

Despacito Art School presents...

home is where the garden is

Friday 22 – Sunday 24 August 2025

Exhibition open daily, 12-5pm

Roland Ross
231 Northdown Road
Margate CT9 2PJ

*

Home is where the garden is – an exhibition of artworks made by Open School East's Despacito Art School with guest artists Samara Scott, Harold Offeh, Flora Parrott, architect Jonathan Boyle, OSE Artistic Director and artist Polly Brannan and OSE in-house artist and graphic designer George Harding.

This exhibition is part of OSE's wider programming cycle for September 2024-September 2026 titled *Home is where the garden is*. The cycle explores the garden as a metaphor for spaces of cultivation, rooting, and unexpected encounters. It is built around an ecological, rhizomatic framework that focuses on the networks, systems and communities that form *civic space*.

The exhibition is loosely organised into four constellations that explore the garden as: *in-transition*, *subterranean* (below ground), *interconnected*, and *suburban*. All gardens are microcosmic worlds in constant *transition*, shape-shifting and evolving with changes of season, temperature, soil chemistry and more. Their dark, *subterranean* worlds are where plant roots anchor, store sustenance and energy, as well as communicate and prepare for change. The subterranean activities of a garden can be murky and unknown, as explored with Samara through miniature world building.

Within its microcosm the organisms in a garden are entangled by soil, root systems, pollinators, environmental processes... In this way and more a garden is *interconnected*, with human and more than human life. The branched sculptures made by Despacito artists with Flora map the interconnected nodes in each of Despacito's personal ecosystems. As one Despacito artist writes: 'we both need sun, we both need water, we both need each other' – a garden is a place of inter-species connectivity.

Human intervention can make a garden thrive or wilt, and a garden can do the same for humans. The tradition of gifting cut flowers, for example, provides care and joy-sustenance, whilst food provided by an allotment (such as the Despacito community garden at EthelAthele Alley) provides nutrient and energy-sustenance. The garden is a place of give and take, of exchange, images related to which can be seen in the visual identity of the wider *Home is where the garden is* project made with Polly and George.

Finally, the *suburban* garden: tamed, domesticated, and watched over by neighbourly eyes. Yet also a meeting point for plants with genealogical (family) roots that extend across nation borders, such as the monkey puzzle tree, rhododendron, tulip and peony. In Margate gardens these plants that are native to Chile, Argentina, Nepal, Ukraine, Iran, The Netherlands, Italy and more meet to form the local terrain of our town. They connect us to global systems of trade as well as botanical histories of cultivation, cuisine, tradition and medicine. The plants on our doorsteps can expand our sense of home.

In the exhibition ***Home is where the garden is***, Despacito artists use creative processes to make clearings – spaces in which otherwise unseen things become visible – through which we might encounter our local gardens in alternative ways, more aware of the worlds of others that maintain our own ecosystems of sustenance and life.

ARTWORKS

1. *Mobile Growing Unit*

Despacito Art School x Polly Brannan, designed with and fabricated by Jonathan Boyle (Slate Studios)
Custom build Valchromat unit, vinyl, various workshop & gardening materials

Polly Brannan worked with Despacito to devise a roaming project with and for local families as part of OSE's new *Civic Programme*. Together they mapped key venues and locations as well as designed typography that became the visual identity for the current programme cycle, co-developed with OSE in-house artist and graphic designer George Harding.

Polly and architect Jonathan Boyle then co-designed the *Mobile growing unit* with Despacito. This mobile project is focussed on exploring new ways of working together across Cliftonville West. Polly has taken the unit around Cliftonville West with two Despacito members Christly and Daisy as a tool to connect to local community groups and residents through on the ground, grass roots pop-up growing and poster-making sessions exploring how plants, gardens and shared community spaces shape ideas of civic space and home.

2. *Home is where the garden is*

Despacito Art School x Polly Brannan
Oil pastel on paper

During workshops in spring, Polly worked with Despacito to make still life drawings and paintings to co-develop the visual identity of our current thematic cycle *Home is where the garden is*.

3. *Miniature Worlds*

Despacito Art School x Samara Scott
Cardboard, foam, strawberry laces, cling film, marshmallows, tape, string, poster paint, pipe cleaner, beaded link chain, aquarium gravel, tin foil, petri dish, glitter, polystyrene balls

Samara joined Despacito to make miniature worlds inspired by science fiction and submarine/subterranean ecologies as metaphors for environmental and climate change.

4. *The Open Life of Plants (Plant Power Jamboree)*

Despacito Art School x Harold Offeh
Performance documentation

Harold joined Despacito to make costumes, characters and a final performance of their *Plant Power Jamboree* based on Stevie Wonder's *Journey Through The Secret Life of Plants* album (1979). In this workshop Despacito investigated interdependent networks and ecologies that link their own gardens, parks and local crops to wider systems of movement, production and trade.

5. *Imagining an Ecosystem*

Despacito Art School x Flora Parrott
Collograph prints with chalk pastel, found branches, poster paint, foil, string

Flora joined Despacito to explore the interrelations between living and more than living bodies that make up our personal ecosystems, making collograph prints with found materials and impressions.

Despacito Art School is a project-based programme for children aged 5-12 from Margate that has been running since 2018. The programme provides regular opportunities over school holidays for children to take part in hands-on art making and showcase their work in public presentations to their families, friends and the local arts community.

'Home is...' community partners include: AgeUK Thanet, Ark: Cliftonville Cultural Space, Cliftonville Community Centre, Ethel Athel Alley, Millmead Community Centre, Northdown Primary School and Roma Drom.

Open School East would like to thank Roland Ross for generously hosting the exhibition, Vlasta Hozova for ongoing hard work as part of the OSE/Despacito Team, Ruslan Mutafov for his design and garden support, Keely Burrows for her cooking skills, Ayaan Bulale for initiating the programme in OSE's early days, Jon Karicka for taking care of the unit, Ethel Athel Alley Residents, H and Aaron McKay for enabling the garden to grow. We would also like to thank all the Despacito families for their commitment and support – this is what makes Despacito Art School!

DESPACITO ART SCHOOL ARTISTS

Bella, Benitta, Christly, Daisy, Eddie, Jackson, Kingsleigh, Knight, Maria, Melody, Minnie, Opal, Otis, Raiden, Ralph, Vlasta

Home is where the garden is
Supported by:



**Gerard and
Sarah Griffin**



J.P. Jacobs
Charitable Trust

