

SpaceMakers



SpaceMakers

at

Kettle's Yard

September 2011 -

June 2013

KETTLE'S YARD

SHAPE | east



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Flow



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St Mary's Year 5s climbed Castle Hill to sketch the skyline

***“As art coordinator in my school, I initiate and organise our pupils’ art activities by myself so the SpaceMakers project has been an exciting chance to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team. I wanted to raise the standard of artwork in our school and introduce our pupils to many new professions. The project succeeded in both aims!*”**

Personally, I found it stimulating to be learning new skills alongside the children and I enjoyed the freedom to make the links between our Kettle’s Yard activities and our curriculum back in school. Our children now have greater aspirations for the future, having met artists, engineers, archaeologists, architects and curators. The legacy will live on through our brilliant Art Shed, the new skills learnt and the enthusiasm of our pupils.”

Janet King, St Mary’s

SpaceMakers Project Introduction

SpaceMakers was a two-year project using creativity and contemporary arts to help pupils from two Cambridgeshire schools to engage with architecture and the built environment, to become ‘SpaceMakers’. Devised and overseen by Kettle’s Yard’s Learning Team, it was primarily delivered by two professional artists working closely with two lead teachers:

- Artist Jo Chapman collaborated with teacher Janet King and two classes of pupils from St Mary’s Church of England Primary School in St Neots *
- Artist Raksha Patel collaborated with teacher Nicola Powys and BTEC Art and Design students from Comberton Village College in Comberton.

In monthly sessions, the participants investigated structures, functions and art within the Kettle’s Yard site and diverse buildings around Cambridge with architects, designers and engineers. The students explored Kettle’s Yard as a unique place to experience art in a domestic environment as well as the contemporary art of the gallery space. They also discovered the history and environment of the City, with archaeologists, history enactors and tour guides, while learning about Kettle’s Yard as a heritage site. All these visiting experts were sourced and recruited by architectural design consultants, Shape East. These experience were integrated with hands-on visual art and design workshops at Kettle’s Yard or in their schools.

Through the SpaceMakers project, students developed knowledge and understanding of the built environment, explored art practices and designed and built their own structures.

* In the first 15 months, St Mary’s participants comprised one Year 5/6 group. Then in 2013, a Year 4/5 group took part for a shorter project in year two. The first group had expected to continue throughout the two years. However, delays to the building project and other school-related factors led to a decision to work with a younger group for a shorter duration during the second year.



As part of the 'Kettle's Yard; Looking Ahead' development project, SpaceMakers was generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The development plan includes a new Education Wing, archive facilities, a café and, a remodelled gallery and welcome spaces. SpaceMakers aimed to follow the build of the Education Wing between 2011-2013, to enable learning about processes of commissioning, design and construction and to help represent the needs of young people. Despite changes to the build schedule, which meant the groups were unable to see the actual build process first hand, the project resulted in rich, varied and unexpected outcomes for both schools as well as learning for the organisation:

- Participants from St Mary's made excellent use of sketchbooks to gather visual notes, while learning about building structures and histories. This inspired creative learning in Science, Geography and other subjects. In addition, they developed numerous practical art-based skills in working with diverse materials and they created their own 'Art Shed' in the school garden.

“ My favourite place in Kettle's Yard is the cottage first floor sitting room. When I stand in the middle and look around I see artwork everywhere. Some is recognisable, some not. Some new, some old. And some that you wouldn't realise is art. There's a cupboard full of beautiful ceramics and two grey armchairs where I imagine Helen and Jim would have sat ... This place really makes me think about real art. ”
Pupil, St Mary's

- Young people from Comberton Village College were introduced to the work of a wide range of contemporary artists and innovative architects, while they connected historic buildings and symbolism within their artwork. They too experienced collaborative and large scale art making, including a drawing filling a room and building a shelter in their school grounds.

BTEC group created their own zine to illustrate and evaluate the project through photos and drawings

Project Aims

LEARNING OUTCOMES

IT WAS HOPED THAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD:

- **Gain a strong understanding of the architectural history of Kettle's Yard.**
They would be able to describe how the owners (the Edes) contributed to its spaces, and how its spaces function today.
- **Gain a strong understanding of the design and construction of buildings.**
They would be able to talk about how buildings fit their sites, are made structurally sound or use materials from their environment; how they are designed for users and how people feel about them.
- **Input their own ideas and creativity into the process of the Kettle's Yard build.**
They would have taken part in activities to ensure that the layout and equipping of the education spaces meet the needs of future audiences.
- **Develop confidence, knowledge and skills in using technical vocabulary.**
They would use terms of architectural style and be able to roughly date buildings.
- **Develop an awareness of associated career choices.**
They would find out about careers in 'space making' and see what is involved in being an artist, designer or architect.

