

Barnsley Museums

CREATING SPACES

Introduction

This activity explores the concept of space and spaces and what it means for children today. This activity can be for a child of 7 years and up with the help of an adult if needed and can last for one session or over many.

Space often evokes a physical and/or an emotional response, whether that is a calming, safe or unsafe place. In this activity we want to focus on a positive, favourite space, a place that evokes happiness or a sense of calm, intrigue or fun, a hideaway or a shelter.

Children then create a 'mini space' which can be a place of imagination or exploration. It draws on concepts of design and place, it uses skills of observation, imagination, creativity, and dexterity to create a model that is individual to the child.

Curriculum Links

Art and Design

- Produce creative work, exploring their ideas and recording their experiences.
- Become proficient in drawing, painting, sculpture and other art, craft and design techniques evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design.
- Know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms.

Design and Technology

- Design purposeful, functional, appealing products for themselves and other users based on design criteria.
- Generate, develop, model and communicate their ideas through talking, drawing, templates, mock-ups.
- Build structures, exploring how they can be made stronger, stiffer and more stable.

English

- Listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers.
- Use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas.
- Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings.

Science

- Describe the simple physical properties of a variety of everyday materials.
- Find out how the shapes of solid objects made from some materials can be changed by squashing, bending, twisting and stretching.



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Developing Curiosity and Creativity

1. The activity begins with some discussions and thoughts around spaces – e.g. pupils' home, their school, their classroom, their local built environment. It encourages children to look and think differently and more deeply about their environment. To think about the hidden places, the visible and invisible places, the connections, the empty spaces, the distances. The questions encourage the thinking process, whilst providing a starting point for reflection and discussion.
2. It then moves to identifying each pupil's favourite space, supporting reflection on the characteristics that make it a favourite place.
3. Pupils will then design and create their own 'mini space' using items found around the home or classroom. Here, they are thinking about the components that make it a favourite space. Beauty and a neat final product are not important. This is about capturing their thoughts and design ideas of what makes a small favourite space. It is about the process, being fascinated, focused and the ability to be 'lost' in their own imaginary world. Experimentation, problem solving, nurturing ideas, and free thinking build resilience, where young people have ownership over their final model (with guidance where needed) to produce something original and meaningful.

Materials

Sketchbook, paper, pencils, collection of small cardboard boxes, toilet roll holders, tissue paper, card, craft papers, coloured pens, paint, small items like rubber bands, glue, stapler, string, Sellotape, ribbons, natural materials such as leaves, twigs, and pine cones, straws, pipe cleaners, paper clips, fabric. Any other materials that can be found that children would like to include.



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Activity

A. Spaces – what, how, where, why?

What do we mean by space? Is it a place with walls? Or open? What is in the space, around it, what can be seen in different spaces? Is it different being outside in the playground, in the street, in the garden, in the house, in the cupboard, under the desk - what do we think about when we think about spaces?

B. Exploring

Encourage children, if it's safe and appropriate, to explore the space physically by getting under tables, moving to corners in the room, stretching their arms out, reaching out as wide as they can, moving around the room observing and identifying spaces. Can they think about spaces at home, where they live? They may wish to rethink the space, their home or the classroom, identifying places that are new to them or places they can reimagine or see in a fresh way. What do they notice about the space? Shapes, high, low, dark, light, corners, open, colours?

C. Favourite spaces

Focus on identifying their favourite space, encourage a deeper thinking about why this is a favourite space. Ask pupils some or all of the following questions:

Can pupils think of spaces around their school and home? Where is their favourite space? Is it big small? What can they see? Can they fit in it? Where else could they have a favourite space? Can they stretch in it? Is it low, high, light, dark, cosy, open? Does it have corners and/or walls? Which materials is it made of - is it hard, soft, warm, fresh, are there colours? How does it make them feel? Do they want to share it with anyone?

What is it about this favourite space that they like? What would they change?

What would their ideal space be like? Big/small, which colours would it have, where would it be? In a tree, underground, on the water, under a chair?

Explore other areas, are there places they are curious about?

Capture the words that the children use to describe their favourite space



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D. Inspiration

Use these links to explore artists who have used or interacted with space as part of their work. You may want to add in others that you know.

Andrea Zittel, produced habitual structures that could be adapted to individual needs
<http://zittel.org/>

Frank Gehry 'Who has mastered the art of whimsical'
<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/best-of-frank-gehry-slideshow>

Mario Merz known for building igloos out of earth and glass.
<https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/10965/looking-back-on-the-legacy-of-mario-merz-the-doting-father-of-arte-povera>

E. Playing with materials

Building on the idea of their own favourite space and inspired by the artists who create and interact with spaces, children create a miniature space. Before they begin it is important for children to play with the materials that are available. Ask them to comment on shapes, forms, colours and textures. Make simple shapes by;

- Bending or folding
- Balancing objects
- Scrunching paper
- Tearing paper
- Drawing
- Making holes
- Holding them up to the light
- Feeling the materials with their eyes closed

F. Design their mini space

Revisit the words that children identified as related to their favourite space. Ask the children to write ideas for their own mini space, or they could draw ideas in their sketch book



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G. Creating

Children create their ideal space from the items that are available. Experimentation is key. Encourage them to choose their own materials, get them to think about why they have chosen those objects.

Which objects will they choose? E.g. paper for curves, boxes for corners, toilets roll holders for towers, leaves for decoration.

Practice putting the items together, balancing, looking at the items next to each other. This is a mini space, if they were small themselves, would they be in this space or outside it?

Let them experiment with making shapes out of paper, tearing holes, cutting opening, bending folding, scrunching paper, balancing. What are the components of their space?



Children build their mini model using the materials they have chosen, encourage them to test first, cut then glue parts together, they may want to paint or draw onto their model.

They can modify it as you go along, add bits, take bits away, make it more solid, give it a door etc.

H. Share

Can pupils give their model a name? Can they tell the class about their space? If they could go inside their space what would this feel like? Would they change it? If they could go in it how would they use it, what would they do in their space?

