

# The Fitzwilliam Museum



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE



## Art in Action 2008-9



The Prince's Foundation for  
**Children & the Arts**

**RENAISSANCE** EAST OF ENGLAND  
museums for changing lives

## Project Outline

The Art in Action project has involved the Fitzwilliam Museum working with six partner primary schools over a period of three years. This report covers the final year of the project. The schools selected were all in areas of high socio-economic deprivation and/or geographical isolation. None of them has previously worked with the Fitzwilliam Museum.

A total of 17 classes from these schools made two visits to the museum during the year, one in the autumn term and one in the summer term. During the museum visits, the children explored a range of different works of art and took part in gallery activities led by experienced museum teachers. As part of their first visit the children took part in a workshop in the museum's education studio.

This year the focus of the museum visits has been the paintings collections. The visits in the autumn term explored how and why artists create pictures. We looked at early Renaissance paintings, discovering how Italian artists used shapes and colours as symbols of the

Christian ideas they were expressing. The gallery session then went on to explore how the paintings were made, using wood panels, gesso, pigments and gold leaf. The children sketched details from the paintings before moving down to the education studio. Here they worked with a freelance artist or museum teacher who demonstrated how the egg tempera paint would have been made. The children then created their own panel paintings on wood using the ideas they had collected in the gallery as a starting point.

The schools continued the work started at the museum back at school in many different ways (see St Mary's case study on page 5). When the children returned to the museum in the summer term, we looked at other paintings in the collection to explore composition, shape and colour.

Approximately 500 children aged 9-11 years old took part in the project. The project was funded by the Prince's Foundation for Children and the Arts, with additional funding from Renaissance East of England and Trusthouse Charitable Trust.





# How did the project achieve its aims and objectives?

**Objective 1: To give the children the opportunity to engage with great works of art and respond to this experience through their own work.**

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses world-class collections of works of art and antiquities spanning centuries and civilisations. During their visits, children worked with museum teachers directly in front of the works of art in the galleries. The museum teaching sessions were carefully planned to include a balance of close observation, discussion, listening and activities. During each visit there were opportunities for the children to draw in the galleries and they created their own paintings in the studio.

***“The children were engaged and interacting at all times”***

***“high level of engagement”***

***“All produced excellent sketches”***

***“When I was in the studio painting I felt so alive and enjoyed it a lot”***

***“I really loved it when we were painting because I thought I was rubbish at it but when I saw my painting I thought I did quite well.”***



**Objective 2: To build on the relationships already made with schools to enrich and extend the cultural experience of the pupils and staff.**

Working with the same schools for three years has allowed the museum to build strong relationships with staff and pupils. The teacher's pre-visit meeting, held in September 2008, gave us the opportunity to discuss this year's work with teachers, as well as meet one another again. We were also able to build on the skills and experience of the children who had visited the museum in previous years.

Throughout the project, we have tried to keep closely in touch with our partner schools. Schools sent in photographs and follow up work they were able to do after the first visit.

***"They remembered so much from previous visits, including using specific artistic vocabulary. They felt at home in "their" museum"***

***"The tree makes a 1/3 of the painting. That leaves a perfect square. Then***



***there's a cube right in the centre. It makes you look at it."*** Yr 5 pupil commenting on Bruegal's "Village Festival" (above)

***"the Fitzwilliam has now become part of St Mary's 'speak'"***

**Objective 3: To extend our work in the museum and to develop new ways of working with our collections.**

Developing the teaching for the Art in Action project this year allowed us to develop a new workshop session exploring colour and pigment which we are now able to offer other schools. Museum teachers worked alongside freelance artists to deliver the workshops and develop their skills. The summer term visits led to the development of activity cards for groups to use independently when visiting the museum's outside sculpture promenade, which have also been used by other groups visiting the museum.





**Objective 4: For teachers and children to experience the breadth of learning that can take place in the museum and to extend their thinking about art and creativity**

The teaching in the museum was carefully planned to give teachers lots of opportunities for creative follow up work. Activities in the museum were varied and museum teachers discussed extension ideas with teachers during their museum visits. Follow up work included creating large scale displays at school (Murrow Primary School), creative writing work based on a particular painting (Thongsley Primary School) and work on

perspective and scale (Orchards Primary School).

Three of our partner schools took part in whole school INSET days at the museum this year. This was a chance for other staff in the school to find out more about the project and to develop their own cross curricular work.

***“I think it will broaden several aspects of my own teaching”***

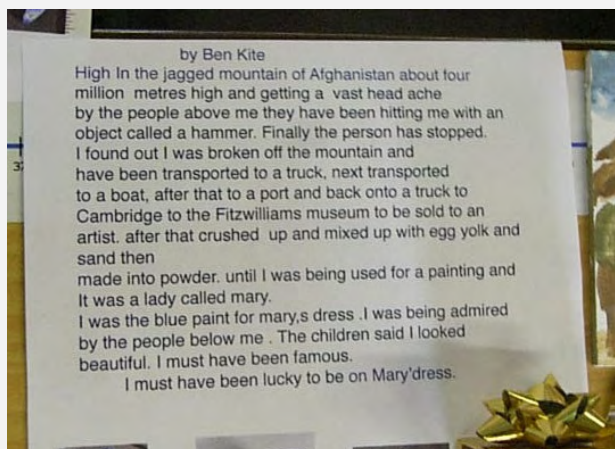
***“Very cross curricular. Lots of ideas on starters for writing. Ideas for active and creative learning”***

**Case Study**

After their visit to the museum in November 2008, Year 5 children from St Mary's C of E Primary School were fascinated by the precious lapis lazuli which artists used to make the blue of Mary's dress. This interest was used by their teacher as a starting point for work across the curriculum.

