

# Festival Makers: Cherrywood School sculpture report

Nick Sayers, July 2011

## Results

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- Project brief – to create an artwork with schoolchildren to be used in a festival, and to run a workshop there on 2 July, within budget – successfully met.
- Year 4-6 children have a lasting legacy at the school, and will be able to keep the templates left over from the cutting process.
- The project developed on my previous *Sphere Of Shadows* project with Stourfield School in Bournemouth.
- My art practice was developed through involving children more in the creative process, redesigning for 60 children (I'd done 120 before), working with costumes/dressing-up activity, and running the pantograph drawing workshop.
- My World Party In The Park workshop was great fun. Around 50 people took part.
- The resulting '*Imagine All The People*' sculpture...
  - will be kept by Cherrywood School
  - works as an interactive plaything and a demonstration of the beauty of mathematics
  - can be loaned out to other schools and events
  - can be rolled around the school building and grounds for special occasions etc
  - demonstrates the schools' involvement in craft, the arts, maths and sustainability
  - will aid the teaching of art, geometry, maths, numeracy, shape, recycling etc

## Process

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### Application process

- My attention was drawn to the call for artwork celebrating world cultures – a perfect opportunity to make a big globe!
- It was nice to be invited for interview at Central St Martin's, and to be paid to develop my initial idea – felt prestigious and respected. There were some good suggestions made at interview about getting sponsorship in kind for the project.

### Preliminary work

- Admin work, finding fabricators and other services in Farnborough. I secured sponsorship in kind from Centriforce, who provided about 250 pounds worth of Stokbord plastic boards for the project, in exchange for publicity.
- Designing and calculating the different geometry for a 60-piece sculpture.

### Presentation

- I gave a short talk about the project on my first day working at Cherrywood. This seemed to go down very well, with lots of oohs and aahs as photos of my work came up. One of the best receptions I've ever had!

## **Dressing-up and photography**

- Getting all 60 photos taken in three days was a challenge, but the teaching assistants and Simon from The Making helped run things smoothly, and we got them all done.
- I had to adapt the design of the grid the children posed within on the first day because the children couldn't fit comfortably within it. I'm glad that the quickly-redesigned version worked so well!

## **Image processing**

- I did most of the image processing back in Brighton (and some in the evenings staying in Farnborough). It was time-consuming to do the chromakeying, retouching, warping, auto-tracing, vectorisation etc, but I could fall back on previous work to do it quicker.

## **Fabrication**

- I visited Complete Sign Solutions while working at Cherrywood. It was reassuring to see they had a good CNC machine to do the cutting work, although it was too noisy to allow children to come watch the pieces being cut.

## **Construction**

- The pieces came back from the factory fairly smooth (the CNC machine had a vacuum bed, unlike the one I'd used before), but they still needed smoothing off. The children made fast work cleaning up the edges with sandpaper provided by the school.
- I worked in stages, with small groups of children, to bolt the pieces together. This worked better than in the previous project, where only a few "Gifted & Talented" school council children did the construction work.
- As I'm not a structural engineer, I wasn't 100% certain the final piece would support its own weight. My contingency plan was to add supporting struts between the children's hands. Luckily, this proved unnecessary, and the final piece was even stronger than the one I'd built before (perhaps due to using thicker board and bigger pieces).

## **Completion**

- The working title of the project was '*World Of Cultures*', but when the piece was finished, the title '*Imagine All The People*' came to me. This was taken from the John Lennon song '*Imagine*'. I liked the idea of the silhouettes being from around the world, linking hands, but being somewhat mysterious.

## **Media**

- The Making put together a good press release for the project, which I helped draft. This resulted in a front-page article and photo in the Farnborough News & Mail on 10 June. The newspaper also sent a photographer down to photograph the children and me around the sculpture, and published another story about the project on 1 July.

## **World Party In The Park – pantograph workshop**

- Receiving sponsorship in kind from Centriforce for the Stokbord sheets, and hospitality from the school, freed up money and time to spend on the pantograph drawing workshop. This idea came to me as the project developed, and it felt a lot more meaningful than the messages on ribbons idea I'd initially proposed.

- Building the pantograph was a fairly quick DIY project, and the results proved to be a happy medium between a precise body outline and a child's drawing.
- I had about 50 participants. It was nice to have so many people take part, and a big audience to watch while they waited (it felt very much like a performance).

## Analysis

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### **Working with The Making and Cherrywood School**

- I felt well supported by The Making while working at the school.
- It was relieving to have publicity aspects of the project (ie: press release writing, photography at World Party In The Park) dealt with by The Making.
- Cherrywood were very hospitable, and were obviously very grateful to have been chosen for the project.
- It would have been nice to meet the other makers properly. There wasn't really time at World Party In The Park.

### **Improvements**

- I would like to investigate a discreet, cost-effective method to mark children's names on the back of their silhouettes. This wasn't possible for this project.
- Following this project I've had an idea for another, where participants pose "freestyle". These outlines would then be cut out in multiple, quite small, for each person. They would then make their own mini sphere, which could be used as lampshades. This would lead to more direct involvement in the construction, and very individually shaped final pieces.

### **Successes**

- Children seemed to like the sculpture and the production process. I'm proud to have made a sculpture that won't just sit on a plinth, but can be used as a plaything too.
- It was great to work with Cherrywood pupils and involve them in the production process – dressing up, posing for photos, sanding their silhouettes, helping build the sculpture, playing with it outside etc.
- The sphere of silhouettes sculpture, and the pantograph workshop, have great potential as projects that can be rolled out (excuse the pun!) to other schools, organisations and companies for their students/employees.