ourselves* including our experiences with *people and places*, our memories and the meanings we give them, and *our hopes for the future*. Some of what we think and feel may not be easy to reflect on, even if what we write is for our eyes only.

Give an example of a relationship with a place that has a particular meaning, positive or negative. Can such associations change or are they fixed in time?

Getting to know what *makes us who we are* is a lifelong task. An important step is to stop seeing our thoughts about ourselves as '*facts*'. We need to look closely at the *stories we tell ourselves* so we can rewrite those which are too *self-critical or limiting*.

What are some examples of the kinds of stories we might tell ourselves about ourselves?

Maria Amidu
**things I want known and also
do not want to share, detail, 2021**
Installation shot, living in fear of
quicksand, Nunnery Gallery,
3 March - 21 May 2023
Kizuki 4 Monme paper, porcelain slip,
typewriter ink
148 x 105 each sheet
Photo: Jonathan Bassett
©The Artist



The print on the front of this card shows *a jug* that is only *partially visible* because the bottom part of the paper was *submerged in water*.

One *way of seeing* this is as a reminder that we often go through life without pausing to *look under the surface*. Maybe we're choosing to see only the parts that keep us in *our comfort zone*.

Why might we avoid taking a more serious look at ourselves or our lives?

Or perhaps *Maria's image* reminds us of what we might choose to hold back, that is, the parts of ourselves that remain submerged and out of sight like the '*invisible*' half of the jug. We all have a *private self and a social self*. The social, or public self, *isn't 'fake'*, it's just not the whole picture. We have a right to decide with whom we share the more *personal details* about *our lives and our family*.

How do we know it's safe to share? If someone opens up to us, how do we handle this?

Mutual sharing in a trusting and supportive friendship or relationship is important. If we can count on others to respond with a wish to understand, *we'll feel more comfortable* taking the risk. Sharing happens in its own time – we have to be *ready to open up* as it can feel a little exposing. It's usually best not to force the pace but instead *go slowly and share bit by bit*, testing the water.

What are the qualities of a healthy relationship?

Maria Amidu
edge/threshold/brink, detail, 2018
Iwami White paper, inkjet print; Tyvek, digital print; 1/6
123 x 172mm (original);
2250 x 5000mm (installation)
©The Artist



When we see an image such as the one on the front of this card, we might look at the title for a clue to help us understand its meaning.
This work is called somewhere.

Perhaps it reminds us that everyone *comes from 'somewhere'*. We all have a birthplace which might not be the same as the country we most identify with or reflect the cultural heritage of our parents.

To what extent does where we come from define us? Does the place you were born or your cultural heritage have a particular meaning for you?

Our birthplace or our cultural background may be a big or small part of our identity or might not figure at all for different reasons. If we think of *everyone as being from 'somewhere'* and give less importance to nationality, then it may be easier to notice our *similarities rather than our differences*.

What do we have in common with each other regardless of where we're from?

Something we all share is the capacity to *feel emotions*, but we deal with them differently. In some contexts, being open and emotional is encouraged, while in others, everyone is expected to be more reserved. We also differ in the way we interpret bodily sensations. For instance, something someone might describe as *'fear'* could be felt as *'a thrill'* by someone else. This will depend on the kinds of experiences we've had.

We develop our own beliefs around which feelings are permissible to show. Do you think there are differences between what we feel comfortable revealing based on our gender or other aspects of our identity?

Maria Amidu
somewhere, work in progress, 2020
Red carbon paper, water
210 x 148mm
©The Artist

...ing outwards to
rily the most important
ion, earth with knowledge
branches and bloodline
ormation to be passed
o hand, mother to dau
to sister until the
ines across time, in
by those in power
long existence as m
... and ...

It is possible to make out a few phrases such as '*branches and bloodlines*', '*mother to daughter to sister*' and '*across time*' in the image on the front of this card.

Maybe this is hinting at connections made across the generations. For instance, we all take in *spoken or unspoken beliefs* or ideas about who we are from our parents or carers who, in turn, were *shaped by their upbringing* and so on down the line.

Give some examples of what these might be.