PERSONAL OUTCOMES

IT WAS HOPED THAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD:

- **Experience enjoyment and inspiration.**
They would express that they enjoyed making art; and would take inspiration from artists and their explorations of places.
- **Develop a sense of 'belonging' to Kettle's Yard and beyond.**
They would feel involved and welcomed at Kettle's Yard, and confident to explore other places beyond it.
- **Show inclinations to 'take action' beyond the project.**
They would express intentions to pursue more art activities or to explore other buildings, to discover heritage more independently or consider a career in creative or 'spacemaking' areas.

Evaluation Process

Bridget McKenzie, Joanna Holland and Susan Potter from Flow UK worked as independent evaluators for SpaceMakers throughout the project. In addition, Flow is supporting Kettle's Yard to evaluate its wider development project so they ensured that the SpaceMakers' learning and personal outcomes complemented this broader and longer-term evaluation.

THE APPROACHES TO EVALUATION WERE LAYERED FOR TWO DIFFERENT GROUPS:

- Project partners took part in conversations and regular meetings with Kettle's Yard staff, Shape East, teachers and artists. They also contributed reflective statements, especially when evaluators were unable to attend sessions.
- Young participants were visited by evaluators who observed a third of all sessions, and were invited to share visual, written and oral reflections through discussion, comment walls, graphic sheets and drawing.

THE PROCESS INCLUDED THREE MAIN PHASES OF ACTIVITY:

- **Baseline Phase:** benchmarking sessions with participants and teachers, and establishing common understanding of the outcomes
- **Formative Phase:** observations and facilitated reflection by Flow at the end of each term with each school partnership (12 visits in all)
- **Summative Phase:** self-reflection by all participants at the end of each year, then writing a final summative report.

Because evaluation has been integrated throughout the project, it has encouraged both teachers and learners to reflect on their experiences and voice their needs or creative ideas throughout.



St Mary's Year 5s reviewed the first year of the project by making a collaborative drawing, inspired by their favourite sketches

Shape East

SHAPE EAST IS A CHARITABLE ORGANISATION which helps people to make better places in the East of England by offering an expert Design Review service, design support training and tours for local authorities and a public engagement programme for communities and young people. Our central aim is to provide a positive influence on the quality of urban design and the built environment through supporting the professional community, engaging the public and educating the future generations.

We have been working with Kettle's Yard, Cambridge on the SpaceMakers project to provide bi-monthly experts in the built environment to support artist-led sessions with two groups of young people. Our guest speakers included a huge range of experts depending on the artists' needs for each session; from archaeologists and architects, to sound engineers and local history guides.

From Shape East's point of view, this project has been a tremendous success and is something which we hope to see more of in the future. Not only were the young people able to see real life professionals from this field of work – something which, especially for young girls, is quite absent from their traditional education – they were also able to explore a very practical occupation in an interesting, creative and inclusive way. The fact that this was constantly related to the physical build procedure going on in Kettle's Yard really emphasised this and allowed them to see the actual outcomes of this area of work. It has made them feel more engaged and confident that they can own and have a say in local buildings and development.

Finally, and something which we had not accounted for, it has had a huge impact on the professionals involved, all of whom have reported that the project has re-engaged them with the public and especially the views of the young generations and allowed the experts to see the importance of engaging the future generations with the built environment if we are to create inclusive and youth-friendly spaces, buildings and communities.

Kate Sarley, General Manager, Shape East



“Through the sessions working with Jo Chapman, they have developed practical skills linked to our school curriculum in art, design technology and ICT. Their photo diaries and sketchbooks overflow with ideas and memories. ”

Janet King, St Mary's Primary



Foundations:

Learning, Knowledge and Skills

Throughout the project, the SpaceMakers' learning was intensified by regular encounters with professionals from the built environment industry, such as archaeologists and engineers. The participants often responded to briefs from the experts, with tasks ranging from technical experiments, such as stress-testing model bridges, to more open-ended explorations such as weaving red wool around a churchyard. Few experts had experience with schools but the artists and teachers acted as mediators, linking to the participants' own learning and devising manageable activities.

The length of the SpaceMakers project allowed participants to enjoy a range of diverse experiences, while learning in one focused area, around the following learning outcomes.

AIM: A STRONG UNDERSTANDING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF KETTLE'S YARD

Some sessions investigated the history of the site in depth. Participants explored and sketched the Kettle's Yard site, for example, detecting the four original cottages restored into one house. They found clues in the adjacent churchyard such as the recycling of old gravestones into paths. They understood how the house was intended as a 'living space' for art and gained a good sense of the Edes' tastes and decisions. Comberton students met with David Owers, one of the architects responsible for modern developments at Kettle's Yard. Learning about Kettle's Yard was complimented and extended by investigating other buildings in Cambridge. For example, the first St Mary's group were led on a historical walk with Angela Brown in role as a stonemason's wife.



With the support of structural engineer Simon Smith, St Mary's Year 5s designed their bridges for load-bearing strength

AIM: A STRONG UNDERSTANDING OF THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS

St Mary's pupils reported that they now knew 'how to lay out a plan', 'how architects design buildings', 'how to build better bridges' and 'how to change an old building into a new one'. They were also aware of the styles and merits of both traditional and contemporary design.

