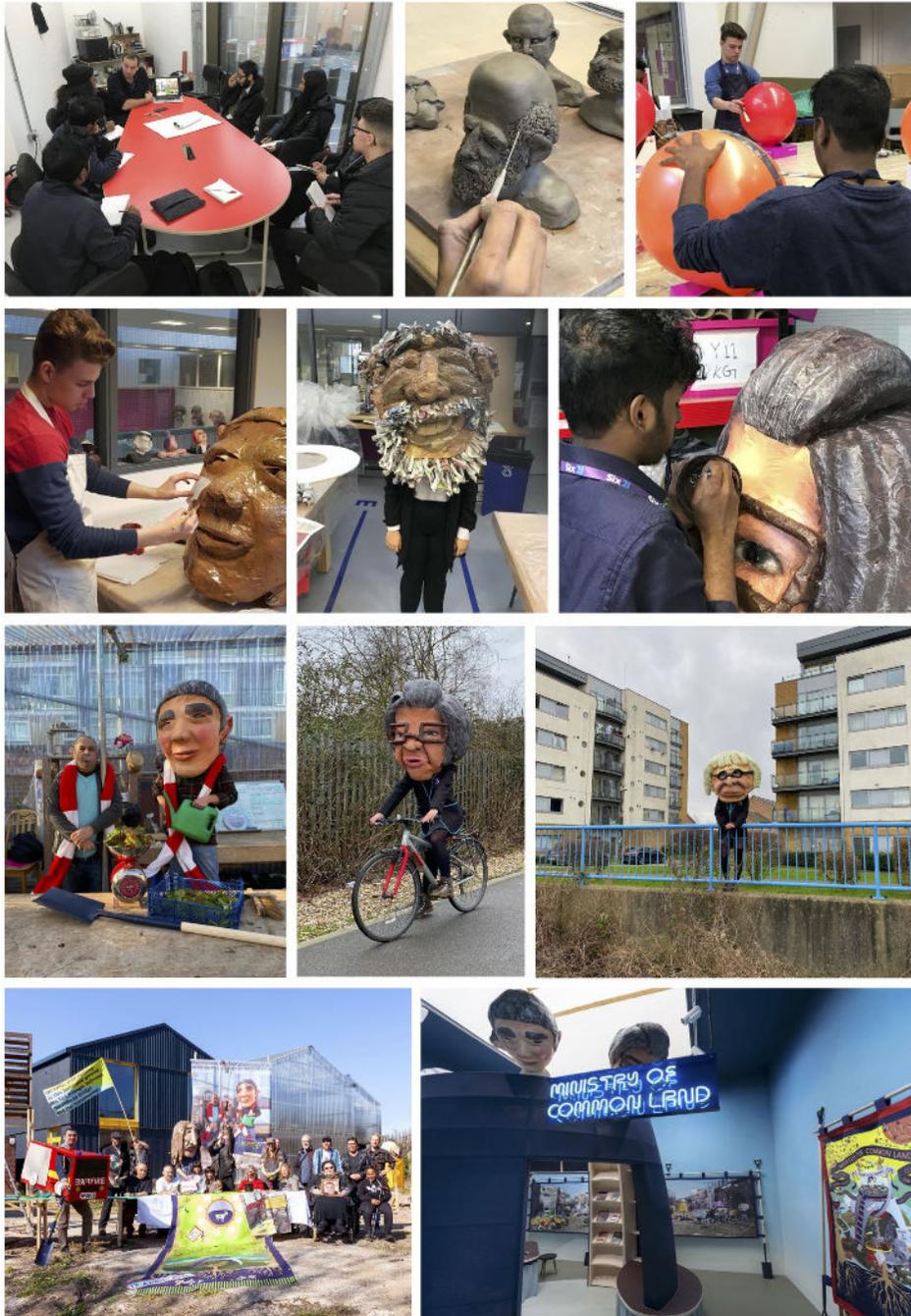


Big Heads
Zek Hoeben
12th Grade
School 21, Newham, London



In this project, students in year 12 were commissioned to design and build oversized head masks based on figures in the UK who have influenced land reform. The brief was set by Publicworks Group, a not-for-profit critical design practice that operates across architecture, art, and performance. In addition to gaining prop design and construction skills, students learned about the interdisciplinary nature of the arts in the real world and explored potential career paths in the creative industries, specifically in TV, film, and stage productions.

The completed heads were ultimately showcased at 'The Ministry of Common Land' at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2021 as part of an installation in the British pavilion. It's worth noting that this project took place during lockdown, leading to the postponement of the biennale from 2020 to 2021. Consequently, this had an impact on the workshop time available in schools, necessitating remote work.

Teacher Reflection

This project serves as an excellent example of a real-world assignment that resulted in outcomes surpassing the scope of the learning experience itself. Students were notably motivated by their participation in a broader team of experts and the associated pressure to meet a genuine deadline. Failing to do so would have repercussions, affecting the subsequent stage of development and jeopardising Publicworks' commission by the British Council. A pivotal factor contributing to the success of this real-world project was that the learning process was propelled by a desire to impact an audience beyond the students themselves. Striking the right balance, where a project possesses meaning and purpose while remaining achievable and engaging, represents the primary challenge for us as educators.

—Zek Hoeben

Student Reflection

The process of prop making presented challenges, and I found satisfaction in drawing caricatures, sculpting a 3D prototype, and then constructing the Big Head. If I were to enhance the project, I would suggest involving figures who are still alive and actively engaged in addressing the land reform issue. Additionally, I desired a more active role in the tableau photograph that formed part of the installation. It would have been fantastic to collaborate with Publicworks Group until the project's completion, possibly even visiting Venice.

—Grey

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