



Usworth School International Kite project Report and Evaluation



Written by Infinite Arts 2007

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1 Usworth School International kite project

Introduction

This report has been produced in order to value the thoughts and feelings of the participants, to influence future projects and practice, and to provide information to funders.

Project description

This project set out to give pupils from Usworth Secondary School and Oxclose Secondary in Washington the opportunity to work together, to learn from each other and to make some amazing kites from recycled materials. The kites that they produced were exhibited at the Sunderland International Friendship Festival in June/July 2007. Kite artist Frances Anderson from Infinite Arts led the project with support from Gill Laverick and Ged McCormack. Four International Kitemakers were invited to work in school for the few days leading up to the festival. They were Makoto Ohye from Japan, Meg Albers from USA, Alessia Marrocu from Sardinia and Robert Brasington from Tasmania.

As Usworth School was in the final stages of closing down, there were only twenty nine pupils remaining who were from Year 9. These pupils took part along with 10 pupils from Oxclose Secondary school – where they were due to move the following term. They had the opportunity to explore kite making with local and International kitemakers. They also had the opportunity to build relationships with Oxclose pupils in advance of them moving to the school in September.

Preparation day

The project began with a preparation day in late June, held at Usworth but involving pupils from Oxclose too. Staff from both schools also took part. This session was designed to provide opportunity for pupils to think about how much they already knew about kites, and then to decide what else they might need to know. In small groups, pupils scripted questions to ask about the sample kites they had been given:

“Why did the artist only paint half a face?”

“Why is it this shape?”

“Why is it made like that?”

“What makes it fly?”

“Why does it seem to be the wrong way round?”



Pupils were given some information about the four international kitemakers who would be working with them and were asked to find out something about each country and the language in that country before the workshops started. Although children had thought about kites between the sessions it was actually during the workshop days that children began to ask questions about kites in different countries – such as asking Makoto what Kite was in Japanese.

Workshop activities at Usworth included:

Scrapheap challenge	As an introduction, everyone makes ‘something which might fly’ out of our pile of recycled and everyday materials
Mini kites and bugs	Indoor mini-kites and bugs made out of personal scraps – sweet wrappers, bus tickets etc
Usworth logo kite	An opportunity for people to work together to paint a large kite with a version of the logo
Shibori kites	Everyone makes a brightly coloured kite from the specially folded and dyed Japanese paper
Kitemakers Kites	Each kitemaker brought a kite with them for pupils to make, this included simple paper kites to color, cut out and make up as well as more complex washie paper and bamboo kite.
Windmills	Windmills made from recycled materials
Friendship Kites	Pupils were asked to design and make a kite either for a friend or with a friend to reflect the theme of the festival



Due to the imminent closure, Usworth School were able to allocate the main hall for the full two days and the team were able to leave out all the work in progress throughout the sessions. The main hall was a good space to work as it was high and had direct access to the outside. The school also allocated another room for the team to keep their own tools and belongings along with a great variety of materials. Pupils were able to come off timetable for the two days and also spent time on the third day on a preview day visit to site where they were able to help install the work they'd been making at school ready for the festival.

An additional activity was the creation of a kite bearing an adaptation of the Usworth school badge which was developed on day two by a few pupils who came up with the idea. The kite was a Japanese style Rokaku kite measuring 1 metre high.



On the Friday (the day before the festival began), there was an opportunity for pupils to visit the site and set up an exhibition with the kites they had made. They also had a chance to meet more kitefliers and to see installations being created and to fly their own kites.



2 Stakeholders Viewpoints

2.1 Feedback from staff at Usworth

Feedback was gathered from the staff at Usworth School, in particular from the main contact Roger Lane

Roger felt that pupils were engaged in a very professional and effective manner and that they had all had fun. (All most of the time and most all of the time.) He suggested that the cross-curricular activities addressed real learning needs and issues.

Regarding benefits and gains from the project. Roger highlighted the following:

- Pupils were well engaged and achieved success in a variety of ways
- Pupils worked very well in groups.
- Pupils were positive about the project and it helped them through a potentially difficult period of transition.

