



Using museums to engage young people
in art and design activities:

toolkit

for youth and community project workers

V&A

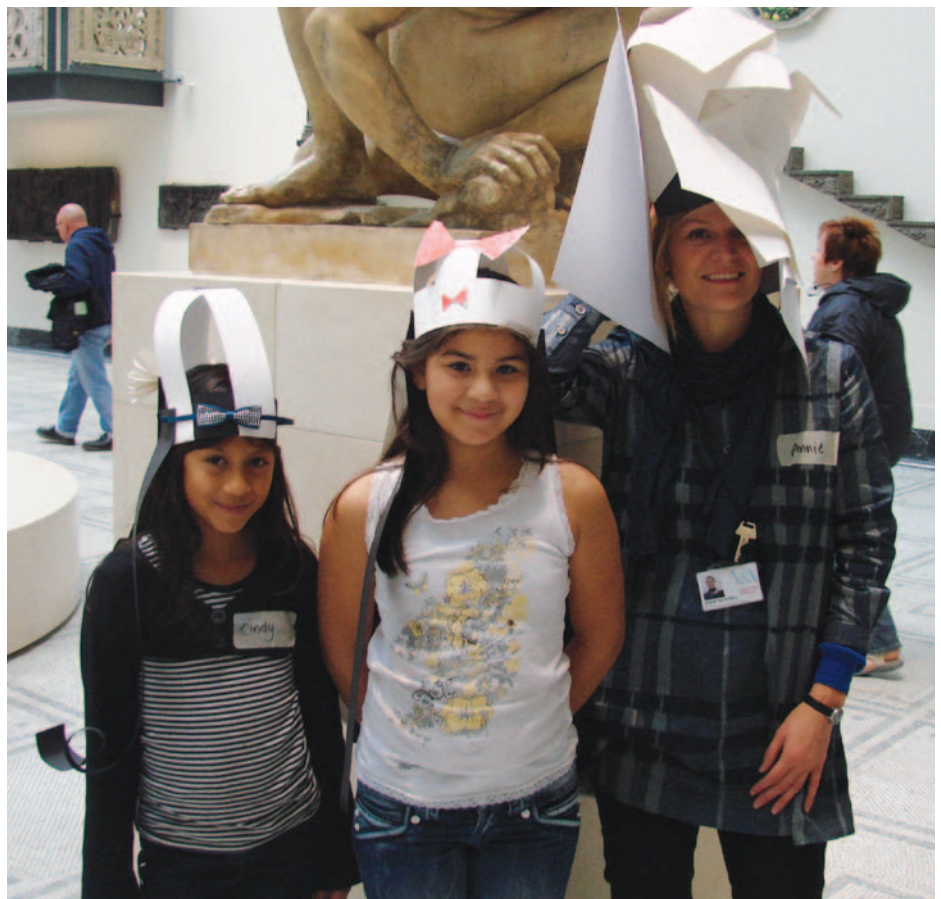
DESIGN FOR LIFE



Young people from Southwark Young Carers design imaginative 'Repel/Attract' headgear in the V&A's Renaissance Galleries

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- 1 Why bring youth and community groups to visit museums and galleries?
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- 6 A do-it yourself museum/ gallery visit guide, including two complete activities to download and use in any museum or gallery
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This toolkit contains information, well-tested strategies and activities that you can use with young people in museums. The contents will help you arrange a visit to a museum or gallery and use it as a starting point for art and design activities. You might organise a one-off visit, or get young people involved in a longer term collaborative project with museum staff and professional artists or designers.

These ideas and strategies are derived from the experience of a three-year national project, **Design for Life**, led by the Victoria and Albert Museum. This project shows how museums can help young people to develop their creativity and design skills. Staff from museums across England worked in partnership with Action for Children and other youth organisations. They developed and piloted the approaches outlined here, which are designed to meet the needs of both young people and busy youth and community project workers.

