

# Collaborative Public Mural Project

By [Tracy McGuinness-Kelly](#)



In this post, Artist and AccessArt contributor Tracy McGuinness-Kelly shares with us a community project completed in 2017 at Rose Hill train station in collaboration with the local community. The aim of the project was to create a collaborative public mural situated along the car park area of Rose Hill train station in Cheshire.

"The beautiful permanent mural I created with the local community aimed to improve the train station environment by significantly brightening up a very scruffy car park area. I wanted to increase pride of place and community spirit by involving members of the community, of all ages.



The proposed site for the community mural at Rose Hill train station.

First of all, we approached the friends of Rose Hill train station who had expressed a desire for a mural. They agreed to the idea of creating it out of individual pieces of art made up of plywood circles in various sizes. The great thing is the wooden circles were a waste product from a speaker company heading for landfill.

They needed to be sanded and painted with weatherproof paint on the front and back.





I then approached a range of community art groups, schools and other individuals by preparing a detailed information/inspiration mood board for them to download and learn more about the project.

Some of the themes we discussed were our town's history, people and places; lifestyle; the natural world around us; the environment; reduce reuse recycle; the remembrance of those lost in the wars; landscapes; train travel and community.

I attended a few community events with a banner describing the project and distributed take away templates for participants to draw their sketch on, which would be eventually be painted on one of the wooden circles.



Wanting to ensure people of all ages could be involved in the project, I visited a senior citizen's centre, Dementia drop-in class, adult art groups, and spoke to childminders all within the community to pitch the idea.





At age 99, Bessie was the oldest contributor to the mural. Her design was inspired by her family run Bakery, Wright's, which is no longer in business but nonetheless fondly remembered - especially for their lemon cream buns and Battenburg cake.

Five of the local primary schools and the local high school all showed willing to be involved.



A few professional artists were also attracted to the project. Rob Fathers is a local artist who kindly donated his time to support the Dementia group design and paint their circles. He also contributed his own stunning design. Rob was a signwriter many years ago whilst in the army, he assisted in finishing some of the circles with names and dates with skilful hand-painted lettering.





The project was run like a competition and participants were sent a pack through which they could submit their design. The submitted sketches were judged by myself, Friends of the Station and teachers.



The response to the project from school children was fantastic. The local high school ran it as optional homework to all students and the primary schools integrated it into their daily learning.

There were thousands of sketches from the schools for us to look through and we needed to get a good balance of all the subjects we wanted to represent within the mural, and so it was not always the most technically well-executed that were chosen.

We asked for different styles of art and ways of looking at the same subjects through drawing, painting, collage, abstract, lettering, manga, modern urban graffiti styles, traditional, classic, strong graphic design, clever concepts, modern takes on more traditional themes and great colour combinations. We wanted to make sure everyone felt like they could fit in somewhere.



Excellent work across all categories from the primary schools

Such an impressive effort was also made by the high school students.

Once the sketches were chosen the children were notified and the feedback we received was that they felt like they had won the lottery! We then set out a plan to run workshops in the schools throughout June and July. For the primary schools, I worked with small groups of children up to around 6 with the help of a Teaching Assistant. I went in with the prepared circles with lots of pre-mixed acrylic paints in little pots with lids. We were kindly donated a huge set of new Posca paint pens and high-quality poly colour pencil crayons and these were a real favourite with the children.





The high school pupils worked in the school art department, making a start on their pieces before being left to complete



them independently. The standard of work was extremely high. Most but not all of the high school children finished their work and the teachers told me the children whose work was chosen were thrilled as this kind of thing had never happened to them before - a great result!







The adults were left to get on with theirs in their groups or individually. I visited them regularly working with whoever required help or input. A lot of people had only ever worked in watercolour so were excited to venture into a new medium. They also had great pride in their work and were equally excited about the idea.



We asked everyone to write their first name & their age. This was important in expressing the range of ages of the people who contributed - from the under 5's to 99 years old.

Once the finished artworks had been collected or dropped off, they were varnished before installation.

When it came to the installation this project required a full team of volunteers all hands on deck as well as some serious



engineering skills to figure out the best solution to hold the massive weight of the mural.



The project was successfully installed in November 2018 and won first prize national award from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), who recognised the project in the category for Permanent Community Art. So the goal of increasing pride of place and boosting community spirit was wholeheartedly achieved".







Tracy has been an ACESSArt contributor for many years and featured in our '[40 Artist Educator](#)' collection. She collaborates with schools to create beautiful vibrant displays that can be directly linked to the curriculum and you can find more of her beautiful mural resources [here](#).

---

**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.**

**We believe everyone has the right to be creative and by working together and sharing ideas we can enable everyone to reach their creative potential.**