

A
LOCK
IS A
GATE

A LOCK IS A GATE

A mini concept album and drawing project for the Central line

A LOCK IS A GATE is an Art on the Underground project devised and led by artist Ruth Ewan with composer Kerry Andrew and poet Evlynn Sharp, and created with young people from the Laburnum Boat Club youth project in Hackney.

Nearly 40 members of the Club aged 9 to 19 took part in creating an album of experimental songs, a book of drawings, posters and Tube station artwork. All the voices, words, sounds and drawings are their own.

The book and the album

This book of drawings and the album of songs are designed to be looked at and listened to together. They follow a part-real, part-imagined journey that winds through London from the Tube to the canal. Along the way the young voyagers pass through a long canal tunnel and negotiate a lock. From their narrowboat they see puzzling landscapes and dazzling colours. They make songs telling of who they are and how they think others see them, and share their hopes and dreams for a better world in which to grow up.

The tracks can also be downloaded at art.tfl.gov.uk

The Tube station artwork

A LOCK IS A GATE includes two artworks that run the length of the escalators at Bethnal Green station. These are based on drawings created in response to the album songs.

The project process

In early 2011 Art on the Underground invited artist Ruth Ewan to collaborate with young people at Laburnum Boat Club in Hackney to create a new artwork for the Central line. Ewan was inspired by the youth club's inclusive atmosphere and lively, adventurous spirit. She devised a project that aimed to reflect the participants' creativity and shared wisdom, and the supportive and cooperative atmosphere of the Laburnum Boat Club community.

To develop the project, Ewan invited composer Kerry Andrew to collaborate on a series of song and drawing workshops, and poet Evlynn Sharp to lead writing sessions. The workshops ran over two months in the Spring of 2011 and were open to all members of Laburnum Boat Club. The sessions included a tour behind the scenes at Bethnal Green Tube station and a trip on a narrowboat through Islington tunnel. The participants used audio-equipment to make field recordings on the water and out in the wider city, and to capture their observations and song ideas along the way.

Back at the Club they made drawings and poems exploring ideas about themselves and their dreams. Together they experimented with making songs from each others' poems. They made up alphabets and picture puzzles in which images stand for words. They invented puzzles ways to express sound through drawing, and mapped the flow of a song along a line. This book collects some of those drawing and writing experiments created as part of the making of each song. The flow of drawings follows the same route through the songs as the album.

The idea behind A LOCK IS A GATE

During the project workshops one of the participants made a drawing with the words A LOCK IS A GATE. The phrase is both a philosophical riddle and practical fact, and became central to the project. In reality a canal lock is a watergate that requires special knowledge to unlock. But once open, it lets a boat pass along different levels of water. In that way, a lock is both a barrier and a way through. In the song of the same name, it stands both for a real canal lock and the obstacles we all face in life, and the challenge of how to overcome them.

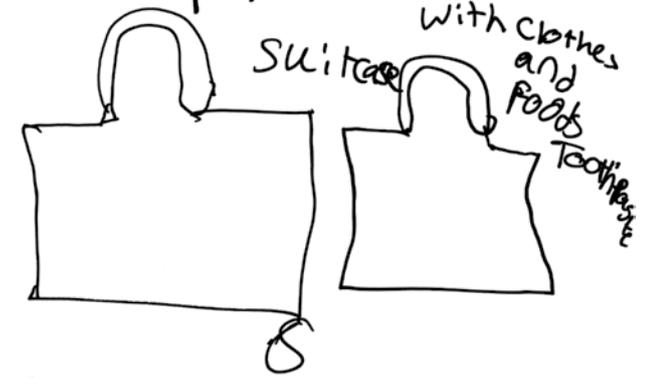
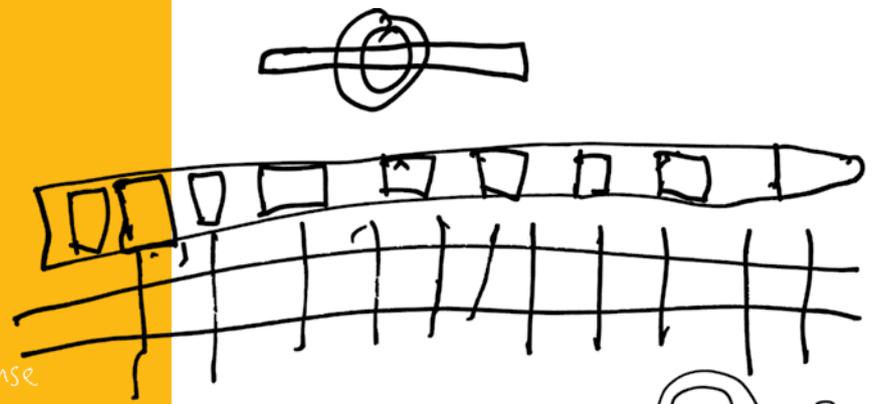


