

Animal Farm

Evaluation Report

September 2001

This project was funded by BAA Heathrow, the Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity and the LBRUT education standards fund

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February - June 2001

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With thanks to:

All the children who participated

Will Bishop-Stephens

Ann Coward, Nicola Parsons, Jan Adams, Anna Doyle and reception/support staff at Clarendon School

Catherine Cartwright, Susannah Mitchell, Octagon After School Club

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"So full of life, you expect them to move" (comment book, 10.5.01)

From the very beginning, there was a magical quality to this project. The completed animal sculptures, which are now installed in the grounds of Clarendon School and Orleans House Gallery, look so real that they often catch passers by off-guard.

Involving over 70 children from Clarendon Special Needs School, Hampton and the gallery After School Club, this project was devised to complement the Sally Matthews touring exhibition "Sentient Beings". This exhibition features pictorial and sculptural representations of wild and domesticated animals.

Following the success of recent education project exhibitions such as *Constructing History* (1999) and *At Home with Art* (2000), *Animal Farm* was created to provide a local context for the touring show. The project also provided an excellent opportunity to work with an artist in residence.

Will Bishop-Stephens trained at Winchester School of Art, he was introduced to the gallery through engage (the National Association for Gallery Education) and from February 2001 he set about devising the workshops which were to produce life-size sculptures of farm animals.

Aims

This project provided us with an opportunity to develop existing links with Clarendon School, Hampton producing high quality artwork which would complement a touring exhibition. It also enabled us to integrate our work with schools with our own after school club providing opportunities for the participants which would increase their confidence and self-esteem. For Clarendon, it was an opportunity to work with an artist in residence on a large scale, using the new art room to its full potential. The exhibition provided an excellent focus for the project and opportunity to involve visitors and other schools in this valuable work.

Getting Started

The visits to Hounslow Urban Farm, which had been originally planned for late February/early March, were cancelled due to the Foot and Mouth Outbreak. Having done so much careful planning and given that the Sally Matthews exhibition would still be touring to us we decided to go ahead with the project minus the farm visit.

We were working with 5 groups, pupils from Clarendon School included the year 11 seniors group and from the juniors, J1 & J2. All of the Clarendon workshops took place in their new art room. For the seniors the project took place from 3.30-5pm as part of their special after school programme. The Octagon Art Club sessions took place at the gallery as usual; the children are divided into two groups who attend after school either on Wednesdays or Thursdays 3.45-5pm.

To give the children enough material to work from, we watched videos of farms and looked at books before the children began their initial sketches. Just as we would have come away from the farm visit with lots of quick animal sketches, the first sessions produced a range of representational and more abstract images of farm animals.

Texture

Once we had begun drawing animals, Will taught the children how to make different kinds of drawings giving an insight into concepts such as texture. Without the benefit of visiting the farm to see and touch real animals the participants had to imagine the different textures that were innate to a sheep, a cow or a duck. For us texture was defined as "how things feel" and we compared the softness of our clothes to the hardness of the floor, and the downy feel of our hair. New animal drawings were covered with different textures, rough or smooth, hard or soft.

Line to 3D

Another insight into the animal sculptures was through line drawings. This provided the participants with an understanding of the structure involved in an animal and the bones and joints which animals have just like humans. The continuous line drawings progressed to wire outline sculptures, which then became three-dimensional structures.

The wire was a difficult and unusual material for all the children involved and we were very impressed by the efforts of each group in producing a finished piece.

Scaling Up

Once we had created 3D work from a 2D starting point it was time to scale up. Will expertly welded the steel armatures on site at Orleans House Gallery in between the drawing and wire workshops. We were now ready for the final stage - filling the armatures to create life size and life like animals.

A variety of materials were used and the seniors worked on their chicken wire bull heads before tackling the full-scale sculpture. Chicken wire was used to create a body, sticks were woven in between to add strength, and then the texture was added in the form of kapok, straw, fabrics, felt, rag pulp and even mud! In turn the other animals gradually grew from the metal structures and the bull was joined by a sheep, lamb, ducks and goose which were

produced by juniors at Clarendon and the Octagon club. For the final touches to the ducks and goose, mod roc and tissue paper created the hard texture needed for the beaks and webbed feet.

