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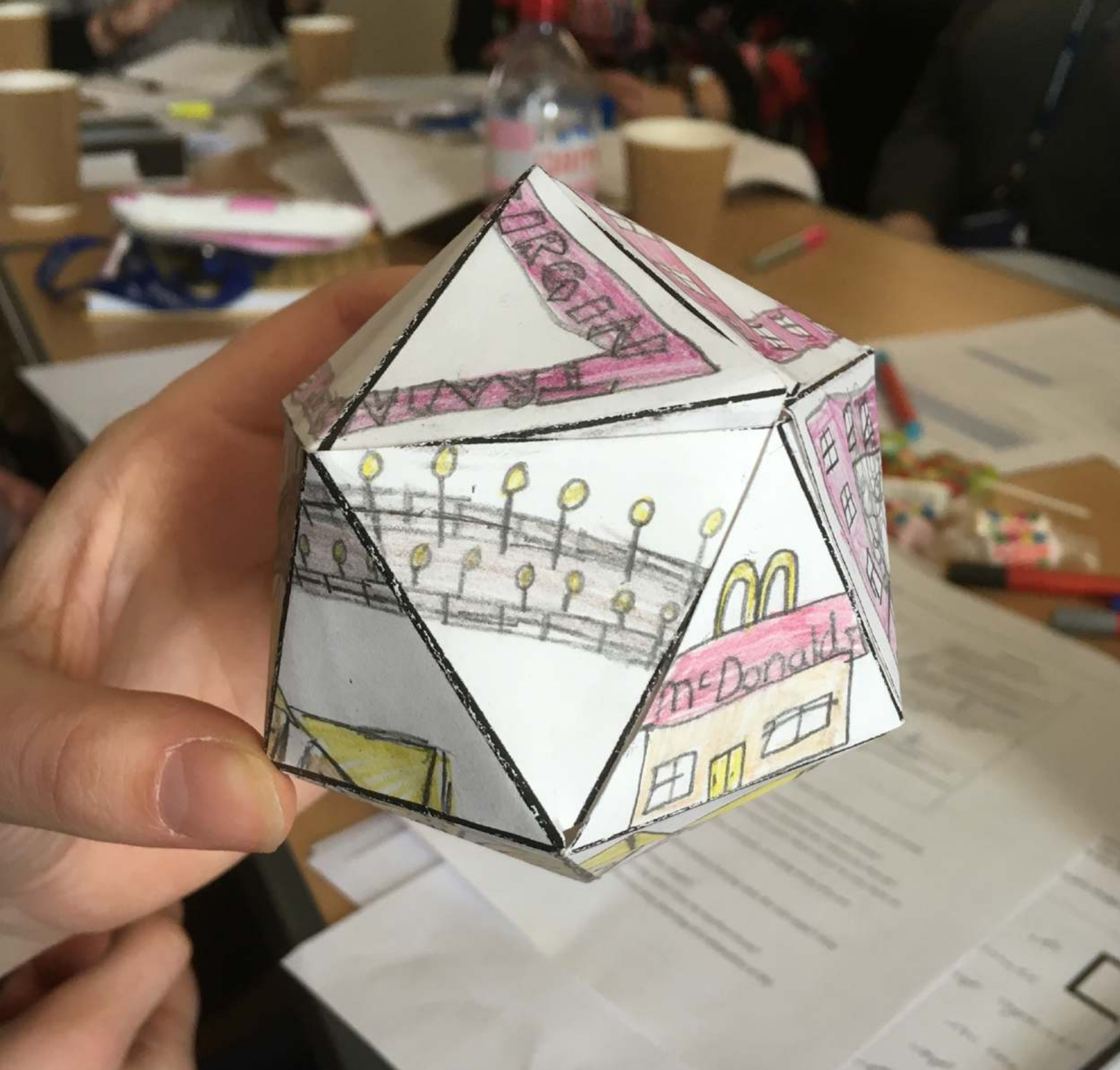


**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

CREATE ASPIRE TRANSFORM (CAT):

NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND SCHOOLS CULTURAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME





Type of output:
Other
(Education
initiative &
Report)

by
Judy Thomas

Cover:
A Sense of Place
exhibition, June 2019.
Photo credit: Val Tobias

Left:
Sharing cross-curricular practice,
June 2018.
Photo credit: Judy Thomas

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SUMMARY

The *Create Aspire Transform (CAT)* research programme was established by Thomas in collaboration with partner organisation Berwick Visual Arts to test and evaluate approaches to arts leadership within north Northumberland schools. The overall challenge was to identify and understand the value of cultural engagement by creating specific artist-led programmes for teaching and learning and to publish a report in order to disseminate these values within art educational contexts.

