

# 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.

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### **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](#)

[evelynarts.moonfruit.com](http://evelynarts.moonfruit.com) – work portfolio

[evelynartsunique.com](http://evelynartsunique.com) – online shop

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[Explore how Linda Bell creates sculptures](#)

## Talking Points: Nnena Kalu



[Explore artist Nnena Kalu](#)

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# Making Worry Dolls

AccessArt and Mencap have created three great ways for children to make their own worry dolls. This provides children not only with a great opportunity to practice their making skills, but also to create their own very special “friend” who can listen to their fears.

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## 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?

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## 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.

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# Sensory Spaces: An Autism-Friendly Project

## To Connect



At the beginning of the project it was important to take time getting used to each other, the learning space and the surrounding environment. Below is a list of considerations you may find helpful to use in your own learning spaces. Be aware of the daily sounds, smells and other textures of life in your learning space; a constant humming noise or flickering light may be stressful for a child with autism. Allow time for everyone to feel their way in the space; connections may be made through the use of different senses and body parts.

## To Conceal



During the six week project, the group explored different themes and actions, some of these were displayed through learning schemas. In week 2 we experimented with different ways to conceal ourselves and objects; schemas such as enveloping and enclosure were exhibited by the group.

## **To Colour**





Two of the sessions explored the theme of colour. The first was rather abstract, I asked questions such as; What does colour smell like? What does colour feel like?

For a child on the autistic spectrum, a question like this may be confusing, some autistic people think and understand literally. So instead of directing these questions at the children, I answered and speculated on them myself. These abstract questions became vehicles for the workshops documented below.

## **To Construct**



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.

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## To Conceal...

# You May Also Like...

Talking Points: Linda BELL



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**Explore and Draw**

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**Drawing as a Tool for  
Wellbeing at Chesterton  
Community College, Cambridge**

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# **Be Inspired to Inspire**

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## **World in a Matchbox**

Children love working on a miniature scale where they can create worlds which they can control and oversee. AccessArt and Mencap have devised the “World in a Box” activity to enable children plenty of creative freedom resulting in fantastic autobiographical artwork.

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## **Making Finger Puppets**

AccessArt and Mencap have got three great ways for you to make finger puppets depending on your time or level of expertise. Starting with a simple print, colour, cut and stick and moving on to a full blown sculptural version, we hope you are inspired to make some puppets and possibly put on a show!

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## **AccessArt helps teachers at Belvue School to get ready**



# for a Drawing Week

[Back to InSET & CPD](#)

## Teachers Battle it Out in Conversation with Marks on Paper



Teachers embarked on an exercise whereby they made marks on paper to have a conversation with a partner. This was a playful and fun exercise and teachers very much enjoyed both the process and outcomes.

## Teachers Explore Pattern, Shape & Texture with Charcoal, Graphite, Masking Tape and Pastels



This was the second session in the series and an introduction to pattern, shape and texture with charcoal and graphite, and an opportunity for teachers to break down any preconceived ideas about what drawing is and who drawing processes is for.

## **Play and Placement: Teachers Explore Approaches to Drawing**



This was the third and final session in the series, and an opportunity to play with creative mark-making and explore context and placement as an introduction to larger scale drawing and concepts around installation art.

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## **Teachers Explore Pattern, Shape & Texture with Charcoal, Graphite, Masking Tape and Pastels**

**An introduction to pattern, shape and texture with charcoal and graphite, and an opportunity for teachers to break down any preconceived ideas about what drawing is and who drawing processes is for**

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# **Teachers Battle it Out in Conversation with Marks on Paper**

After a series of warm up exercises which introduced drawing through feel, teachers embarked on an exercise whereby they made marks on paper to have a conversation with a partner.

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**“Heart-Work” – A series of ‘Arts on Prescription’ style workshops for young people at Cambourne Village College with Arts and Minds; Led by Sheila Ceccarelli (Artist) and Yael Pilowsky Bankirer (Psychotherapist)**

This series of workshops with students at Cambourne Village College was part of the ‘Young People’s Pilot’, coordinated and managed Arts and Minds, a leading arts and mental health charity in Cambridgeshire. The sessions were led by Sheila Ceccarelli from AccessArt (artist) and Yael Pilowsky Bankirer (Psychotherapist)

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# **Arts and Minds: Building to the Limit**

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# **Arts and Minds: Manipulating Clay with Water**

This post shows how to facilitate a sensory session exploring water and clay.

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# **Arts and Minds: Constructing the World with Collage**

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# **Arts and Minds: Expressive Monoprinting on a Big Scale**