“ We saw some pictures of buildings. We looked at one that was made only three years ago. It had really big glass windows on the roof. Sarah told us that the windows let in lots of light to make it easier for the people to see and do their work, but not too bright light. I think it's quite nice to have modern bits on old buildings because you can see what was there before, then you see what can be there now. It's different, but good. It makes you notice both bits more. ”

Year 5 Pupil, St Mary's

Comberton students explored a range of old and modern buildings, in the real world and in images. Several of their making sessions involved constructing models or artworks that reflected aspects of building design. For example, they visited a building at Wysing Arts Center made from salvaged materials and then created their own version in their school grounds.

AIM: INPUT IDEAS AND CREATIVITY INTO THE PROCESS OF THE KETTLE'S YARD BUILDING PROJECT

As the build schedule was altered, the project could no longer follow the timeline of the build. Both groups did, however, through the activities, develop awareness of the purpose and spaces of Kettle's Yard today and the nature of planned changes. In addition, they both experienced building a shelter for their school and, at St Mary's, the pupils were able to curate and run the Art Shed in their school, for future classes.

SpaceMakers allowed participants to express their individual ideas creatively, even if not directly applied to Kettle's Yard plans. For example, Comberton students made books on 'Different Architectural Styles' but broke away from that definition, for example with one creating 'The Book of Hope' and another, a mapping of City trees. Although creative skills were not an explicit learning outcome, they were very important for everyone involved.

“ I think it has made me much better at looking and drawing. ”

Year 4 pupil, St Mary's

AIM: DEVELOP CONFIDENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN USING TECHNICAL VOCABULARY

Participants remembered learning new, technical terms relating to art and architecture. They could confidently discuss terms such as sculpture; mould and impression; floor plans and models. They reported learning about specific techniques including archaeological digs; demolition as a concept; the role of light, shadow and acoustics in buildings; and the importance of strong foundations.

“ Today we met an architect called Sarah. One of the pictures she showed us was the museum building, you know the corner bit...They all had a mix of old and new bits...If you put old and new on top of each other, the new might just break the old bits. If you are an architect, you have to think really hard about how strong the old building is and how heavy the new bit is. You know, how they can fit together. ” Year 4 Pupil, St Mary's

As well as increased technical understanding, both groups learned how people play an essential role in designing, commissioning and using spaces. They also developed tacit understanding of materials through working with materials such as plaster, wood, card, plastics and clay.

AIM: DEVELOPED AN AWARENESS OF ASSOCIATED CAREER CHOICES

The project provided encounters with acoustic and structural engineers, interior designers, sustainable architects, architectural historians and contemporary artists, which broadened their horizons while exposing them to niche careers.

For St Mary's it was important that children's aspirations were raised and some individuals were enthused about their potential to be artists or engineers. Of six children reflecting on the project, three said that in the future they would be: "Designing bridges;" "Making and designing" and "Doing art"

Comberton students learnt about artists and architects from the past, including disciplines such as theatre design or graphic design. They were following a BTEC Art & Design course requiring them to make vocational connections and their teacher commented that they benefited from "working with a group of people who aren't teachers, and getting out of the building." All these students want to aim for a creative career and now have a broader list of options.



Comberton students learnt plans and layouts from architect Sarah Morrison



Keystone: a Sense of Belonging

The SpaceMakers Project was designed to build the participants' confidence in their visits to Kettle's Yard and to spread this sense of comfort in visiting to their peers and families. The aim was to achieve this through regular extended visits, investigating the house in depth and using the exhibitions as inspiration. They gained experience of a range of activities that helped them understand why spaces for art were valuable and what makes them work well. They also visited many other cultural and public buildings in Cambridge and beyond, so they could compare different heritage and arts attractions and see different ways that visitors were welcomed and served. Both groups stepped over the threshold into so many buildings and understood their purposes. Importantly, they all felt that Kettle's Yard was a calm and welcoming yet inspiring place.

St Mary's pupils reported feeling 'excited' in anticipating their trips to Kettle's Yard and afterwards they felt 'happy', 'calm' and 'relaxed'. Teachers described how the children talk of Kettle's Yard 'as if they have shares in it'.

For St Mary's school, it was important not just to develop a sense of belonging at Kettle's Yard but also a concrete, local and everyday sense of participation. This was achieved through collaborative work such as creating a city of models together and, especially, through their school Art Shed. Taking turns to act as curators, to select art from children across the school and explaining their choices to children, parents and visitors gave them a great sense of involvement and pride.

St Mary's Year 5s visiting the Kettle's Yard house



“When I sit on the chair near the table, I see a spiral made of pebbles. The pebbles in the middle are huge and they get smaller as they go around. The stones make me feel like I’m spinning round and round. When I’m at the house it makes me feel like I’m at home because of the furniture and all the artwork. I could just sit here and feel like home.”