Thomas' pedagogical research investigates the attitudes and approaches of the artist-facilitator within artist-led learning programmes. In recognition of this prior work, Thomas was commissioned to examine teacher confidence towards arts engagement in primary school settings and assess the impact of arts-based learning upon the life chances of children and young people.

For *CAT*, Thomas devised and led bespoke training that modelled 'cultural learning' as active engagement with the creation of arts. Informing cross-curricular action research, artists with innovative practices were commissioned to work with teachers in four schools to stimulate and embed cultural learning in the classroom. Using data collected between April 2018 to January 2020, including observation and semi-structured teacher interviews, Thomas produced an evaluation of the training's impact to facilitate high-quality educational experiences, to engage learners with memorable, inspiring practices that developed new skills, increase knowledge acquisition, and raise pupil aspiration: *Create Aspire Transform: North Northumberland Schools Cultural Education Leadership Programme Report (CAT Report)*.

Thomas's evaluation, publically available on Berwick Visual Arts and Culture Bridge North East websites, demonstrates the value of cultural learning as a basic skill for educational, social and emotional attainment. It presents evidence derived from the research that artist-led learning increases teacher confidence; augments creativity and has positive impacts for pupils and wider school communities. Thomas made recommendations to improve school practice and inform strategic programming in cultural organisations, informing regional planning through the Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP). The research was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and contributes to their nationally and internationally significant *Education and Learning through the Arts strategy*.

INTRODUCTION

The *Create Aspire Transform: North Northumberland Schools Cultural Education Leadership Programme Report* evaluated a pilot cultural education leadership programme.

Relevant to teacher learning and the challenges schools face in relation to engagement with cultural learning activities, Thomas' report reflected upon the provision of creative, cultural learning within four primary school settings, in a remote, rural location with limited access to arts and culture. Findings revealed heightened teacher confidence as a result of bespoke, artist-led, creative professional development (CPD) along with positive impact for pupils and their wider school community.



Right:
Teachers CPD at the Hatton Gallery, April 2018.

Photo credit: Val Tobias

RESEARCH CHALLENGE

Aims:

1. To explore the value of cultural engagement for teaching and learning in north Northumberland primary schools, and to raise pupil aspiration and increase acquisition of cultural capital, particularly for pupils experiencing disadvantage;
2. To make recommendations for regional school leadership, cultural organisations and Northumberland County Council Education Authority, and to contribute to the PHF Education and Learning through the Arts strategy.

Objectives:

1. To realise a programme of creative professional development (CPD) with eight teachers in Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland;
2. To test bespoke artist-led activities in four primary schools, for cross-curricular, creative teaching and learning;
3. To produce a report evaluating the impact of increased teacher engagement with cultural learning upon learning outcomes for children and young people.

Right:
(Modroc bird) Sharing best practice during teacher Cream Tea cluster session, The Granary Gallery, Berwick, July 2015.

Photo credit: Judy Thomas

Below:
Close up of sculpture with pipe cleaners, July 2018.

Photo credit: Judy Thomas



CONTEXT

Core STEM subjects and assessment-driven agendas leave school resources stretched for cultural learning, and primary curriculum design does not prioritise it. In this context, CAT proposes a need for schools to recognise the value of creative, cultural learning by facilitating opportunities for learners to engage with memorable, inspiring practices through which children can acquire new skills, increase knowledge and develop cultural capital.