In addition Roger felt that pupils were pleased to have their work exhibited although he suggested that we could perhaps have planned the layout and produced some notes and explanations to accompany the display.

Teacher Linda Nesbitt provided the following feedback:

“From a personal perspective, it was all about the pupils. The pupils were able to mix and work with their new peer group. Friendships were forged and the normal cry of them and us did not happen.”

She felt that there were a number of pupils who because of their needs (either academically, socially or physical) needed extra time, confidence boost or even prompts of what to do next. She felt that this was handled sensitively by putting pupils into mixed groups with the benefits of having an extra adult to work alongside the kite makers.

Linda was pleased that all the pupils were able to take part in an activity which was held in a non-threatening environment. She thought that the program enabled everyone to participate in some way and noted that some pupils (who normally do not take part in group activities) enjoyed and took a leading role in their groups project.

Thank you so much once again for the work you and the kitemakers did with our pupils last week. Staff and pupils from our school thoroughly enjoyed the 2 days & those from Oxclose did not want to leave!
Carole Graham – Deputy Headteacher, Usworth School.

“Experimental learning is always effective. I already knew that but this reinforced my view, partly because it was so effectively run and managed.”
Roger Lane, Teacher

“For some pupils, a new confidence in working with others was evident.”
Linda Nesbitt, Teacher

2.2 Feedback from the International Kitemakers

2.2.1 Alessia Marrocu from Sardinia sent this response:

“It was a really important experience for me. I started working on the project without special expectations, I mean, I chose to start it with a completely open mind just really wanting to give my energy and curious to see what it would be.

The project was great: to build the team with such different people, coming from such different places, with such different artistic styles, ages and experiences, was a really good thing for the pupils. You gave them a taste of the international world of kite festivals where I've been growing up and which really played a big part in the person I am now.

“To see them working hard to make something new, and to see the pride in their eyes when they get to fly it..... that was the most memorable moment for me.”

Alessia Marrocu, Sardinia

The structure of the workshop was very interesting for me, to have plenty of time and work in a gradual process was a great opportunity. I loved the way we slowly introduced them to the work;

- starting with the 5 minute challenge with the materials to help them explore just their ideas of flight,
- going through the discovery of different kites, different kiteflyers, different ways of thinking about flight...
- and finally to bring them to project draw and build their own kite.

Of course it is not easy, they can step into problems and defeats on the way, making more mistakes than if they were working on a standard project, but for me, that is the quality point of this workshop, which seems to me much more useful and educational for the pupils.

On the way the pupils collect information and knowledge to make them able to give life to their own creations. It is not easy for them to get this kind of opportunity nowadays, everything is already done, already invented, and it doesn't need any creativity from them.

In Usworth, they were free to do something which was really coming from them, a personal project, using the pieces of the puzzle they collected on the first days. To see them working hard to make something new, and to see the pride in their eyes when they get to fly it..... that was the most memorable moment for me. The exhibition was really nice, but for me, that was the less important part of the project. In a 2 day project, the result of the exhibition could be not perfect, but it really doesn't matter. The important part is the process and the benefit is seen in the pupils not in the exhibition.

So... a beautiful work of the organization, an interesting project and a great experience and a chance for me to grow too.”

2.2.2 Robert Brasington from Tasmania answered our feedback questions

Was the project what you expected?

There was more free expression than other workshops using students of that age group. The students were, on the whole, receptive which is certainly more than I usually expect for the participants in that age bracket.

Did you achieve what you wanted?

I considered my responsibility to be that of a trouble shooter on the kite construction, as well working though problem solving with the participants. With this in mind, I felt I achieved what I set out to do, with some nice surprises along the way.

What do you feel you personally have gained from the project?

I feel satisfied that the days there were fruitful. Watching the participants help each other was good to see. It was a chance to see kids having fun without the ubiquitous raging hormones left at home.

What for you were the most memorable moments in the project?

Watching the participants flying their free form kites. Nice expression of creativity. And seeing the strong bonds between the students was a pleasant and unexpected surprise.