Year 5 pupil at St Mary’s



St Mary’s Year 4 and 5s spent time collecting shapes and patterns in the Kettle’s Yard house



Comberton students became familiar with the whole site and spent time discussion about Kettle's Yard and it's history

Comberton students grew in confidence over their visits to Kettle's Yard. They developed a positive attitude towards the spaces and collection, reflecting on it as a place of opportunities for inspiration and creativity, with exhibitions and activities that opened up their eyes to new forms of art.

“*Inspiration and enjoyment is all there. They enjoy feeling as if they are treated like adults. They feel special and chosen, 'We're the KY gang'. They know that their peers wouldn't know what that was. But they like being here and they love the house ... it feels like a home to them.*”
Nicola Powys

Many of their creative activities contributed to this feeling of connection to the place. For example, they considered how places such as Kettle's Yard have distinctive emotional qualities. They explored how to represent the emotions of spaces through art, chose an area of the house to draw and then developed this into a painting.

“This is a place where we felt accepted and comfortable – people at Kettle’s Yard appreciated our crazy art ideas”

Luke and Milly, Comberton

“Kettle’s Yard is a truly inspirational place. The visitors have been great and the art even better. This experience has helped make the last two years my best yet.”

Benjamin, Comberton

Comberton students considered how spaces have distinctive emotions qualities





After visiting historical building around Cambridge, Comberton students, with teacher Nicola Powys, explored a newly built extension to their school

THE TWELVE STUDENTS ARE STUDYING BTEC ART AND DESIGN, LEVEL 2. In my role as teacher, I design every two-year programme around opportunities outside the school environment so that students can make the vocational links by engaging in real-life scenarios. I encourage independent learning and thinking through group work and a questioning culture but this approach has been limited by time and cost issues to the odd trip and some visiting artists. When Sarah Campbell, the then Education Officer mentioned that Kettle's Yard were looking for a school to participate in two-year project with the gallery – I bit her hand off!

The school were very supportive. They changed the school timetable to allow the group to leave for the day-long workshops without missing too much of their other subjects. This four period day has now been adopted by other schools in the area as a way of integrating vocational education in a more meaningful way and allowing smoother and cheaper cross-school links. The group certainly knew that they were privileged to be given a total of sixteen days off curriculum over the two years and the school was rewarded by following the upward progress of each student as the programme rolled out.

This feeling of specialness contributed to the cohesive nature of the group and helped generate a feeling of "belonging", I think. Everyone loves the House and students had their own favourite spaces there. A common question towards the end of the sessions was; "Why can't we spend more time in the House?" But they did become disappointed in the second year not to see the building change.

From my perspective, I have watched some of the weaker members of the group develop into self-confident individuals as a result of being given this out of school opportunity. A higher percentage of the group than usual is planning to study Art and Design at a higher level and a significant proportion of these want to work in an Art environment as a career. Most students will be receiving a Distinction overall for the work that they have done with artists and guest speakers in the workshops. This grade is given to those who work hard and to a high standard, independently – but also is given for proven signs of cooperation, leadership, organisation and team work. The SpaceMaker sessions allowed everyone in the group to find themselves on a regular basis in a stimulating environment that I know has made its mark and will stay with them for a long time.

Nicola Powys, Comberton Village College



This place makes me feel like I could be an artist and it makes me happy and I like that I can work at Kettle's Yard.

Year 5 Pupil, St Mary's

Elevations:

Inspiration and Enjoyment

Enjoyment of the project is an important outcome in itself because it creates the conditions for possible creativity, learning and cultural participation in ways that are open-ended for the future. The project was rich and varied, with exposure to many different artists, ideas and buildings, so the inspirations could continue to unfold in unpredictable ways for individuals.

Participants from both schools expressed a positive response to the SpaceMakers project and reported feeling 'inspired' and 'excited'. Talks, tours and practical workshops were described as 'fun', 'exciting' and 'excellent', with several participants commenting that they had changed the way they 'looked at buildings and their environment'.

When asked what they enjoyed most, they talked about: being out of school; getting to know the people at Kettle's Yard; visiting new places and looking at other sites; watching slideshows; drawing, making, building, weaving and deconstructing. Teachers at both schools also reported enjoyment of being out-of-school, while the experience is also inspirational for their own professional development.

“ This has truly been an inspiring project for both the pupils and myself. It has been a little ray of light each month amongst all the gloom and doom of national and local educational politics when I've been able to see the children learning new things! Thank you Kettle's Yard! ”

Janet King, St Mary's



St Mary's pupils explored a range of modern and historical building including the University of Cambridge's Center for Mathematical Sciences with a new grass-roofed building

Observations of workshops suggest that most participants were typically fully engaged, excited about their next visit and enjoying the wide range of unusual practical activities. It was a challenge to maintain this at every moment, given the large number of untried activities and contributors, but the variety in itself helped keep a buzz.

St Mary's pupils particularly enjoyed their tour of the Centre for Mathematical Studies at the University with Simon Smith, an engineer, looking for shapes in structures such as bridges and spans.

