

King George's Park Hoarding Engagement Activities

Introduction

Through Kaleidoscope Eyes, 2018

Emily Tracy and the West Hill in the Park Children's Centre, West Hill Primary School and local residents, commissioned by Tideway



Emily Tracy, *Through Kaleidoscope Eyes*, King George's Park, 2018

Through Kaleidoscope Eyes is an artwork for the hoarding around the Tideway construction site at King George's Park in Wandsworth. It is the result of a series of workshops organised by the artist Emily Tracy in November 2017, which included an opportunity to work with a local beekeeper, The Wandle Trust, and The Garden Classroom. Participants were invited to

create their own collages, generate ideas, and gather facts, thoughts and stories about King George's Park to help create the final artwork.

Emily invited people to re-look at the familiar surroundings of the park in a new light, and enter another world through playing with image, mirrors and kaleidoscopes. Using this idea as a starting point, eight collages were made in response to participants' views. The artwork incorporates ideas and collages made during workshops of the things that people value in the park. The collages try to include the diversity of activity in King George's Park – people and objects alongside natural elements of plants, insects and animals, as well as some historical references to the rich history of the park and local area, such as Calico prints and watermills.

The artworks are interspersed with unfolding kaleidoscope forms, inspired by the geometry and science of kaleidoscopes. Look carefully, and the collages take park users on a journey from the south end of the park, meandering alongside the River Wandle, to the northern entrance, before one quick leap downstream to the Thames, much like the new sewer pipe. The images included in each collage provide a clue to the location that it is inspired by.

Credits

Emily Tracy worked in collaboration with Amelia, Amy, Arthur, Bearwyn, Beatrix, Ben, Chloe, Eli, Ella, Harry, Isaac, Isabella, Josh, Mateo, Mia, Nia Rae, Rose, Samuel, Qudsia and Zyg from West Hill in the Park Children's Centre; Year 6 'Camden Town class', West Hill Primary School; and Public Artist Tom Pearman who created and arranged the digital artwork and designed the geometric forms.

Thanks due to

Jo Baxter from The Penfold Centre for hosting a workshop, Polly Bryant and Alice Dawes from the Wandle Trust for leading a session about the River Wandle. Phoebe Nevill from The Garden Classroom for helping families to explore the park. Geraldine Kelly, Beekeeper, for sharing her knowledge about local bee populations. All the participants from the local area who contributed to the collages during workshops in the park and at The Penfold Centre.

Wendy Maxey, Children's Centre Manager, West Hill in the Park, Susie Gray, Cultural Planning Manager, Enable Leisure and Culture and Vic Chetty, Senior Community Relations Officer Tideway as members of the artist selection panel.

About the Artist

Emily Tracy's practice is primarily focused on social engagement and participation. Her work aims to allow participants to re-view a familiar place through intervention or transformation of space, event, participation, spectacle, and collaboration, with simple materials such as paper. Emily has created visual art projects for a wide range of outdoor and cultural environments with communities, schools and audiences over the last 20 years.

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Artist's Brief

Emily's brief was to develop designs for the hoarding in collaboration with the West Hill in the Park Children's Centre users and others identified by the artist.

The overarching theme of ecology was identified as the main focus for this site-specific commission, the artist was asked to develop the theme with the groups. The artist was also asked to consider project elements or components such as water, movement, time and ecology and place, which could inform the artwork in addition to the rich historical context.

Development of Artist's Proposal



Emily Tracy, *Through Kaleidoscope Eyes*, King George's Park, 2018

Emily Tracy developed her initial proposal to ensure that the workshops took place during busy periods. She organised five sessions in total: two sessions at the Children's Centre aimed at the Centre users (families with very young children), one session in the local primary school (West Hill Primary), one session in the Park (by the Centre) at lunch time aimed at park users and one afternoon after school session at the Penfold Centre aimed at older families, teenagers and older people living locally. The artist organised the sessions at various times and on various days to appeal to a wide demographic and coincide with the leisure time of local residents. The information about the workshops was shared through the Children's Centre, through the Penfold Centre and information about the project was shared widely online, on Tideway website and on social media. Posters advertising workshops were also distributed in the local area. The artist's intention was to be present at King George's Park on a number of days and in different settings to develop an in-depth relationship with the area and the people, offer stimulating experiences to local people and inviting them to contribute to the high-quality artwork. The artist was accompanied for three of the sessions

by specialists with knowledge of ecology: a local beekeeper, a representative of Wandle Trust and a forest school practitioner.

Workshops



Workshop session activities

Workshops took place between 20 and 29 November 2017. The first workshop on 20th November 2017 took place at West Hill Primary School and was centred on the ecology of The Wandle. Alice Dawes from the Wandle Trust led an informative session about the different aspects of ecology that affect the River Wandle and Emily worked with the pupils to create collages inspired by what they had learnt. Eighteen Year 6 pupils attended this session and the collages made feature on the artwork for the hoarding.