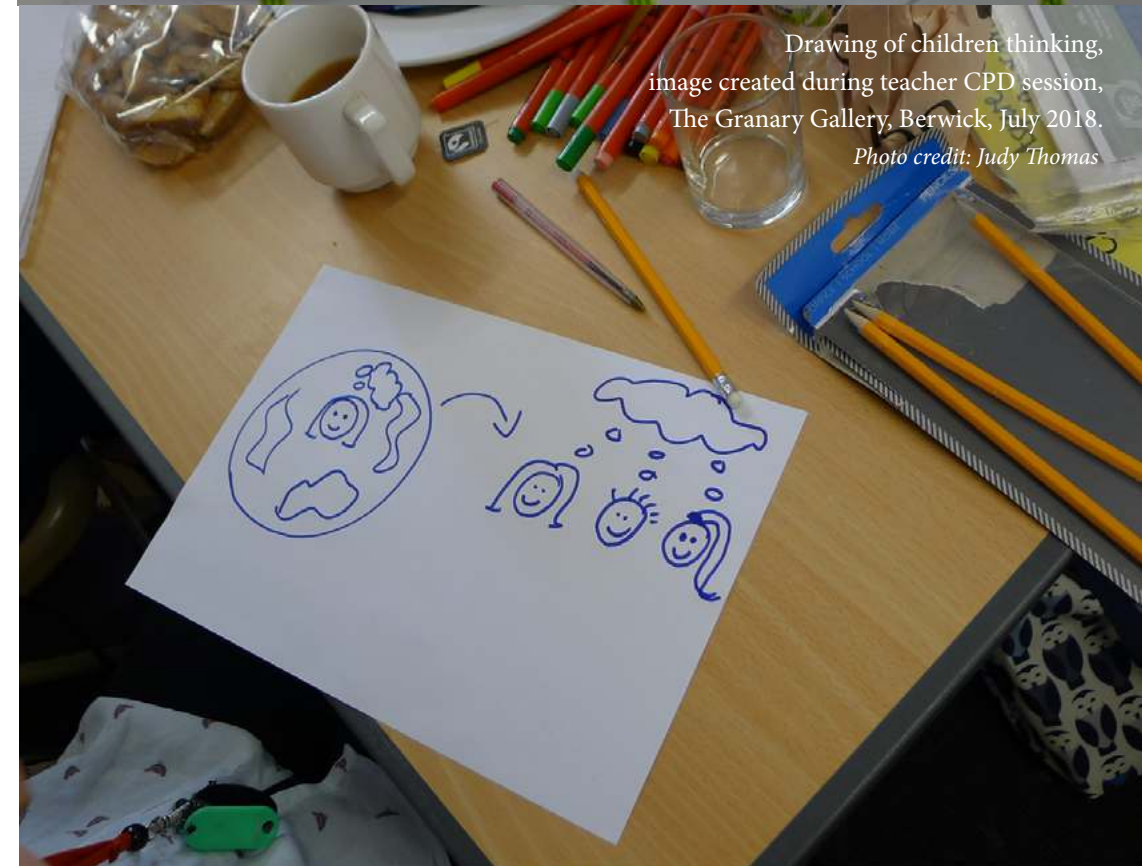
Thomas' investigation of the CAT programme seeks critical understanding of the impact of creative professional development and artist-led, visual arts activity for primary teachers, to raise confidence and develop creative leadership skills. The research draws upon *The Creating Clusters Report* (Thomas, 2015), *Imagine Nation* (CLA, 2017), *Specialist Leaders in Cultural Education: An Evaluation* (Hiett & Smears, 2014), the *Teacher Development Fund – Year 1 Pilot Evaluation* (CUREE, 2018) and *The Durham Commission on Creativity and Education Final Report* (Durham University, 2019). The research evaluates the impact of strategic, cultural sector partnerships and identifies models of good practice for cultural organisations who are frequently challenged by limited resources.

The rural location of Berwick Schools and remoteness from urban centres presents specific challenges for schools to engage in cultural education. There is a recognition that communities in coastal towns lag behind comparative areas for both education and jobs.



Creativity is...
image created during teacher CPD session,
The Granary Gallery, Berwick, July 2018.

Photo credit: Judy Thomas



Drawing of children thinking,
image created during teacher CPD session,
The Granary Gallery, Berwick, July 2018.