Laburnum Boat Club narrowboat. Photo: Ruth Ewan

money

SUN cream ON a tube

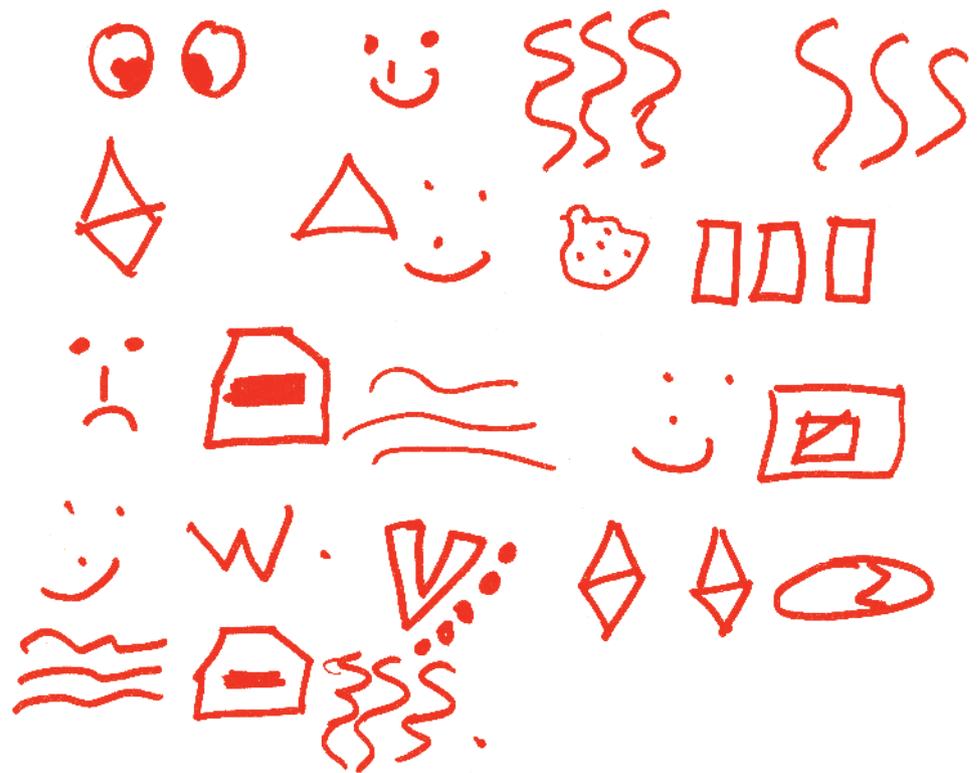
I set off my gerney and the
 Six things I need is a DSA suitcase
 some Sun cream to rub on my
 face. The people I see have hand
 bags, I hear people saying Bia, Bia,
 Bia, Bia. When I get on the train I
 hear ~~tu, tu, tu, tu~~ cho, cho, cho, cho
 when I set off my gerney I have 3 more
 things to bring, wich is a phone, my bag
 and my hat



money
 osery
 suitcase
 snack
 clothes
 books
 ticket

2000
 2100
 money
 ticket





I can hear nothing All I can see is the
moon and

Live forever machine
Equal Money Machine
Water machine
Food Machine



EVER

Lasting

Friends

+



&



SHARPE!