Were there any problems? How were they resolved?

Problems arose constantly, but were dealt with at the time they arose in regards to construction techniques, methodology, and sequencing, but our role was to be on top of that and sort it there and then.

What did you think of the management & organisation of this project?

The course was well thought out and handled well. There was all that we needed in the way of kit to get stuff done. Frances put 150% into the days there and was well impressed with her patience and energy. Go Girl! It seemed the concentration of the students waned mid afternoon, but that is understandable as kids will be kids. The free form workshop worked well, but yielded few workable platforms. Maybe an alternative is to lose all the bags of stuff and replace it with, say, 5 bamboo sticks and some tissue paper and ball of wool and give the class slightly more direction in do-able flying kites

Looking back, is there anything you think should have been done differently?

I think as a 2 day workshop, there could be room for a quick introduction on the history, culture, art and science surrounding kites and kite flying. Maybe just 5 to 10 minutes at the beginning of each half day. Boring to some, I know but rounds out the experience.

"I feel the students thought having a couple of days making kites sounded like an easy beano. Having completed the workshop, they felt there was more to it than that, and came away with a general knowledge of kites, and creativity."

Robert Brasington,
Tasmania

2.2.3 Makoto Ohye from Japan provided his thoughts

Benefits

- I liked the Five minute kite-making. It is a nice way to understand how do they think about the kite.
- I wanted to see what part of the kite making they were interested in. They didn't hesitate to use glue and ink with their hands. Their hands were colourful.
- Children all over the world enjoy kite flying all the more when they have made the kites themselves. Maybe they think that flying the kite is like flying in the air oneself.

"To make a kite is a precious experience for the pupils, but to fly the kite is even more special. Maybe we have created some new fliers."

Makoto Ohye, Japan

Problems

- Making kites went well but we didn't fly the kite on the field together because of the rain. The weather decided.
- My poor English is big problem.

Makoto also commented that his local festival in Daimon has also run kite-making workshops for adults where they included more emphasis on talking about their kites and about where they come from. Although he recognised the differences between an adult programme and a youth based programme he felt that the problems and benefits were essentially the same for each.

Makoto felt that our approach to creative learning was essentially a new way of working for him. He felt that it took a lot of preparation and planning.

2.2.4 Meg Albers, kite education specialist from the USA commented

Meg felt that the project was more 'fluid' than she had anticipated. However, she felt she achieved more than she had hoped for.

"I gained the knowledge that 'un-structured' programs can work well and can have their place."

She was impressed by how eagerly and enthusiastically the students approached each challenge.

"It thrills me when the students kite first takes flight and you see the joy and satisfaction that it brings them. I was touched when a student asked me to sign their friendship kite."

"I truly believe that kites can be successfully incorporated into any grade level and subject matter and they have a great deal to contribute to the educational field."

Meg Albers, USA

Overall, Meg felt that the way the project was organised helped to promote thinking outside the box, an important life skill, and introduced and re-enforced the circle; promoting respect, equality, and group dynamics, which are important leadership qualities. Although rain was a problem, it was resolved by flying in the gymnasium.

Meg identified the following main benefits for the participants:

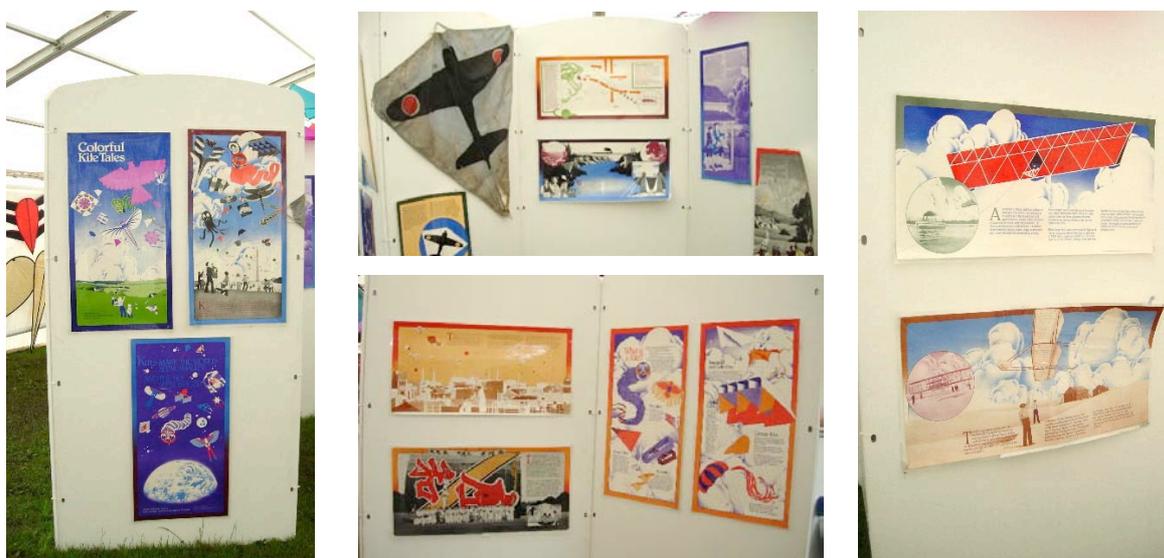
- To work in teams; with friends and new-comers alike.
- To go where the materials take you and not to have pre-conceived notions of how the end results should be.
- To be exposed to unfamiliar uses of traditional materials and familiar uses of un-traditional materials.

Regarding the exhibition of the pupils' work in the marquee on site, Meg suggested that it could have had a little more prominent placement, and better signage done by students beforehand.

Meg had some suggestions for improvements and alterations to a future programme:

“I wish I had taken advantage of opportunities to interject specific kite terminology and woven kite science and history anecdotes into the two days we had with the students. The beauty of kites is how perfect and natural they are as an educational tool. Kites are a unique partnership between science and art.”

“Cooperation between the educational sectors, kite festivals, and art world are integral to enhancing the community as it works together to produce creative and productive human beings.”



2.3 Feedback from pupils (from Usworth and Oxclose Schools)

The pupils who took part were asked to record their comments from time to time throughout the project. They highlighted the fact that they enjoyed the kitemaking, and felt that they had learned various new skills such as tying knots and dyeing paper. They also felt that it was good to spend the whole two days on the work. Here are a few of their comments;

