

Inspire - A celebration of children's art

10 December – 22 March 2020

'Every child should have access to arts and culture, and to the benefits that access brings. The arts are a positive force in society: children feel more confident in their ability to create, challenge and explore, to be part of society, and to make change happen. The arts empower children.'

From The Arts for Every Child: Why arts education is a social justice issue, Cultural Learning Alliance, 2019



Cupid and Psyche Jacopo del Sellaio, c. 1473



A rendition of del Sellaio's 'Cupid and Psyche' in pencil by a Year 2 Pupil at Arbury Primary School

Cambridge is one of the UK's most unequal cities (Centre for Cities, 2018/19) and the 2016 Social Mobility Index notes 'many of the richest places in England are doing worse for their disadvantaged children than places that are much poorer' naming Cambridge as an example. Although Cambridge is home to one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the world, its primary school children have the least government funding per pupil of anywhere in the UK.

Those children most in need often have limited experience of arts and culture beyond those opportunities provided by school and in recent years, there has been a significant decline in time spent making art in primary school. Many teachers lack the confidence and specialist skills to teach art effectively. This is the daily reality that faces many of Cambridgeshire's primary school children.

Over the last year, the University's lead art museum, the Fitzwilliam have been working in partnership with a local artist led charity AccessArt to try to address this need through a new outreach project. Inspire is an exhibition of children's artwork created in response to a painting of the story of Cupid and Psyche by the 15th - century Florentine artist Jacopo del Sellaio. Some of the children included in the exhibition would not have been able to produce the art work without this project.

After attending training sessions at the museum in early 2019, teachers returned to school to plan their own creative projects based on the painting. They were then invited to submit their work to the Inspire exhibition for the opportunity to have their works hung alongside the masterpiece itself. The Fitzwilliam worked with over 40 schools over the course of the project, and nearly 4000 children, in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Cambridgeshire. The project provided many schools with the inspiration and opportunity to reboot their art teaching and provided an exciting opportunity to connect children with their local cultural heritage. Children were encouraged to look carefully at the painting and embark on their own journey of research, experimentation, and creativity.

While teachers and children were studying the painting in school, further research was also conducted at the Fitzwilliam and its painting conservation studio the Hamilton Kerr Institute. Conservators and Research Scientists have examined X-Rays, infra-red (IR) scans to find out more about the construction of the painting and used cutting edge techniques to analyse which pigments the artist used. The findings of this new research will be shared through the exhibition displays and public programme. Their research on how works of art and pigments were made, inspired teachers and children to experiment with making their own pigments from egg tempera, which they used to prepare and bind pigments of colour. Many also learnt how the artist used gilding to embellish his finished work and experimented with gold leaf.

The Inspire exhibition demonstrates the power of museums, schools and teachers working together to support young children's creativity. The exhibition marks the launch the next phase of Inspire as we expand our training for teachers and develop these partnerships. We will continue to invite schools to celebrate and share their work with us as part of a growing community of dedicated and talented artist teachers. Together we are committed to ensuring that all children have access to art and culture and much needed time and space to look, think and create.

Ends

Notes to Editors

Our project partner AccessArt is a registered charity which aims to inspire and enable high quality visual arts education by running workshops and events, and sharing inspirational teaching and learning resources.

Inspire builds on our long-established schools programme which encourages students and teachers to look deeply and thoughtfully at objects and images, and to respond imaginatively through thinking, talking, and making together.

For all other enquires please contact the Fitzwilliam Museum Press Office:
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About the Fitzwilliam Museum

Founded in 1816 the Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Major Partner Museum programme, funded by The Arts Council. The Fitzwilliam's collections explore world history and art from antiquity to the present day. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, masterpiece paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of coins, Asian arts, ceramics and other applied arts. The Fitzwilliam presents a wide ranging public programme of major exhibitions, events and education activities, and is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research and conservation.
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00; CLOSED: 24-26 & 31 December, 1 January, Good Friday

Business Partners

The Museum is supported during 2019/2020 by our Business Partners [TTP](#) and [Brewin Dolphin](#)