SHARPE!



count to three
and see what
happens?



COUNT TO 3!

HELLO! AM A
SUPERHERO!

I Will Save

You When you
are in Danger.

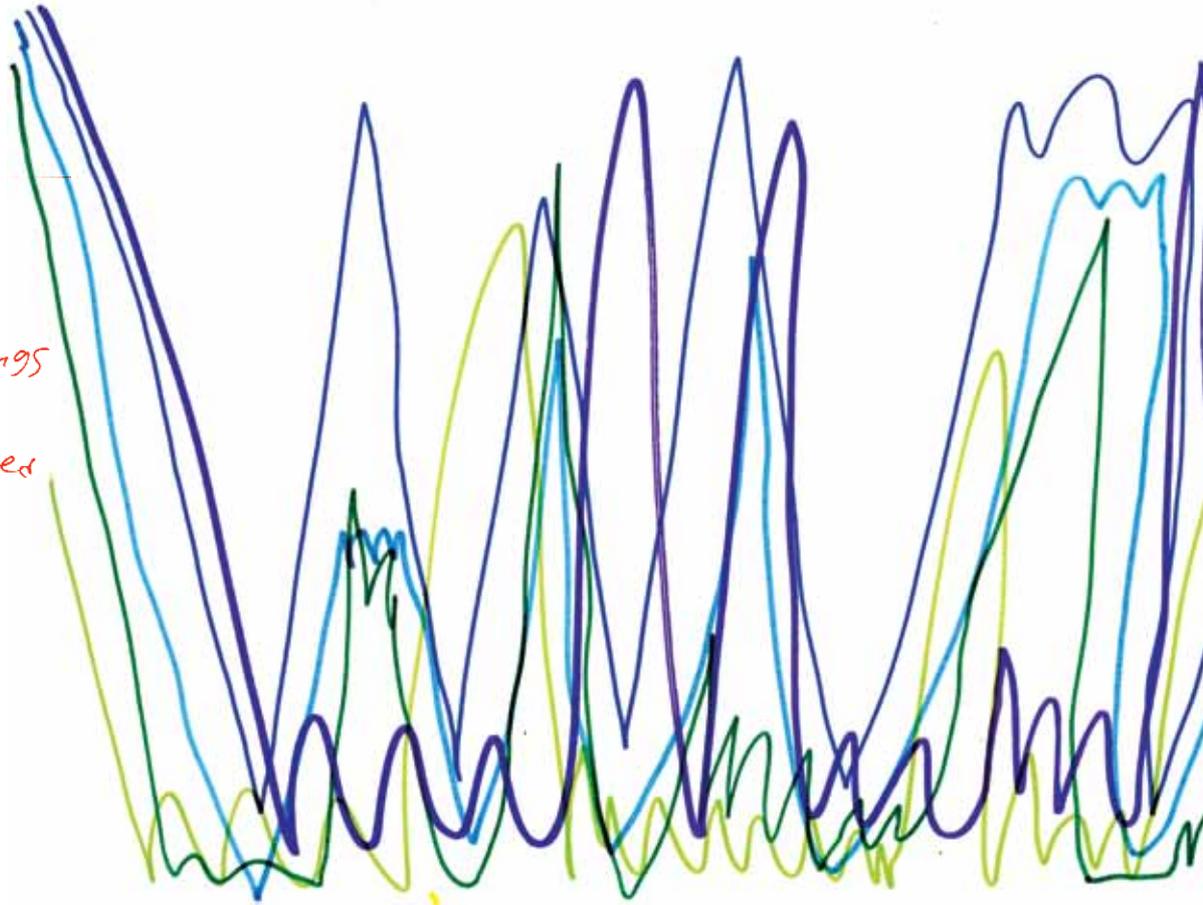
If you are Hurt

^{I have} I got Super Hearing. I will
know when your in Danger.