“ The maths building was interesting. It was a curvy shape and it was a bit like a reverse Tardis, it was pretty massive outside, but it felt small inside. It was made up of a lot of different shapes. I'd never seen anything like that before and you could smell muffins inside! I've learned a lot about the shapes you can use in a building, not just squares. ”

Year 4 Pupil, St Mary's

They also enjoyed several activities where they created homes, decorative features and whole cities, through casting, moulding and carving with clay, modroc and found objects. This included creating animal homes.

“ One of the best bits for me was making the birds nest. You got to go outside, choose your own materials and then make your nest. I really like playing with clay and all that. Then just putting things into it, using your imagination. ”

Year 5 Pupil, St Mary's

The students at Comberton also appreciated time to make and think. They were most engaged when there was enough time to focus on a substantial making task, and to see results within one or two sessions. Nicola Powys, their teacher, noted that they appreciated “slower, more focused working and a hands on recap that resulted in finished pieces.”

Although this older group could be outspoken about what they didn’t enjoy doing (mostly sitting and listening), they had great tolerance for activities where they didn’t know what would happen next. The artist with this group, Raksha, often devised very unusual shifts in activity and lateral combinations of inspirational material. For example, after weaving pieces of lath, willow and coloured gels into a construction, they were asked to make a destructive intervention into it. On another occasion, after combining their paintings to create an architectural structure, they then went outside to create an installation by tying red wool around the trees in St Peter’s churchyard. These and others were the activities they chose to celebrate in their final workshop, when they created a graphic book or ‘zine’ together to document their most enjoyable experiences.

Comberton students worked collaboratively on a number of artworks, including a 3D drawing with wool in the churchyard of St Peter’s (and inside back cover)





At Comberton Village College, the group designed and constructed their own shelter out of found and recycled materials with Patrick Fleming from the University of Cambridge's Department of Architecture

THE UPLIFTED AND INSPIRED MIND WAS EVER PRESENT throughout the SpaceMakers sessions. It was evident through the energy that was generated through the sessions. The range of activities that were put forward to the participants to investigate through play and experimentation sparked this.

The group that worked on this project were diverse both in their character and spirit; they kept each other motivated and excited through working together in a collaborative manner. The range of activities that were offered to group were (un) planned to a certain extent so that they allowed for space to investigate the given themes without any literal or direct route. Nothing in the sessions was kept straightforward, and this gave way to creative exploration that in turn led to engrossed, enjoyable and sometimes a creatively intense atmosphere, which succeeded in unexpected but outstanding outcomes.

Much of the group engagement was kept through the variety of activities; they ranged from painting and sculpture to photography and installation. I deliberately chose approaches to making that might be new to the group, so that in each session they would discover a new way of working or thinking. Sometimes the approaches made might have seemed alien to begin with, but were simultaneously new and exciting. These methods gelled well with this particular group as they came to the sessions with a level of openness and confidence, which were to embrace the variety of contemporary art without fear or an attitude of stuffiness.

The group were able to express their likes and dislikes early on, and with this level of open communication both parties, the artist and the participants were able to engage in contemporary art practices, ideas and discourse that suited each others needs without boredom.

Raksha Patel, Project Artist with Comberton Village College



“My experiences here have taught me all about exploring more than just designs and artworks, as I can and will look more into the history and culture around the work. I have learned how to mix modern design with old fashioned art and design.”

Luke, Comberton Village College



Extension:

Taking action

This outcome is an extension of feeling confident to visit cultural spaces, and is made possible by enjoyable and inspiring activities. There is plenty of evidence that the SpaceMakers project helped develop the participants' creativity, in ways that will encourage many to be engaged independently or outside the curriculum.

Pupils from St Mary's were asked what SpaceMakers has encouraged them to do next. Responses included 'visit Kettle's Yard in the summer', 'make more models', 'compare buildings from other countries', 'be an explorer in Cambridge' and 'design a little rocket'. Some of the children imagined themselves in the future as: 'Designing bridges', 'Making and designing' and 'Doing art'.

In particular, the Art Shed at St Mary's has set up a situation which allows keen ones to 'take action' by getting involved in curating art:

“When the class are Year 6, they will train up younger pupils to take over the curatorship of the Art Shed. When the class started in September 2011, they had no team skills and took little responsibility for their own learning – they can now time-manage and work productively and independently.”

Janet King, St Mary's



For St Mary's pupils, because Janet King and her colleagues worked so hard to integrate the experience into their school life, learning has become embedded and previous experience has inspired ongoing creativity:

“ It would be good to come back in the summer on a special trip here. I'd like to go to Castle Hill again, to see how different it is now it's not so windy. It's much better to learn these things when you are younger, because then you can do them all through your life, even when you are old. I think when I'm old and it's a bit hard to go anywhere, I'll look around my house at all the materials and the pictures and think about all of this and what we learned here. ”

Year 5 Pupil, St Mary's

Comberton Village College students are all intent on pursuing further creative work towards a career in art or design. Several are interested in areas such as graphic and digital design, theatre design and fashion. Raksha and Nicola ensured that these interests were woven into the planned activities, using Kettle's Yard, the built environment and architectural art as a broad canvas for inspiration. The project has opened their horizons to architecture as a context for creative practice and they have seen the blurred boundaries between contemporary art and architecture.