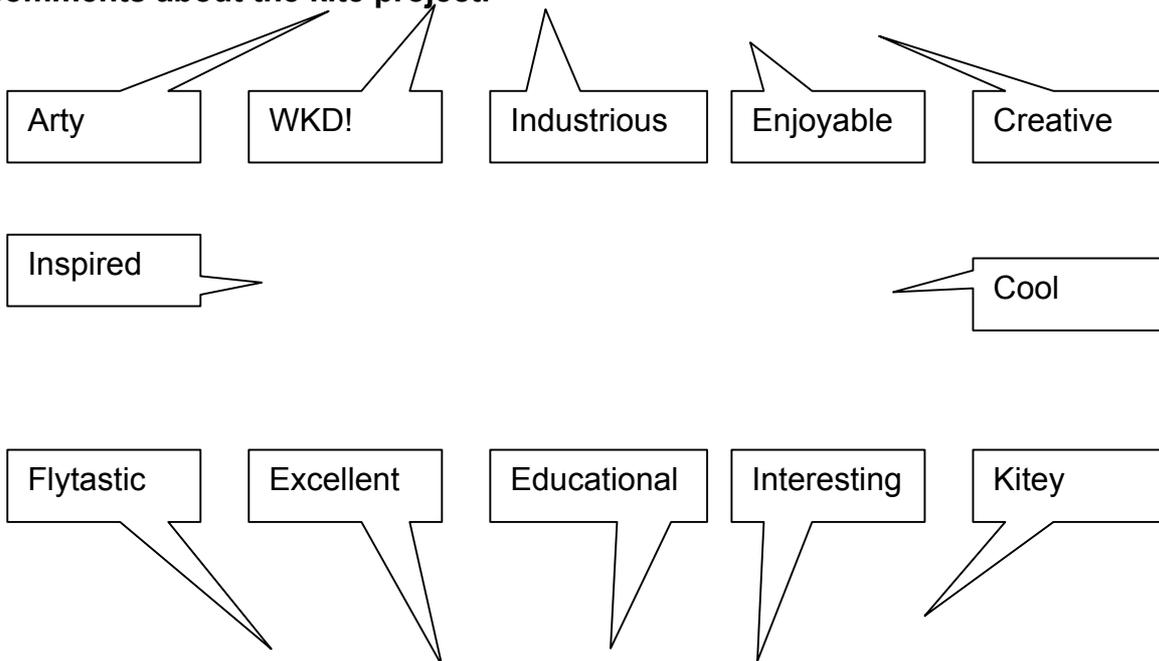


- “Everything was fun and different!”
- “I learned about how to make ideas for kites.”
- “I enjoyed learning about Makoto’s type of Japanese kite.”
- “I like learning how to make kites with Robert (from Tasmania)”
- “I learned what a spine is on a kite.”
- “I have enjoyed it all”



Pupils were asked to think of questions that they would like to ask about kites and kitemaking and these were answered during the course of the project. They developed some interesting questions including..... What gives you the inspiration to make a kite?.....Who invented the kite?.....What are the tails for?

A board was used to collect one-word comments about the kite project.



Pupils' comments following the project



2.3 Infinite Arts feedback on the Usworth Kite Project

Frances Anderson was the lead artist and project manager for the Usworth kite project. She was very impressed with the commitment of all the pupils and recognised key benefits both educational and social. She felt that it would have been good to have an additional day to allow pupils to develop their designs further. She also felt that “some might have enjoyed the opportunity to fly different kites – fighter kites or 2 or even 4 line kites – but maybe that’s another project!”

“In the session with kitemakers on the afternoon of day 1 pupils worked on paper photocopied kites, colouring them cutting them out, making them and flying them. Pupils were split into groups so those pupils who worked fast could make several kites moving from one table to another. Others concentrated on making just one.”

“The following day everyone made Makoto’s kite together and they were able to appreciate how special and different the materials were. I think that there was a natural progression from the open learning approach on day one towards this kite using more complex materials and techniques. They also appreciated working with Japanese paper and seemed to work in a more careful and considered way taking their time over decorating it. They also became interested in the Japanese language and asked Makoto to translate their names and words to put onto their kites in Japanese. This session also created a natural step towards the final session where they would be designing and making their own kite.”

“On day 2 some of the children went with the kitemakers to a press launch for the festival. While they were away, the whole group were given a demonstration on the mini kites and some went off on a separate table to make windmills. This change of format was a little more difficult to manage and in hindsight I would keep them in their familiar group areas and demonstrate and work there rather than bringing them all together.”

Due to a delay in the arrival of Makoto’s luggage, a session which was to have taken place on day one was held over to day two. This activity involved all the pupils making ‘Makoto’s kite’ together – and it worked really well to have done it in this order.

There was a natural progression of skill development over the two days with pupils developing the confidence and ability to learn and work independently, trying out their ideas and finally making their own kites.

Frances Anderson,
Lead Artist

“The children from both schools worked incredibly well together - you really couldn't tell who was from which school as there was a bond and friendships formed. This extended into breaks and lunchtimes where they all mixed very well.”

Frances Anderson.

Several of the children decided to make their friendship kite as a present for Makoto. Pupils from both schools worked together - they thought hard about the design and the decoration depicting a tree and saying kite and tree in Japanese.

Frances Anderson,

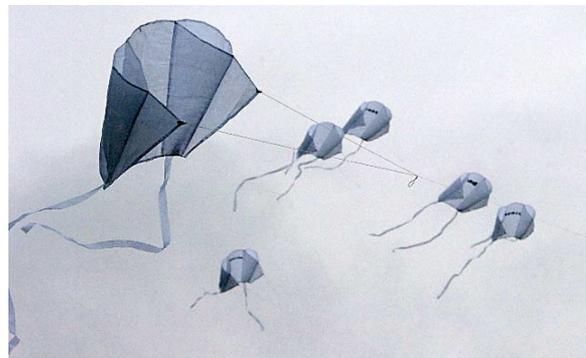
“The pupils formed relationships with the kite makers and were genuinely interested in them as professionals, their practice and their experiences.”