Firstly, the children created their own pieces of lapis with stones and paint, then they plotted how far the lapis had to travel from Afghanistan to Italy and imagined the journey. They used mapping skills to work out where other stones might have come from and did experiments creating paint from a variety of pigments mixed with different mediums such as egg, oil and water. A poem by Adrian Mitchell “A Speck Speaks” helped inspire the children to write their own poems about lapis lazuli.

***“When we started I was thinking of art objectives because we were going to an art gallery and then we linked in lots of history objectives. But the thing that's really amazed me is all the cross-curricular links we've been able to make .. when I sat down and looked at all the things we've done, we've actually covered a huge amount of the primary curriculum just through a few museum visits”. Janet King, Class Teacher***



**Objective 5: To measure the impact the experience has had on participants and staff and disseminate this knowledge to colleagues in other museums at regional and national levels.**

The project has been evaluated at each stage. Children were asked to complete simple evaluation forms after each museum visit and after the workshop. Teachers and teaching assistants were also asked to fill in evaluation forms. The project has been written up as a case study for Renaissance East of England and is available on the website ([www.renaissance-east.org.uk/Content/Current-Publications](http://www.renaissance-east.org.uk/Content/Current-Publications)).

We have worked with the Faculty of Education of the University of Cambridge to create a short film recording the impact of the project on St Mary's C of E Primary School. This film will be shared with museum and teaching colleagues as well as trainee teachers.

***“Hand on heart I can say that every single child has raised their game, has benefited from this. There’s not one child in all of the classes that I’ve brought to the Fitzwilliam who hasn’t benefited. That’s a fantastic thing to say about an education project”.***

***“The Fitzwilliam has been an inspiration for all the children I’ve come with”***

***“The children have experienced the wow factor both in the actual building and the exhibits and encouraged families to come and share the experience”***



## What we could have done better

The evaluation form for both teachers and children offered them an opportunity to tell us things that they felt we could have done better. In previous years we have often run out of time during the day. This year we seem to have got the timing better although there were one or two comments about the length of time sitting in the galleries. In general most teachers felt we had achieved a good balance between listening, speaking and doing. Feedback from the children often

requested more time to draw and paint in the galleries and the studio. They would have also liked a studio session as part of each visit. This year the project leader was not able to go out to all schools to see follow up work as she had hoped but several teachers did let us know what they had done. In addition it is hoped that the St Mary's film will encourage other teachers to share their follow up work with us.

## Conclusion

The third year of the Art in Action project successfully built on many of the achievements and experiences of the previous two years. The vast majority of the children taking part in the project were engaged and enthusiastic about the museum, the works of art they saw and the activities in which they took part. The quality of their verbal and visual responses to the museum experience was very high. Feedback from teachers, teaching assistants and children throughout the project was positive and several teachers commented that the workshop was the most successful as it was closely linked to the gallery experience, gave opportunities for cross curricular follow up work and taught the children a new skill.

The Art in Action project has enabled us to build close relationships with our partner schools which we plan to nurture into the

future – we have plans to work with 5 out of the 6 schools again next year. In addition the evaluation feedback from the project has fed into other strands of work with primary schools.

When asked about the success of the project, one class teacher said:

***"I would say 100 per cent, and I don't often say that, but I really think this has been a complete success in our school and we've sucked every opportunity out of this. And I think we've made it a really rich project for the children. And I think Fitzwilliam staff are really pleased and they can see how our children have developed each time we go back, the way in which they engage with the artwork and the real objects there. So I think it's been 100 per cent."***

**The Fitzwilliam Museum like to thank the Prince's Foundation for Children and the Arts, Trusthouse Charitable Trust and Renaissance East of England for funding this project.**

Sarah Burles , Education Officer  
Fitzwilliam Museum

August 2009

## Appendix 1 - Final Budget

### Expenditure

#### **Arts Educator to run workshops (daily rate = £ 300 per day)**

17 ½ day workshops following on from museum visits	£ 2550.00
Materials for workshops	£ 300.00

#### **Museum Teacher (daily rate = £150 per day)**

##### **Pre-visit meeting for teachers**

Planning and delivery – 2 days	£ 300.00
Expenses for Pre-visit meeting	£ 50.00

##### **Museum visits**

10 days project planning, admin and reports	£ 1500.00
2 teaching days per class	£ 5100.00

#### **Partner School**

Transport costs	£ 4800.00
Teacher's time for pre-visit to museum	£ 1275.00
½ day supply cover @£ 150 per day * 17 classes	

<b>Total</b>	<b>£15875.00</b>
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### Income

Arts and Kids Contribution (£ 8.50 per child x 500 children)	£ 4250.00
Fitzwilliam Museum supported by Renaissance East of England	£ 3725.00
Partner Schools Contribution	£ 3650.00
Trusthouse Charitable Trust	£ 4250.00

<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 15875.00</b>
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## Appendix 2 – Partner Schools

**Orchards C of E Primary School**  
Cherry Road  
Wisbech  
Cambs PE13 3NP

**Murrow Primary School**  
Murrow Bank  
Murrow  
Cambs PE13 4HD

**Friday Bridge Primary School**  
Maltmas Drive  
Friday Bridge  
Wisbech  
Cambs PE14 OHW

**Thongsley Fields Primary & Nursery School**  
Butts Grove Way  
Huntingdon  
Cambs PE29 1PE

**Huntingdon Junior School**  
Ambury Road  
Huntingdon  
Cambs PE29 1AD

**St Mary's C of E Primary School**  
Winteringham Road  
St Neots  
Cambs PE19 1NX