Photo credit: Judy Thomas

METHODS & PROCESSES

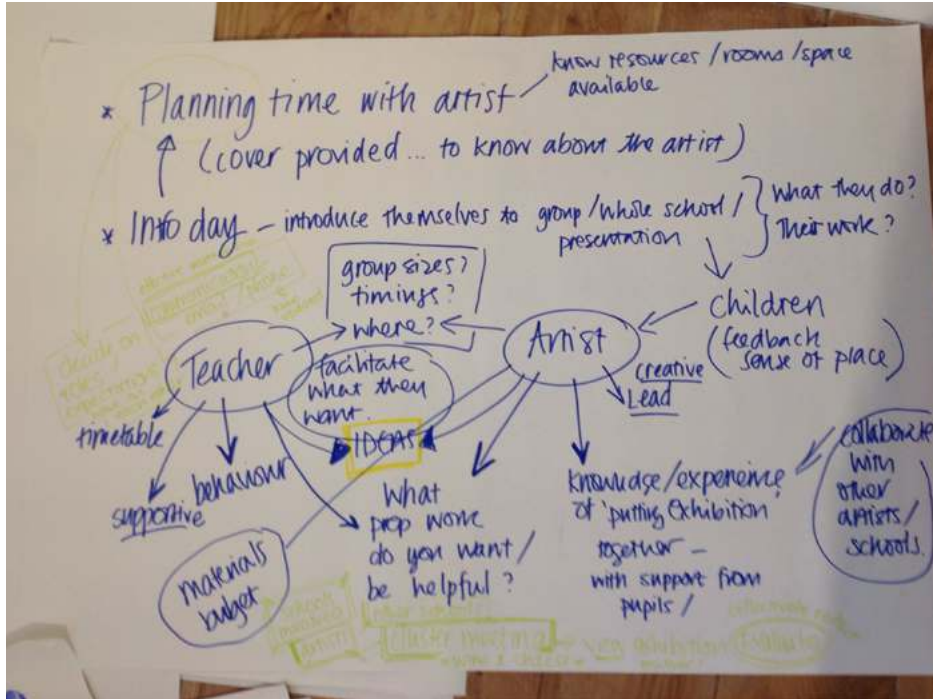
A mixed methodology of artist-facilitation and evaluation was used. The relationship between the different strands of activities and intended outcomes was mapped, creating an active qualitative research framework that enabled Thomas to create recommendations in the CAT Report.

In the position of artist-facilitator, Thomas devised a 'transformative' (Kennedy, 2005) visual-arts focussed programme of professional development. Five full-day sessions were held during an eighteen-month period. This aspect of the research Thomas described as 'creative professional development'; the content purposefully balanced playful creative tasks and gallery-based activities; this intended to model collaborative actions and professional autonomy that could be adapted back in the classroom: reflective writing, material enquiry, game-play and open tasks requiring direct engagement with artworks.

Teachers working with Northumbria University
Fine Art students during practical CPD session,
The Maltings, Berwick, January 2020.

Photo credit: Yasmeen Almaskati





Top right:
 Children with folders working in the Granary Gallery, Berwick, January 2019.
Photo credit: Val Tobiass



