CHILDREN IN NORTHERN IRELAND, like children all over the world, love animation. At Londonderry’s celebrated Nerve Centre, a community-based arts center and “cultural factory” in the heart of the walled old city, animators-in-residence and instructors Gary Rosborough and Tomáš Ó Maonaigh use Claymation, modern technology, and stories from Irish history to capture young imaginations, teach skills, and encourage cross-community communications.

Londonderry, or Derry, is Northern Ireland’s second largest city. During The Troubles of the 1970s and 1980s, it was a particularly tense area. The Nerve Centre was established in 1990 as a focal point for Derry’s youth culture. By bringing popular music, film, video, animation, and interactive multimedia together under one roof, the Centre promotes creative collaboration among artists and fusion of the arts. It also provides a cultural outlet for many young people who feel excluded from what is traditionally regarded as the “arts sector.”

(Above) Local school children learn about Claymation, technology, and history during a workshop at the Nerve Centre.

(Right) Claymation characters take time away from their teaching responsibilities to lead a tour of their hometown of Londonderry, or Derry.

Photos courtesy the Nerve Centre