For all the children involved there was an enormous sense of excitement and energy as we completed the sculptures. The flexibility of Clarendon and their confidence in the project team, enabled the artist and gallery staff to work with small groups of children. This gave everyone an opportunity to be involved in the transformation of the metal frames to colourful tactile animals. Working together as a team gave the children an important opportunity to learn how to collaborate with fellow pupils and other children from different schools.

Selection Process

With over 70 children involved, a vast quantity of preparatory work had been completed by the end of the project. Works by different groups were selected to reflect each stage of this project. Drawings, texture pictures and small sculptures produced by individuals were represented in the exhibition alongside the life-size sculptures.

Exhibition at the Gallery

The exhibition was on display at Orleans from the 14 April - 10 June 2001. Senior pupils from Clarendon came to help the artist and gallery staff set up the exhibition. A special private view was held for all those involved on Wednesday 18 April. Many of the children and their families attended. During the course of the exhibition over 4,000 visitors were recorded. Parents were particularly impressed to see the work of their children exhibited in the gallery alongside that of a professional artist. This has encouraged them to become frequent users of the gallery and several have expressed an interest in future exhibitions/projects of this kind.

Two secondary schools visited the exhibition and were involved in special projects with Sally Matthews, the artist responsible for the touring exhibition. *Pack of Dogs* was created by year 7 pupils at Orleans Park School; two dogs were added to the *Animal Farm* exhibition while the remainder of the pack guarded the reception to Orleans Park School. Hampton Junior School also visited and created a special organic installation in the grounds of the gallery in direct response to the exhibition.

Feedback

In addition to the response to the exhibition by all the participants and teachers from Clarendon School, the visitor book comments show just how well *Animal Farm* was received.

"This was a wonderful exhibition. I want to do some too." (15/4/01)

"So good to see living, breathing animals at this time of foot and mouth"
(14/4/01)

Evaluation of the project was provided by teachers at Clarendon, Orleans Gallery After School Club Staff and artist Will Bishop Stephens.

"It was great - would like to repeat something like this again. Orleans House Gallery is an invaluable resource & the staff are friendly, helpful & very skilled!" (Anna Hall, J2 teacher, Clarendon School)

"Will was very good with the children. Excellent at transforming the children's work in a way that made them feel good" (Jan Adams, J1 teacher, Clarendon School)

"a great experience for all involved. We are v. keen to continue strong links with Orleans Gallery" (Nicola Parsons, Art Co-ordinator, Clarendon)

"I liked seeing my horse picture in the gallery" (Lester, J1 pupil)

"I liked the wool" (Tao, J1 pupil)

"I liked doing the animal weaving best!" (Scarlett, Octagon After School Club)

Project Successes

Benefits & Learning outcomes for the participants:

- An understanding of sculpture/3D
- Improved sketching
- Improved vocabulary & ability to communicate about the work
- Helped to improve concentration
- Co-operative working
- Commitment, enthusiasm and pride in their creation
- Group work helped to remove inhibitions
- New skills in a range of media
- Increased self confidence and self esteem
- Enhanced portfolio for GCSE students
- Experience of a long term project
- The experience of seeing their work exhibited at the gallery on an equal basis with that of a National Touring exhibition, and chance for their parents to see this and be proud of their achievement

Benefits for Clarendon School/Orleans House Gallery:

- Opportunity to build upon and consolidate an existing relationship
- Opportunity to work with a artist in residence
- High profile exhibition with good press coverage
- Raised the profile of art & design
- Unlocked the potential of the new art room
- Encouraged repeat visits from participants and their families

Benefits for the artist

- Experience of working on a large-scale education project
- Inspiration to work with schools in the future and initiate projects
- Number of commissions for farm animals following the exhibition
- A unique and rewarding life experience

Unexpected outcomes

- The permanent display of the sculptures at Clarendon School and Orleans House Gallery
- The interest in the project from other schools and number of school visits to the gallery during the exhibition
- The inclusion of *Pack of Dogs* by Orleans Park School in the exhibition
- The quality of the finished artwork
- Increased confidence in art & design delivery for KS2

Conclusion

The quality of *Animal Farm* firmly establishes a place for children's art within the mainstream. The success of this project has helped to consolidate our partnership work with schools and other organisations establishing our reputation in the area of gallery education.

Appendices

Budget
Line and Texture worksheets
Feedback from pupils at Clarendon
Publicity material
Press Cuttings
Visitor feedback
Feedback from schools
Photographs