BIRDS SONGS

I am ^{calm} ~~like~~ and gentle like the songs
the birds sing, I am like the birds who
go to different places, I am carried
by the wind like some birds.



I sing la la la



A handwritten musical staff in treble clef. The melody consists of seven notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on E4, a quarter note on D4, a quarter note on C4, a quarter note on B3, and a quarter note on A3. The lyrics "I am calm like songs the birds sing" are written below the staff, aligned with the notes.

I am calm like songs the birds sing



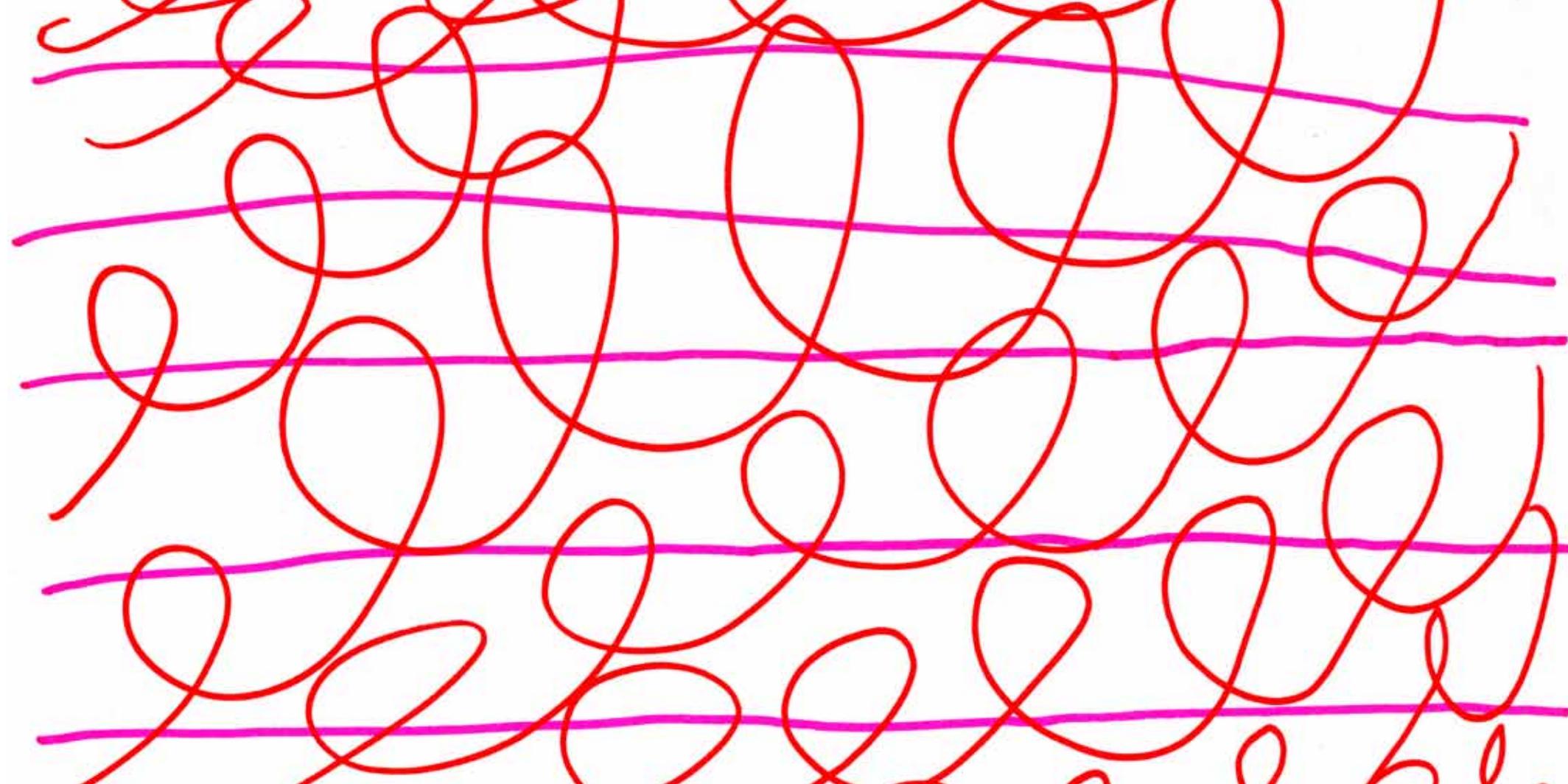
A handwritten musical staff in treble clef. The melody consists of seven notes: a quarter note on G4, a quarter note on F4, a quarter note on E4, a quarter note on D4, a quarter note on C4, a quarter note on B3, and a quarter note on A3. The lyrics "I am gentle like the songs birds songs" are written below the staff, aligned with the notes.

