

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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