“Because of the wet weather it was difficult to fly outside on day one. This problem was overcome by using the school sports hall which was large enough to run and fly kites. We had pupils running around the edge of the hall and then developed this into a kite flying relay with teams. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed this.”

Frances felt that by the end of the second day, pupils were experimenting and thinking for themselves, working more and more independently, trying out ideas and asking questions which would clarify their thoughts rather than asking what to do. She thought that there would have been scope to develop this further if there had been an additional day.

Gill Laverick worked as assistant to Frances and commented;

“The Usworth Kite Project was really successful. In particular, Frances did a brilliant job here and the international kite flyers were a tremendous team. I think we really need to build on this work. Although Usworth School is no longer open, this project could be delivered in other schools and with community groups too.”



3 Assessment and Analysis

3.1 Achieving the Aims

At the outset the following aims were established.

- **To support pupils to think creatively**
- **To support pupils to plan and work together and to learn from each other.**
- **To help develop an awareness of recycling and wind power.**
- **To support education through provision of creative learning opportunities**
- **To support the transition of pupils from Usworth to Oxclose school**
- **To support health by encouraging pupils into outdoor activity.**

In general these aims were all met. Pupils were encouraged to come up with their own ideas rather than copy existing patterns. They were able to take part in a healthy outdoor activity (when the rain stopped). Teachers were involved in the planning of the project and pupils had opportunity to work together and learn from each other.

The activities allowed the pupils to develop their creativity starting with supported and directed activities ending up with freedom to develop their own ideas, share skills and ideas and experiment, allowing them to think in a more open and free way.

In particular the project was able to support the transition of 29 year nine pupils from Usworth School to Oxclose School. During the project, pupils from the two schools were mixed with boys and girls from each school in each group. Genuine friendships were made which were reinforced during breaks and lunchtimes where pupils mixed naturally together. The pupils were so engaged in their work that they didn't try to revert to school based groups - they were too busy.

With hindsight, perhaps there were too many aims for a two-day project. In the early planning stage the Infinite Arts team felt that it would be a great opportunity to see what elements of the curriculum could be covered through kite making. Ideally, this would be the next phase of the kite project and would be developed through direct communication with key staff.

3.2 Realising the Outcomes

At the outset the following outcomes and outputs were predicted.

Target outcomes

- **Pupils from the two schools have a chance to meet and work together on equal terms**
- **Pupils develop self-esteem, confidence in themselves and respect for others**
- **Pupils develop visual awareness and design skills**
- **Pupils develop awareness of environmental issues - recycling and wind power**
- **Pupils feel free to experiment, to identify problems and invent solutions**
- **Pupils see their work on display at the festival**

The outcomes were largely realised in that pupils developed designs, worked together felt confident, thought about recycling, and had a chance to experiment. The opportunity for pupils from the two different schools to work together proved to be very valuable. Pupils mixed really well moving outside their own school groupings, making new friends through the two-day programme.

It was reported by staff that pupils had surprised them and had gained a lot of confidence through the project. They reported that one pupil in particular demonstrated improved concentration and the ability to mix and interact with others.

3.3 Usworth School International Kite Project - benefits

- Pupils enjoyed the project, had fun and learnt new skills.
- Pupils were positive about the project and it helped them through a potentially difficult period of transition.
- Pupils were well engaged and achieved success in a variety of ways
- Pupils saw their work in a public exhibition.
- Pupils worked very well in groups.
- Pupils gained an insight into other cultures and language
- Pupils were able to work with professional artists and understand it as a career option.
- The kite artists and assistants who led the work were given a challenge and were able to develop their skills further.
- An experimental approach to learning proved to be effective with year 9 pupils

4 Conclusions - the way forward

The **Usworth International Kite Project** provided a great opportunity for schools involvement, artistic development and raising public awareness about kites as an educational activity. Proposals for the future have been identified as follows:

Kite making in schools

Kite-making could be further developed within schools in Washington using traditional and modern kite making materials and methods. Kite-making doesn't currently appear on the curriculum however, it could be developed educationally as an introduction to creative learning and links can be made into science, maths, geography and history.