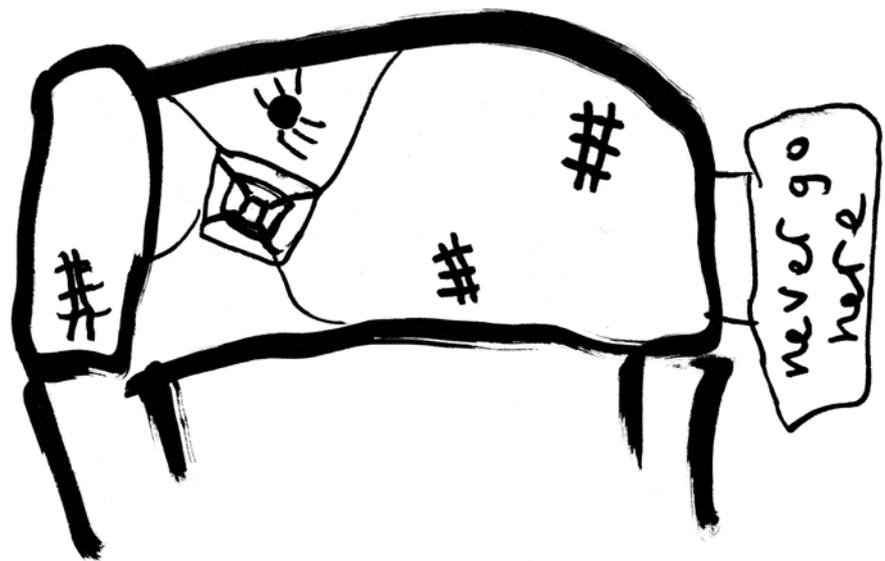
I am gentle like the songs birds songs

Fireworks

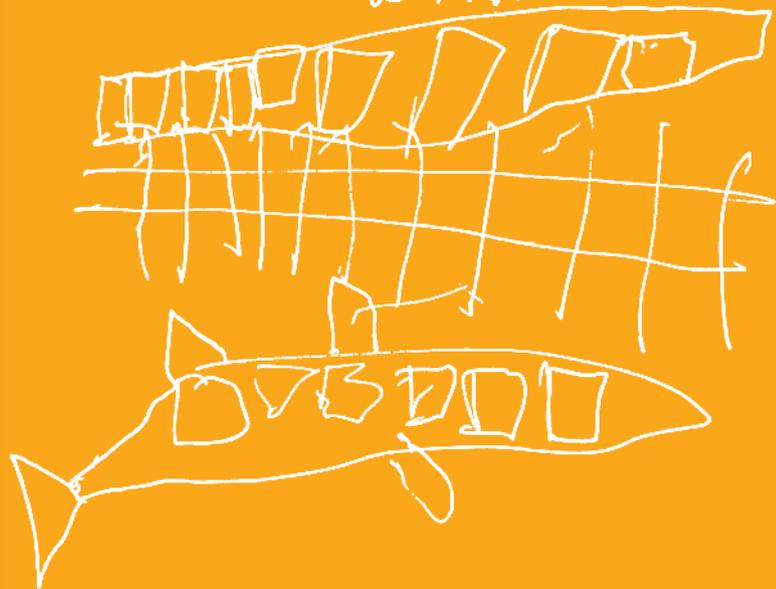
- I am Like fireworks
- I am Very enejetic
- I never want to go to bed
- I change motions
- I am always dressed in Sparks

green means happy
yellow means happy
red means angry
blue means ... sad
and that's all I know.