Students from Comberton identified that the project had made some impact on them personally, sometimes to the extent that it would affect future choices or actions, including:

- Helping their creative tendencies, compared to non-arts students, feel more acceptable within the school
- Encouraging them to think and discover more about cultural contexts
- Opening them up to a wide range of styles, practitioners and possibilities in contemporary art
- Being inspired by a range of different professional people
- Helping them understand how their art skills can be applied to the built environment in many and varied ways.

Comberton Students at St. John's College



Pupils at St Mary's co-ordinate and curate their own Art Shed as a gallery space for the school

THIS PROJECT WAS ALWAYS OF GREAT INTEREST TO ME due to its potential, scope and ambition in bringing a group of young children into the vast world of architecture, the built environment and art. The subject is so rich that it was a continuous challenge deciding where to focus the activities and explorations I wanted to maximise on the children's time in Cambridge, their exposure to new ideas, new buildings, new art, whilst at the same time wanting to put it into a structure that was coherent, tangible and achievable.

Through the practical sessions at Kettle's Yard and at the school, I attempted to take the children through a chronological investigation of the built environment and related aspects such as the use different building and art materials, applications of art and decoration in buildings. We explored various 3D and 2D art techniques, looked at real and projected images of buildings, explored Kettles Yard gallery and house and, for me one of the most valuable aspects of the projects, introduced the children to various professionals from the world of architecture, structural engineering, archaeology and planning who all contributed to the days as guest speakers.

In all the sessions I always got a strong sense of the huge amount of learning that was going on, there was a vibrant energy, the children always absorbed and worked with any idea or material that was shown to them no matter how complex, sophisticated or unusual it was. There was always a good continuity, children would work on their creations further at school and use their sketchbooks continually to refer back to previous ideas and to record new ideas.

From the start of the project I knew that I wanted there to be an additional element that was at the school and that would again reinforce a sense of continuity, a place to show the artwork from the sessions to the rest of the school and to have a little bit of Kettle's Yard in their environment. The result of this was the Art Shed, a customised wooden shed that became a mini gallery and focus for the project. Although I instigated the Art Shed, it was wonderful how the children soon took ownership of it, they organised themselves into a curatorial group, putting on exhibitions resulting from the workshops and beyond. Once the project finished the Art Shed has continued and the organisation has been handed down as the original children have moved on from the school. It was a very tangible and rewarding outcome of the project.

Jo Chapman, Project Artist with St Mary's

Lessons Learned

ART-LED ACTIVITIES

All participants associate the SpaceMakers Project with high levels of creativity, with the experimental approaches and imaginative thinking that are possible when artists collaborate to design learning activities. Participants appreciated the opportunity to experiment with new and unusual materials or techniques, not usually available in their school setting. Several of the guest experts were highly creative in their professional work, and also the teachers were able to draw on their own creativity as artists and teachers.

“ Personally, I have learnt a lot from Raksha and the guest contributors – learning is a crucial part of teaching and it’s wonderful! ” Nicola Powys, Comberton Village College



Comberton students created a collaborative cityscape from drawings and maquettes they made

In response to Project Artist Jo Chapman's own practice, Year 5 made sculptural maquettes



THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Many of the activities exposed how creativity progresses through observation, inspiration, experiment and refinement. The participants were aware of the value of extending beyond observing and investigating materials and spaces, to begin inventing your own spaces, abstracting from your drawings, and combining or even creatively destroying your initial work.

“ This morning we met someone called Sarah, she’s an architect. We learned how she designs the buildings and what she uses to help build them. First of all she does drawings, then she makes small models of them. The models were really, really good. She showed us her sketchbooks too, a bit like our sketchbook. She sketched things when she was working or on holiday, just to give her ideas for her buildings. I think I will do that now. ”
Year 4 Pupil, St Mary’s

ENCOUNTERS WITH EXPERTS

Guided visits to many buildings, and practical tasks that were very closely linked to challenges faced by built environment professionals, greatly extended the participants' knowledge and skills. For example, St Mary's pupils worked with acoustic architect Katrina Scherebnyj and created model houses, each pair of pupils choosing different materials that might be better at insulating sound. They had to make budget calculations and then conduct an acoustic test. This learning was then reinforced very well back in school.

“ I think the best SpaceMakers speaker was the architect who came to see us in school. I liked the way how he taught us about bridges. He was interesting and he was a good teacher too. ”
Year 5 Pupil, St Mary's



St Mary's Year 5s explored Cambridge's history with story-teller
Angela Brown

Artist Raksha Patel encouraged the Comberton students to develop
and present artwork as a group



COLLABORATION

Many of the positive outcomes are as a direct result of the experience and flexibility of those facilitating SpaceMakers. This facilitation was very much a collaborative effort between lead artists and teachers, supported by Kettle's Yard staff and enhanced by the expert visitors. The young participants also enjoyed working collaboratively with peers and adults.