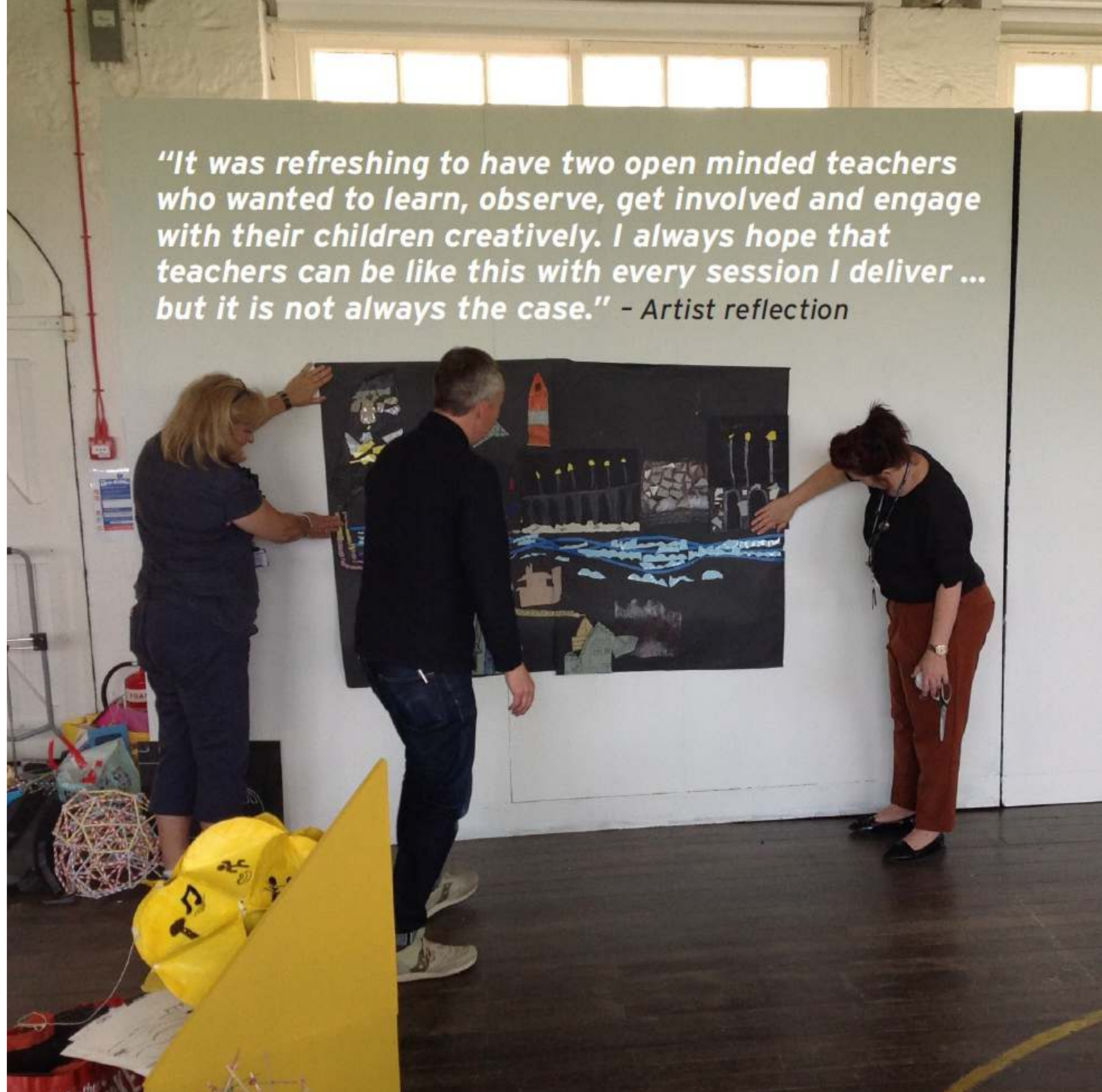
Top Left:
 Diagram, image created during teacher CPD session, The Granary Gallery, Berwick, February 2019.
Photo credit: Judy Thomas

Left:
 Teachers at the Hatton Gallery, June 2018.
Photo credit: Judy Thomas

Top centre:
 The Gallery - Sharing best practice during teacher CPD session, The Granary Gallery, Berwick, February 2019.
Photo credit: Judy Thomas

Centre:
 Children explore the first *Sense of Place* exhibition, Berwick, July 2018.
Photo credit: Val Tobiass

"It was refreshing to have two open minded teachers who wanted to learn, observe, get involved and engage with their children creatively. I always hope that teachers can be like this with every session I deliver ... but it is not always the case." - Artist reflection