- Taxi
- Train
- Airplane
- Food



A LOCK IS A GATE

Notes on the album tracks

1. Setting off

A young traveller gets ready and sets out on a journey through London from the Tube to the canal. He tells us what he sees and hears on the way.

2. Journey through the Canal Tunnel

Orange chalk! White goo!

We go with him on a narrowboat along Regent's Canal and through Islington Tunnel. The boat passengers describe what they see on the tunnel walls: signs, images and messages hidden beneath the city. There is a puzzle to solve, letters to piece together.

3. Seeing the Moon

Moon's word is beautiful, colour is blue, taste is old socks, smells like the same, weather would be O, very, very cold is the moon, outside is orange...

We come through the tunnel and out under the night sky. As we approach the canal lock the passengers talk nonsense. The only clear thing is the moon in the sky.

4. A Lock is a Gate

Pressure's always going to be there...

The boat comes to a canal lock. The passengers think about other obstacles they have met in life. They solve how to open the lock like a gate so we can keep moving.

5. Magic Machine

*Good magic words, say it again, good magic words
Live forever machine, equal money machine, water machine, food machine
Everlasting friends and time and space, a canon that shoots out stars*

After unlocking the lock, the voyagers share their wishes and ideas for a better world.

6. Moving

The boat carries us through the landscape. The traveller feels the thrum of the boat against the water.

7. Like Birds

I am calm, I am gentle, I am like songs the birds sing

This place inspires one of the young passengers to sing a song about how it feels to be her.

8. Like Fireworks

Green means happy, yellow means happy, red means angry, blue means sad. And that's all I know

Another voyager sings a song about herself. The others join in, and the sky fizzes with colour.

9. Turning

It's time to leave. We turn the boat around.



A LOCK IS A GATE is a project devised and led by artist Ruth Ewan with composer Kerry Andrew and poet Evlynn Sharp. It was created by young people at Laburnum Boat Club in Hackney, London. It was commissioned and produced by Art on the Underground.

All voices, words, songs, sounds, field recordings and drawings in A LOCK IS A GATE are those of the young people at Laburnum Boat Club. They were shaped into the finished album and artwork by the artists.

Music composed/arranged by Kerry Andrew, and mixed and mastered by Matt Dibble and Kerry Andrew. Sound recording led by Martin Tisdall.

Design by Rose.

The artists would like to thank all the young people who took part. They also thank Cathy Haynes, Cath Hawes, Dominic Hinshelwood, Rose Parnis, Tamsin Dillon, Jo Martin, Rebecca Bell, Mariam Zulfiqar, Jiangee Ching, Claire Clutterbuck, Simon Elliott, Rupert Gowar-Cliffe, Tom Crawshaw, Peter Donaldson, Matt Dibble, Martin Tisdall, Brian Farrow, Lola Showunmi, Glenn Darlison and all the staff at Art on the Underground, Laburnum Boat Club, Bethnal Green Tube station, Bridge Academy Music department and the Museum of Childhood.

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CHISENHALE GALLERY



Whitechapel
Gallery



Laburnum Boat Club

Laburnum Boat Club is a charitable community project and social education facility based on the Regent's Canal in Hackney. It is concerned with the development of young people and children of all abilities, primarily through watersport activities.

Project partners

A LOCK IS A GATE was selected from a series of invited proposals for commission by Art on the Underground in partnership with the Barbican Art Gallery, Chisenhale Gallery, Create Festival and the Whitechapel Gallery.

Central line series

A LOCK IS A GATE is part of Art on the Underground's Central line series of artists' projects taking place from 2011 to 2012. Each project explores the themes of communication, connection and exchange. The series is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

ART ON THE UNDERGROUND

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LINE
SERIES



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