Unless we become more conscious of our *background thoughts*, often called our *self-talk*, we might not even know what messages we're giving ourselves, influenced by what we've heard or *impressions we've picked up*. For example, we may automatically assume that we'll have many opportunities in life or the opposite – that we're '*not the type who can succeed*'.

Do you think our thoughts about our self-worth can be changed? If so, how do you think we do this? If not, why not?

Our view of ourselves and of *our potential* is shaped by what we believe about ourselves which, in turn, is *coloured by what we experience, see, read or hear*.

Can you give an example of a film you've seen or something you've looked at online that has influenced how you see yourself or has affected your self-belief?

Maria Amidu
somewhere, detail, 2020
Digital print, semi-gloss
photographic paper; 5/7
421 x 297mm
©The Artist

The image on the front of this card is of a specially made *box lying open*. Inside, we see an official looking folder next to a book with a *photograph of the sky* on its cover.

The folder holds planning documents about the *Lincoln Estate* where *Maria* lived as a child, and the book is a partial autobiography of life before and after living there.

We can all encounter times in life when there is a 'before' and 'after'. Give some examples of what might leave us with a sense of 'no return'.

The book in this artwork contains a series of *personal reflections*, past and present, along with descriptions of feeling states, some capturing the *insecurities and uncertainties* of childhood. One of *Maria's aims* is to show us how we remember only *fragments of our past*, often those experiences which had the most *emotional impact* at the time. For instance, an unexpected move in childhood can be temporarily destabilising and may form a lasting memory.

Describe what it can feel like at any age when confronted with an unanticipated change or facing the unknown.

As we grow older, we continue to look back. Even if we have photographs recording our *personal history* and people in our life who can share their recollections of us, *piecing together our story* is still a creative act. This is because memory is made up of a *complex mix of impressions* including the meanings we give to our experiences, what we imagine we felt at the time, what we feel looking back and what we've heard both then and now.

Have you tried comparing memories with a friend or family member who was with you at the time? What did you discover?

Maria Amidu
air, 2022

*Limited edition box, book and archive,
Japanese cloth, Olin High White paper, Kbad
Sunn Hemp Indigo paper, hand-dyed silk ribbon
Dimensions variable, 442 x 377 x 35mm (box)
Photo: Jonatban Bassett
©The Artist*

Blue

I remember a man I remember He's called Ogun Ogun
out of the radio. I remember writing in the book with
writing with my sister I cannot have been more than three
years old. The one was pale blue.

I remember a photograph that came in the post. A portrait
of a man wearing a hat on the corner of
a heavy cotton blue summer suit - short-sleeved shirt with
dotted pockets, perhaps cream down the centre of almost
dotted trousers. What colour was this one? I need to
remember the sky was an equatorial blue. I cannot say for
certain but perhaps I was nine years old.

I dream about cars often. Usually I am out of control,
converting down phantom streets, compasses of places that
do not really exist. Navigation is not the issue, it is usually
my confusion over the brake and accelerator causing me
to veer forward unintentionally, frustrating myself and
others until eventually I come to a sudden stop, realising
where my car ought to be.

(continued)

(continued)

This photograph shows us a book made by *Maria*, laid open so we can see what it looks like inside. She has intentionally included *blank pages and empty spaces* throughout.

Perhaps Maria is showing us that at times we can't describe what we might call '*felt experiences*'. In these moments, it can be difficult to find the words to convey *what we are feeling or thinking*, even more so if we're having to *express ourselves* in a new language.

Do you speak more than one language? If so, do you think and dream in your first or second language?

We begin to speak when we are very young. Being able to call out when distressed or express our joy or excitement allows us to *attract attention* and *communicate with those around us*. This means our '*mother tongue*' is rooted in our emotional ties with those we were closest to in childhood.

Children often play with language, perhaps creating their own words or sounds. Some artists do so as well. Why is play important regardless of our age?

A *shared language* enables us to build on childhood ties as well as create new connections throughout life. All of our relationships, even those formed in infancy, evolve as we develop our capacity to *describe our experiences* and open up to others. This process is reciprocal, that is, *we share and invite others* to do so with us.

Sharing more personal thoughts and feelings is a sign of a relationship or friendship deepening. Why might we take our time to open up?

