

To Construct...

[By Sarah Evelyn Marsh](#)

Within the [creative workshops](#) I facilitated in Gdansk, Poland, I explored a collection of schema-inspired themes with a small group of families. In my final post on the project, I want to reflect on the theme of *To Construct...* looking at the different ways we *constructed* during the project.

Please remember this is a personal and artistic reflection, based on the ideas I presented and the (emotional and physical) reactions and responses of the children and their families, who inspired changes and the development of the project as we experienced it. Much of what I discuss here is referenced by images in previous posts, so please go back to find images that will build upon the visual story of this blog, which you can find here: [Sensory Spaces: An Autism Friendly Project.](#)



Hand sewn objects filled with lavender

The construction of language through sensory experiences

The overarching fabric theme of the project emulated the sensitive, sensorial feel and approach of workshops. The soft and gentle folds and tucks of cotton, silk or velvet embody the care and safety I wanted to create within the environment.



Fold, wrap, conceal, secure, protect

The carefully selected fabrics, chosen for their textures, colours and opacity were used by the group in so many ways, they stimulated movement, security, they concealed, transformed and revealed.



Objects are tactile, they become extensions of the body, (tube filled with lavender).

Soft, sculptural lines, scented with lavender or filled with dry beans or soft wadding were squeezed, bitten and twisted into shapes, wrapped around heads, connected to other objects and transformed into imaginary characters.

I constructed these fabric tubes and shapes as a way to 'draw in space', malleable to bend into forms, they contour our surrounding space and body, creating boundaries and paths; tracing the world around us.

On reflection, I wonder how they were perceived by the children. Some of the group seemed to take emotional comfort from them, they created a sense of calm and security.

I wonder if the group saw artistic value in them?



Constructing with materials and Nature



Elements from my hand made 'toolkit'

A handmade 'toolkit', of sensory-inspired objects enhanced the children's engagement, supporting new ways of connecting to the world around them. Without verbal communication these objects became part of our language.



Handmade Hand



Textured language

Observations and reflections of the emotional and physical responses to these handmade objects, alongside the verbal opinions of the parents, formed a process-driven landscape that allowed us to explore 'construction' in all of these ways, and more;

- we constructed a creative language
- developed and built confidence
- formed trust and relationships
- created safe spaces
- made connections to the world around us.

This developed into / or perhaps grew from;

- experimenting and engaging with new ideas
- asking questions and seeking answers
- trying something new
- making choices, making decisions, making mistakes

- risk-taking
- feeling happy, feeling relaxed, taking ourselves out of our comfort zones
- connecting to our surroundings, connecting to each other.

All of these actions and learning strategies connect, each developed and informed the other. Forging a continual loop of learning, experiencing, playing, experimenting and communicating.

Beyond this Project...



Ewa with kaleidoscope (looking forward)

As an artist and educator, I construct new ways to work, plan, inspire and develop. This project and previous research is extending my own creative language, inspired by the families I've worked with and the outcomes of our ideas, interactions and responses. The tactile and textured world we have

inhabited is producing new artworks that I will reveal in future Access Art blog posts.

My research will continue in such galleries as [Tate Liverpool](#), April 2018 and new ventures that are being realised as I write this post.

These final images represent some of the different ways we expressed ourselves throughout the project; forming the creative language that we constructed as a group. The use of textiles was at the forefront of our experiences, but it kickstarted other creative outcomes such as: drawing, photography, writing and performance art.



Reading a script inspired by the sessions, written by Marianka, aged 7



Photographs taken by a participant in their constructed den

Our Rainbowgarden

Sara



Monika



Drawing the group as a family of mythical animals

See more posts from Sarah in this series by following this link: [Sensory Spaces: An Autism-Friendly Project](#)

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This is a sample of a resource created by UK Charity AccessArt. We have over 1500 resources to help develop and inspire your creative thinking, practice and teaching.

AccessArt welcomes artists, educators, teachers and parents both in the UK and overseas.

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Fruit-Inspired Clay Tiles

Ceramicist Rachel Dormor shares a workshop idea suitable for primary or secondary aged children. Working in clay, pupils take their inspiration from drawings of fruit to make decorative clay tiles.

Fruit Pinch Pot Project

Ceramicist Rachel Dormor shares a workshop idea suitable for primary or secondary aged children. Working in clay, pupils take their inspiration from drawings of fruit to make simple pinch pot mugs.

Beginning with Bones

In a workshop led by artist Melissa Pierce Murray, teenagers make observational drawings of a 1/4 life size model of a skeleton to understand the structure of the human body. Students looked at how artists used armatures, including Alberto Giacometti and Henri Matisse.

Dancing Bones

Inspired by real anatomical drawings of human, ape, cat, lion, horse and dog skeletons, teenagers build 'life size' and 'oversize' collages of 'dancing skeletons' – This workshop was led by artist Melissa Pierce Murray

Exploring Primary Colours and Progressing from Powder Paint to Gouache and Acrylic

This resource is based on methods shared, during an AccessArt InSET session, for primary school teachers at New Hall School, Chelmsford, to ultimately enable their pupils to develop colour skills. Teachers explored using their intuition and experience to mix primary colours, creating coloured swatches, that matched the colours of spring flowers, whilst comparing painting mediums. By Sheila Ceccarelli

Animating Old Books

To Colour...

As part of Sensory Spaces: An Autism Friendly Project, artist, Sarah Evelyn Marsh ran two sessions exploring the theme of colour. What does colour smell like? What does colour feel like?

The AccessArt Village and How a Small Idea can be Big

Sheila Ceccarelli from AccessArt leads year nine students from Frances Bardsley Academy for Girls on a collective drawing and collage experience exploring the #AccessArtVillage in BRG Brentwood Road Gallery. Students absorb this stunning collection of sewn houses and inspired by thread and stitches, make their own creative responses.

Day of the Dead Skulls

This workshop combined students' studies of the skull with ideas borrowed from the Mexican traditions for Dia de Muertos – The Day of the Dead.

One Material: Sea Sculptures from Plastic Bottles

Exploring the Sculptural Possibilities of Plastic Milk Bottles

Working with Ink

In this one hour session, led by artist Melissa Pierce Murray, students explore techniques and properties of Quink and Black India Inks, and how to build up a drawing using the medium.

Magnets and Forces

Secondary school students are likely to study properties of magnets in their science classes, but in this workshop, artist Melissa Pierce Murray, encourages teenagers to explore playful and aesthetic responses to magnets, rather than analytic and quantifiable ones. Using artistic and scientific approaches together aid in developing curiosity and imagination.

Two and Four Legged Creatures

Two and Four Legged Creatures with oil based clay over a simple wire armature to make delicate, extended structures. A one hour, artist led session with Melissa Murray.

The Opposite of Light

Teenagers work with artist Melissa Pierce Murray on a range of explorations looking at light and contrasts. This workshop explores contemporary themes around placement, object and meaning.

Snowflakes

Artist Melissa Pierce Murray leads teenagers in a festive workshop exploring snowflakes and decorating Christmas cookies with piping and egg tempura.

Making your Mark on Small

Canvases

Making a “To Scale” Gallery

This resource shares the process by which 6 twelve year old children created a shared architectural model working in foamboard, working alongside Paula Briggs. The model was based upon an existing house, which was measured and scaled down.

Installing Artwork in “To Scale” Gallery