St Mary's Year 5 pupils explored their own heraldic symbols

INDEPENDENT AGENCY

Opportunities to sit down in the unique spaces of Kettle's Yard and work independently were cited as a particular source of pleasure. The example of St Mary's children being curators for their own Art Shed also shows how much they gain from being empowered to be leaders. Overall, participants seemed to appreciate chances to be inventive, to make their own choices of what to draw or to create personal symbolism, and to make contributions to group tasks that suited their own strengths.

“ I have changed appearance, personality and taste in art over the two years! ”
Milly, Comberton

EXPLORATION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

“ No-one could understand why the Brutalist 1960's buildings had ever got built! ”
Nicola Powys

This quote shows how walking and experiencing buildings in spaces led to strong opinions about architecture. The project allowed for a very wide range of exploratory outings, so the participants were able to compare and contrast several different spaces, structures and styles. The project made very good use of local resources, including ancient and modern colleges, churches and other cultural venues.

“ The maths building was really exciting, because all the different shapes they used in the building and also, seeing how much space it takes up when they gave us the postcard at the end. It was different to normal buildings because it was all curvy and also, the different materials they used to make it. My favourite part of the building was the top bit, you know, where the grass is and all that. ”
Year 4 Pupil, St Mary's



Comberton students made costumes in response to Brutalist architecture

THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF KETTLE'S YARD

Kettle's Yard is described as 'interesting', 'warm', 'comfortable' and 'homely'. For the majority of participants, the project has introduced them to this rich, cultural resource for the first time and as such, is building upon their 'social capital'. The distinctiveness of Kettle's Yard lies in more than just its place, which is very special, but in its artist-led education programme exemplified by this project.

“ We just went into Kettle's Yard house to search for prints. It was so calm and peaceful!...I think it might make me do more detailed work and to look more closely when I'm doing drawing or printing. You can see that the artist took a long time to do it really, really well. I think that's why we went in the house to look at the prints, to make our own ones a little bit better. It makes you do it, not copy it, but do your own one better by looking at what other people have made. ”

Year 5 Pupil, St Mary's

All classes enjoyed spending time with the collection at Kettle's Yard





BALANCING YOUNG PEOPLE'S WISHES WITH THE PLANNED LEARNING OUTCOMES

The project encouraged the children and young people to express independent views, to reflect on their likes and dislikes about the project. However, there were also a large number of topics and areas of expertise to introduce. The shortened day (due to journeys to towns outside Cambridge) and experimental nature of activities meant that some tasks could not be fully developed or completed in one session. The young people, especially Comberton students, were most engaged when making, and in particular, working collaboratively on a large scale. For both schools, it was important not to allow the in-depth topics of architecture to take over, because children also needed to develop a range of creative skills and explore related science, history and arts concepts. St Mary's school needed to ensure that the National Curriculum was covered and Comberton students had to complete BTEC coursework.

“ We love the making and can't wait to get our hands on the materials, but we find it really frustrating to have to sit and listen. There's too much sitting and listening. When we're told to make something, we only get a few minutes ... so we've just started then we have to finish already. ”

Year 10 Student, Comberton

“ The 'hard and spiky' making was fun, but tricky because I couldn't tessellate all the bits together. When I tried taping it and picking it up, it just fell to bits because I'm not a very good artist. But in the end I was happy. I added a little stripe on the end of each straw spike. It was like the pointy bit of a plane. That was the best part about it. I had the idea from planes and jets and also, the top of the Eiffel Tower, you know, it's got that point. Now I'm designing my nest, so far it's good. ”

Year 5 Pupil, St Mary's

By integrating evaluation throughout the project, the Learning team at Kettle's Yard, the lead artists and teachers could respond to difficulties and vary their approach.

Sketchbooks were an important resource when exploring the built environment on visits