Maria Amidu

air, detail, 2022

Limited edition book, Japanese cloth, Olin High White paper, Kbadì Sunn Hemp Indigo paper, hand-dyed silk ribbon

255 x 144 x 21mm

Photo: Jonathan Bassett

©The Artist

We've seen how *Maria Amidu's artwork* often starts with something that we can all relate to whether it be *typed words, handwriting, everyday objects* or even a view out of a train window.

She is showing us how we *make meaning* from our experiences as well as from the stories we've heard about ourselves and others, *our memories and the emotions* we've felt.

Which of Maria's pieces made the strongest impression on you and why?

Like *Maria*, we can find different ways to express ourselves through *experimenting with artmaking* and playing with ideas. We don't always need to know what we're doing before we begin. *Meanings can come to us* through the act of making, often changing over time. We might, for instance, look back at something we've made or written or perhaps listen again to a song we've heard and suddenly, we'll *have a new insight* into an aspect of our life.

Can you give an example of when this has happened to you?

As we progress through the years, we gradually learn to *be curious* about who we are and *who we might become*. Art helps us to enquire into questions of identity and stimulates *interest in our worlds* within and without. It doesn't need to end here. Perhaps you'll be inspired to research other artists by *looking online, visiting galleries, or reading books*. Art isn't confined to a picture in a gold frame – there are many artists working in intriguing and unexpected ways for you to discover!

Maria Amidu
episode(s), work in progress, 2023
Tosa shi paper, laser etching
210 x 148mm
©The Artist

{ *Tips for Facilitators* }

Tips for Facilitators

The themes covered in these cards could touch on subjects that are emotive for some.

Although it is likely the conversation will remain general, there may be times when a participant responds more personally to the material.

Setting the scene: You may want to include the following statement when you introduce the workshop: *'Some of the topics we'll be discussing might bring up difficult thoughts or feelings relating to your own experiences or your family which you may not want to share with us. If you feel affected by our conversation, you can speak to me after the group. Please don't feel pressured into talking; share only what you feel comfortable with.'*

How to respond when a participant ...

... reacts strongly: *'It's okay to have a reaction. Let's pause so others can come in too. Many have experienced racism/being excluded/overlooked (etc) and it's wrong that it's part of life. Can anyone relate to what X is sharing with us?'*

... becomes tearful about their family life or personal history: *'You're sharing something that sounds very painful. I'd like to hear more – why don't we speak after the group? Life, and relationships, can be complex – I'm sure we've all had experiences that have left us with strong feelings. What is generally thought to be most difficult in any family or relationship? (If no one responds, move to safer ground, saying something along the following lines:) Miscommunication is common in any relationship. We might feel misunderstood,*

silenced, or talked down to. Poor communication can also lead to conflict. What are the features of good communication?'

... is upset: *'I can see our conversation is bringing up something painful for you. This can happen - any of us can become unexpectedly upset, distressed or agitated. We all have emotional bruises which hurt if touched, just as a physical bruise can hurt. This is nothing to feel awkward or self-conscious about. We can speak after the group if you'd like.' (Turning to the whole group, you can say...) X's response reminds us that we all have feelings that we might not be aware of until something triggers them. Which feelings do you think are most difficult to experience and which are ones we most enjoy?'*

Conclusion: The above examples provide some approaches to containing and moving on from instances when a group member experiences a strong reaction to something under discussion. If a participant chooses to talk to you afterwards, you can hear them out and then say, *'What you've told me is important. It sounds like you've had a very difficult time. Is there anyone you can share this with?'* (If they are a young person, you could add:) *'I'd like to talk to your Head of Year so they know this is troubling for you. I'm sure they'll want to help. How do you feel about this?'*

If something comes up when preparing for, or delivering, a workshop that you'd like to talk through, you can email **info@spaceinhackney.org** with **Advice/Debrief Requested** in the subject box and one of our therapists will book a free call with you. We want you to feel supported in using these cards.



