



Mikhail Karikis made his video installation *Ain't Got No Fear* with boys from the Isle of Grain. It will be shown at the opening weekend of the Whitstable Biennale

Rapper boys' young voices video captures theme for arts festival

...of the space June 2016 The theme of Faraway Nearby

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Thousands of art enthusiasts are expected to flock to the town this weekend for the eighth Whitstable Biennale.

The festival will include contemporary performances, multimedia installations, film premieres, readings, walks and talks starting tomorrow (Friday) and ending next Sunday.

The programme will unfold across the town, with venues including the South Quay boat shed, tennis courts, High Street shops, Whitstable Library and the harbour among the action.

The theme of this year's celebrations will be *The Faraway Nearby*, a collection by American painter Georgia O'Keeffe in 1937.

A 10-minute film by artist

Mikhail Karikis will capture the theme of the festival on the opening weekend.

His installation, *Ain't Got No Fear*, is made with boys aged between 11 and 13 in the industrialised Isle of Grain.

It will be shown at the Whitstable Youth Centre in Tower Parade between noon and 6pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Using the format of a music video, the teenagers rap about their hopes and fears in secret underground hideaways to the soundtrack of demolition at a nearby power plant site.

Crushing noises of industrial work are used to look at being a teenager in an industrial area.

Mikhail has been working with the boys for several months for the release of the video which has been specially commissioned for this year's Whitstable Biennale.

He said: "I was mainly work-

ing with two boys who rap a song in the video and each verse is a chance for them to reflect their childhood and imagine the future.

"We created a film of young voices against an industrial soundtrack and my time there was interspersed by visiting the hideaways and spaces the boys use to arrange gatherings.

"Their older siblings organised a rave last summer which was raided by police and so this film comes out of the specific need for the young people of Grain to find space to congregate because there is nowhere for them to go."

The Greek-born artist explained the project had a lot of input from the boys he worked with and was not a pre-determined project.

He said: "It shows an inventive way of using spaces for recreation and the different types of community that can be created.

"It is quite a remote area and

in one of the spaces I was shown there was a former underground army base.

"The boys use that to listen to music, light candles and congregate with their friends.

"There is something about the seclusion of Grain that attracted me to the project and it has a unique culture."

Mikhail, who is based in London, has travelled across the world spending time in different communities for his projects.

He said: "People around the world are interested in how other communities live.

"I have been to Korea, Italy, Denmark and I am working on a project in Japan at the moment.

"It is quite mind-boggling how the life of a project continues internationally and this one for the festival is a prime example because it gives people a way to reflect on the issues they are facing."

The theme of *Faraway Nearby* will also be explored by Alice Butler focusing on themes of adolescence, plagiarism and kleptomania in her miniature books.

Marcia Farquhar has created *Rooty Tooty*, a new red and white striped ice cream for the festival.

Whitstable Biennale is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

The festival is also backed by Canterbury City Council, the University of Kent, Culture Kent and Kent County Council.

As well as the youth centre, *Ain't Got No Fear* will be screened daily at 1.30pm from Monday until next Friday in the Biennale cinema at the Horsebridge Centre.

➔ For the full programme, go to whitstablebiennale.com