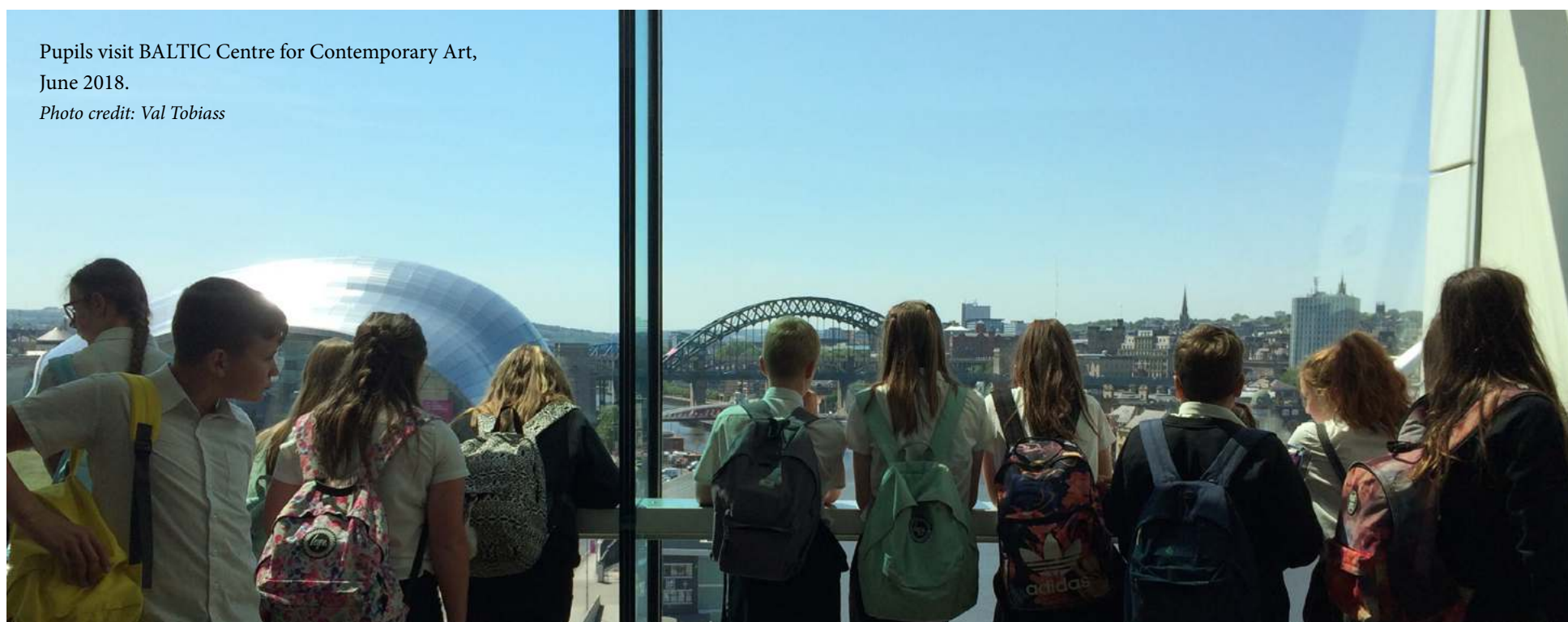


Right:
Teachers and artist installing
A Sense of Place exhibition, June 2019.
Photo credit: Val Tobiass

DISSEMINATION

The final outcome and output is the *Create Aspire Transform: North Northumberland Schools Cultural Education Leadership Programme Evaluation Report* and **Summary Document**. Advocating artist-led practice, the report offers informed insights in relation to the conditions required to sustain practice and suggests changing the culture of schools and recognition of the value of cultural activity on supporting teaching and learning is an ongoing process.

The research contributes to a wider body of work, and discourse that has international significance, through the PHF Arts Based Learning Programme. The full, 60 page, **Evaluation Report** was made public on 28 February 2020. It is publically available on Berwick Visual Arts and Culture Bridge North East websites. The **Summary Document** has been shared with Northumberland teachers and artist educators working in the wider, national field of gallery learning.



The research has been shared at several conferences, symposia and talks to date, including the BxNU, In Need of Education symposium, November 2018, the Cultural Education Research Initiative (CERI) Conference at Tate Liverpool, May 2019, the Engage Conference 2019, Unlocking Culture: an entitlement for children and young people, at Northumbria University, November 2019 and the Northumberland Arts Development Steering Group, March 2020.



Above: Pupils working with Fine Art students at Northumbria University, November 2018.

Photo credit: Judy Thomas

Publication:

CREATE ASPIRE TRANSFORM: North Northumberland Schools Cultural Education Leadership Programme – Summary document / Berwick Visual Arts and Paul Hamlyn Foundation – March 2020.

Reports:

CREATE ASPIRE TRANSFORM: North Northumberland Schools Cultural Education Leadership Programme – Final Evaluation / Berwick Visual Arts and Paul Hamlyn Foundation – March 2020.

The Create Aspire Transform Programme full evaluation report:
<http://www.berwickvisualarts.co.uk/assets/media/editor/Create%20Aspire%20Transform%20-%20Evaluation%20Report%20FINAL%20Feb%202020.pdf>

The Create Aspire Transform Programme summary report:
<http://www.berwickvisualarts.co.uk/assets/media/editor/CAT%20Evaluation%20Report%20Summary%20Final%20WEB.pdf>

CREATE ASPIRE TRANSFORM: North Northumberland Schools Cultural Education Leadership Programme – Phase 1 Report / Berwick Visual Arts and Paul Hamlyn Foundation – August 2018.

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Right:
Artist Graham Patterson demonstrating
to First School pupils, May 2019.
Photo credit: Spittal Community First School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to all the teachers, pupils and artists who participated in the *CAT* programme.

Thanks to Val Tobiass and James Lowther from Berwick Visual Arts and Wendy Scott, Northumberland County Council.



Left:
First School pupils working with Northumbria University
Fine Art Students, Newcastle, December 2019.

Photo credit: Val Tobiass