Emotional Learning Cards

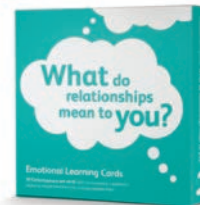
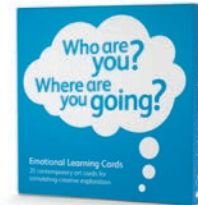
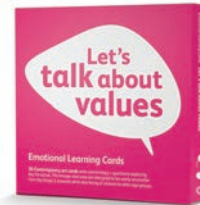
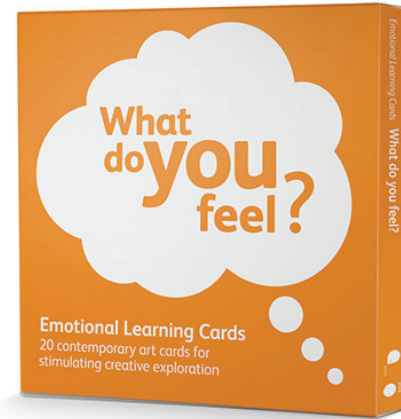
Contemporary *art cards* for *stimulating creative exploration*.

Our Emotional Learning Cards occupy a leading position in the growing fields of emotional learning and psychological therapies. Our cards encourage emotional literacy, support and critique 'meaning-making' as well as challenging often stereotypical ideas about who makes art and what its purpose might be.

Each of our seven boxed sets of **Emotional Learning Cards** highlight specific themes designed to facilitate a better understanding of what makes us who we are and how we make sense of our experiences, *bringing together the artwork of international contemporary artists with therapeutic commentary and questions*.

We move beyond commonly *explored subjects by branching into discussion relating to difference, diversity, outsider / insider experiences, and how past histories (both personal and collective) shape the present*. Using art as a starting point, the cards help facilitators and educators open up difficult conversations on challenging feelings and complex family or cultural experiences. *By openly exploring less talked about feelings and thoughts stimulated by the artworks, we reframe them as common to us all, to be shared and thought about rather than labelled as embarrassing or shameful and denied or hidden away*.

Let us know how you use the cards - we want to hear from you.





REFLECTING ON FEELINGS

The **40 prompt cards** in this set cover a wide range of *thoughts and feelings* which have been selected to help build a more extensive *emotional vocabulary*. Each card features an emotion on the front with short commentary and questions on the reverse. Feelings highlighted can be matched with images from our sets of emotional learning cards or used on their own. They are designed to open up both general conversation on themes relating to *sense of self, identity and belonging* and as a starting point for *more personal reflection*.

Visit **www.iniva.org** to buy sets of *Emotional Learning Cards*.

On our website you can access *further resources, find out about the artists in our sets and our wider learning programmes*.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Images *Maria Amidu*

Creative Concept & Card Text *Lyn French (A Space)*

Project Development *Robini Malik Okon (iniva), Lyn French (A Space) and Maria Amidu (Artist), with input from Esther Collins (Towner Eastbourne), Jenny Starr (iniva) and Melissa Jones (A Space)*

Design *Sonja Frick, Designer & Brand Consultant*

Print *L&S Printing Company Ltd*

Sincere thanks to *Maria Amidu* who generously gave permission for her work to be reproduced in this resource. Thanks also for the support from *Art Fund, Arts Council England and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation*.

A Space for creative learning & support was established in 1997 by the Glass-House Trust, the Social Science Research Unit (Institute of Education) and Hackney Education. **A Space** provides therapy services and emotional learning input to schools, engages in research in the field and disseminates best practices through delivering training and publishing books, articles and therapeutic resources.

iniva is an evolving visual arts organisation dedicated to nurturing and disseminating radical and emergent contemporary artistic practice centring Global Majority, African, Asian, & Caribbean diaspora perspectives. Since its inception, it has been *iniva*'s mission to be an agent for change in the cultural sector, advocating for social justice through the support of artists and communities as well as via the forms of exchange that advance our desire to understand each other and respect the cultural values that challenge cultural 'norms'.

Iniva Creative Learning reflects the partnership between A Space and *iniva*. We share a commitment to producing art-based resources and initiatives which promote emotional learning, personal development and psychological growth.

Co-published by *iniva* (Institute of International Visual Arts) & A Space in partnership with Towner Eastbourne.

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