Workshop session activities

The second workshop on 23 November 2017 took place at the Children's Centre and was dedicated to outdoor explorations, creating collages from found objects as well as rubbings. The outdoor session was led by the Forest School specialist Phoebe Nevill, Education and Community Manager of The Garden Classroom. Half way through the session moved indoors and families were invited to re-interpret their outdoor collages using paint, stamps and prints. 27 adults and 30 children attended the workshop and the drawings produced feature in the artwork.



Workshop session activities

The third workshop on 27 November took place at the Children's Centre and Emily continued working with the families on the development of more complex collages using a range of techniques: cutting, painting, drawing, mark making, printing. The artists created three stations, each with different focus and ensured that the session was free-flowing, creative and open. 16 adults and 18 children attended this session and work produced features on the design.



Workshop session activities

The fourth workshop on 28 November took place in the park, by the Centre at lunchtime. Emily was accompanied by a local beekeeper Geraldine Kelly. This session had a focus on importance of bees for the ecology of the park and passers-by had a chance to learn more about bees and other insects, taste locally produced honey as well as create their own collages. 11 adults and 8 children took part and all collages produced feature on the design.

The fifth and final session took place on 29 November at the Penfold Centre, located just outside of the Park. The session attracted seven adults and three children. Local young adults attended the session as well as a couple of families on their way back from school. Collages will feature in the final design.

Participants



Workshop session activities



Emily engaged with over 130 people aged 6 months to 70 during the course of her presence in the Park. She introduced people to collage techniques and people's contributions have been included in and informed the final design.

The artwork is the result of this series of workshops which offered children, parents and local people an opportunity to be introduced to a range of collage techniques alongside research into the ecology of the Park.

The collages created as a result of the workshops are presented as a toy-box of precious jewel-like forms, similar to the way we view kaleidoscopes down a tube, or look down a microscope, or down a tunnel. The collages will take viewer on a journey from the south end of the park, meandering alongside the River Wandle, to the northern entrance, and then take one quick leap downstream to The Thames, much as the new sewer pipe will. The central image of each collage gives a clue to the location that it is inspired by.

The collages are interspersed with unfolding or moving Kaleidoscope forms inspired by the geometry of Kaleidoscopes and close up will reveal the detail of the collage elements.

Feedback from Participants



Emily Tracy, *Through Kaleidoscope Eyes*, King George's Park, 2018

Local parents, attending Emily's session at the Children's Centre, spoke highly of the sessions. Comments ranged from: *"It was brilliant"*; *"I learnt so much here today"*; *"It was a really good session the time was gone so quickly"* to *"I enjoyed seeing my child experimenting and developing awareness of what she can do with each tool"* and *"these sessions felt different to the regular Centre's activities. There was a clear link between all tasks we were encouraged to do. I am not sure if my child saw that link (he is 13 months old) but he definitely was engaged and interested in each new challenge"*.

The Children's Centre Manager said: *"All the families who commented were very positive about the art project and sessions. Families enjoyed and engaged with the Garden Classroom session. A few commented that they missed our Forest School sessions that we used to run. It enabled families to share their experiences of using King George's Park and what is important to them. It helped staff to see what's important to families and think of other ways of using our outdoor spaces and all the space in the Park. It was great to see the children and families response to some different people and have different activities. Centre staff were reminded how lucky we are to be in such a great setting and we need to make more use of the Park"*.

Feedback from Passers-by

“The work takes you somewhere. Not to the countryside exactly but somewhere else. It combats bad mood, takes away the tension.”

“The earthy colours make me think of the outdoors, the rural parts. The fresh colours up your spirits. Look, even a fox and cat are coming to have a look.”

“I’ve been living in this borough for nearly 40 years. There was nothing here. Building work in the last 10 years has changed things. All the taxes that local people paid finally brought us change. I am more than happy to see this work being done.”

“The park is a feel good park now. It used to be miserable. It’s been revamped in a very positive way, for the benefit of local people.”

“I like that this blends in but also stands out.”

“I love it! I absolutely love it! We pass here frequently and so we often look at it (her + 3 children). I like all the natural elements on it such as the bee, the honey, and flowers. This is Mother Nature, where we come from.”

Feedback from the Artist

Emily Tracy greatly enjoyed the project and said:

“This project celebrates this local park, the people that use it, the nature within it, and its history. It plays with the human desire to find pattern, repetition and meaning in our surroundings. The Kaleidoscope was invented and manufactured exactly 200 years ago by a British scientist who realised its potential for artists and designers to create an ‘infinity of patterns’. The children and families who took part all made their own unique patterns and gave their own perspectives and contributions to the collages. I hope the local community will enjoy re looking at King George’s Park in a different light.”