Extended schools opportunities

Kite-making could also be offered as an extended schools opportunity. Training could be provided much earlier in the year for teachers who could then develop work to show in a future festival. The recycling theme was very successful but could be further developed through projects with schools and would lend itself to family learning working with young and old alike.

Kite making to aid transition in schools

The kite-making project lends itself to supporting transition from primary to secondary and could be envisaged as a project hosted in the Secondary School, working with primary children from feeder schools in advance of their transfer. The project would provide a challenging but equalising opportunity for pupils to meet, form relationships and learn from each other.

The international aspect of the project

Although a kite-making project could be delivered by local or UK based kite-makers alone, the international aspect of the project brought added benefits to the project and to its participants. The opportunity to develop educational projects linked to the Sunderland International Friendship Festival should continue to be explored.

Credits

Photographs

All photos were taken by Infinite Arts (Pauline Taylor and Emma Norris) with the exception of the top photo on p10 which was provided by Sunderland City Council.

Project Management

Pauline Taylor

Funded by

Usworth School
Infinite Arts

Infinite Arts team

Frances Anderson, Gill Laverick, Ged McCormack.

International Kite makers and artists

Makoto Ohye from Japan, Meg Albers from USA, Alessia Marrocu from Sardinia and Robert Brasington from Tasmania.

Schools and participants

Usworth School - twenty nine pupils from Year 9.
Oxclose Secondary school - 10 Pupils from Year 9.

For further information about this project please contact:

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Appendix 1 Timetable and details of workshops

Workshops in Usworth School – Wed 26 and Thurs 27 June

Day 1 - Wednesday

9.00 Exercise 1 Scrapheap challenge

- Introduction session with everyone all together
- 5 minute exercise to make something which might fly!
- circle to introduce ourselves and say who we are why we think it might fly.

9.45 - 12.35 Exercise 2 Shibori Japanese paper dying

- Each group does shibori dying to dye paper they have already folded. Everyone ends up with a sheet of colourful paper which needs to dry.
- Making the shibori kite. Instruction is provided and everyone ends up with a finished kite which will fly. Pupils learn particular processes – bridling, knot tying , bowing etc which are transferable.
- We fly the kites

Reflection before lunch

- End of morning round up in circle – what have we learned – Bring comments sheets from each group to the middle to use as prompt.

1.35 – 3.15 exercise 4 – kitemakers' kites

- Kitemakers introduce themselves, show their kites and say why they make kites
- In four groups, each visiting kitemaker introduces a special kite design
- Once the kites are made we all go out and fly

Reflection at end of day

- a final round up all together at about 3.00 ready to finish at 3.15

Day 2 – Thursday

8.55 – 10.25 - Session 1 Kite History and information and Makoto's kite

- Begin in a circle to talk about flying, kite history and kites in general. What holds the kite up? What makes it fly, what is a good wind?
- Information about the Smithsonian kite history boards.
- Makoto introduced his kite and demonstrated the process to make this kite. Pupils work in small groups to decorate and make up their kites from washi paper and bamboo using more sophisticated techniques such as glue and paper to fix spars and bowing the kite.

10.30 - 12.00

Robert, Makoto, Alessia, and Meg went to the kite festival site to attend the press launch - along with 10 pupils and some staff.

Session 2 10.55 – 12.35

Windmill making with Ged McCormack and mini kites with Frances.

Session 3 1.35 – 3.15 – friendship kite

With everyone back in school, the final project was to make a kite for a friend, or about a friend, or about friendship

Final round up and feedback

In a circle all the participants discussed their responses to the two days