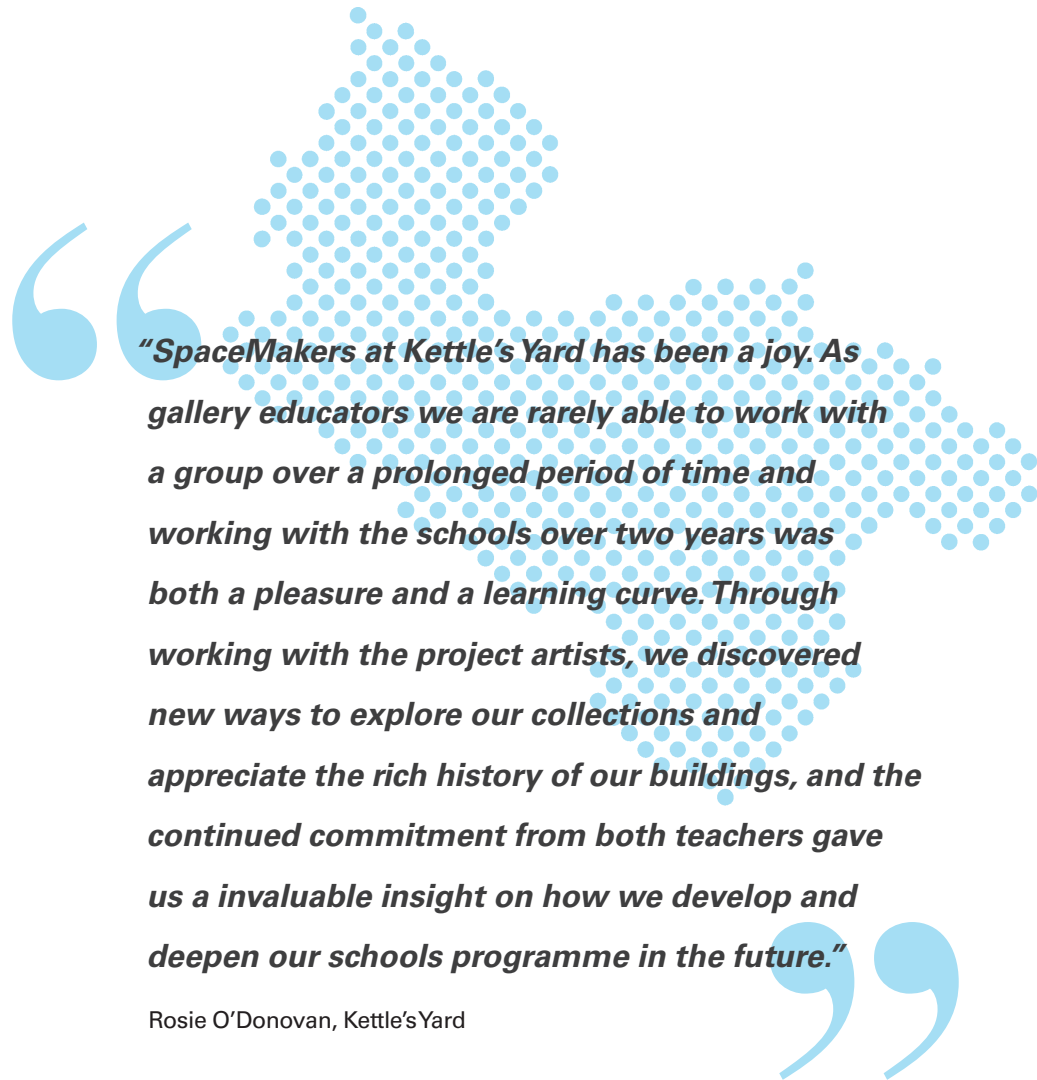
The Shelter built by in the grounds of Comberton Village College

LEARNING CHALLENGES

Some of the activities were rather stretching for some of the children and young people, especially those who were challenged by physical and learning difficulties. However, with a combination of intensive support and the motivation to pursue experimental challenges, there was a great sense of achievement. Assumptions that making art is not 'work' raised interesting questions regarding how the participants responded to creative tasks, which often required commitment and patience. On further reflection, participants describe activities as encouraging independent thinking and that they have a greater understanding of their own learning.

PLANNING AND SCHEDULING

It is very challenging to plan a substantial project that is so closely dependent on the contingencies of a building project. The length of the project contributed to positive outcomes but also made it difficult to maintain momentum as the planned building work did not happen. St Mary's decided to repeat a version of the first year's project for a second class at the school. For Comberton, the activities in the second year become more varied and experimental during the second year, which would otherwise have been focused on the new Education facilities as a hands-on case study.



“SpaceMakers at Kettle’s Yard has been a joy. As gallery educators we are rarely able to work with a group over a prolonged period of time and working with the schools over two years was both a pleasure and a learning curve. Through working with the project artists, we discovered new ways to explore our collections and appreciate the rich history of our buildings, and the continued commitment from both teachers gave us a invaluable insight on how we develop and deepen our schools programme in the future.”

Rosie O’Donovan, Kettle’s Yard

How to Book a Visit

The Learning team at Kettle’s Yard aims to respond to the needs of teachers, tutors and those working with people outside formal education. Experiencing works of art in such a unique setting provides a fascinating springboard for discussion, creativity and developing knowledge and skills.

We can provide a general introduction to Kettle’s Yard and/or an introduction to the exhibition which can be tailored to meet curriculum needs. Talks have a strong element of discussion, where pupils are invited to contribute their own responses to the artworks and spaces.

We work with practicing artists to offer workshops that combine creative thinking and discussion with practical activity, taking inspiration from works in the permanent collection and temporary exhibitions. Practical workshops provide the opportunity for pupils to explore artist techniques, experimenting with new processes and materials.

Please contact education@kettleyard.cam.ac.uk for further information.

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KETTLE'S YARD

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