To find out more about the national Design for Life project see www.vam.ac.uk/designforlife

1 Why bring youth and community groups to visit museums and galleries?

By Ruth Baldwin
Arts Initiatives Manager
Action for Children

Traditionally some people have seen museums as 'old-fashioned', 'academic' or 'middle-class'. Times have changed, however, and most museums and galleries are now welcoming and exciting places which can be enjoyed by everyone.

'Our young mums told me they had expected the exhibits at the museum to be "boring", so were "well surprised!"'
Action for Children project worker, Sheffield.

Youth workers and young people who worked on museum projects such as Design for Life have identified some of the benefits of using museums with young people:

Museums provide young people with new ideas and experiences...

Many of the youth workers reported that museums and galleries were not places that young people considered interesting or worth visiting. Taking part in the Design for Life project helped them to find out what museums and galleries could offer:

'The benefit of visiting museums for the young people I work with is that it gives them the opportunity to do things that they don't do in their normal every day lives.'
Action for Children project worker, Newcastle.

Below left: Young mums from Action for Children's Valley Park Children's Centre designed bags for their children's belongings inspired by banners and textiles in Sheffield museums.

Left: Young people from Action for Children's Ear4U and St. Anthony's House, Tyne & Wear designed and cast personalised bronze coins inspired by brooches in the Shipley Art Gallery.



1 Why bring youth and community groups to visit museums and galleries?

A project based around a museum visit can spark or renew interest in learning and career possibilities

Many of the young people participating in Design for Life felt disengaged from formal education when they began the project. The opportunity to create their own designs gave them new confidence and re-awakened their interest in learning. Working with a 'real' artist or designer inspired them to think about their future careers and showed them that following a career pathway could lead to success.

'I enjoyed it as it's made me realise that I want to go to college. I want to do interior design.'

Member of a young mums' group in Sheffield.

Involvement with a museum or gallery can build confidence and develops a stronger sense of cultural entitlement

Young people can often be put off visiting a museum or gallery because they see it as an intimidating or unusual experience. Organised group trips can help to break down this barrier. Once a young person has attended a museum or gallery as part of a planned trip they are much more likely to go back again. One young mum who visited a museum as part of the Design for Life project afterwards took her daughter and partner along for a second visit.

'I feel like I know people there now so wouldn't be nervous about visiting.'

Action for Children participant.

A project based around a museum or gallery can motivate young people to be creative and inspire confidence

Visiting a museum or gallery can be a great starting point for creative activities, inspiring even those who don't see themselves as naturally creative.

'It's usually hard to get the kids to go to school, let alone do any extra work. This week they have been working on the project at home, taking their sketchbooks home to do some more work and talk about the project.'

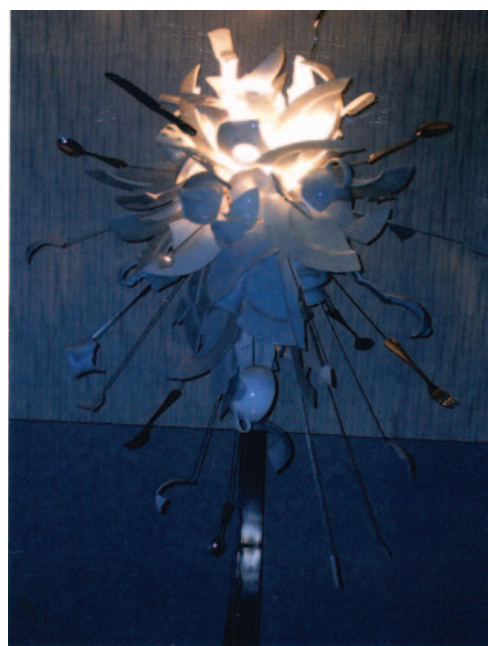
Action for Children project worker, Manchester

'I feel much more confident, especially now I have made some of the things I had ideas for.'

Action for Children participant, Manchester.

Below: Member of Haringey Young carers shows her t-shirt design to Erin O'Connor at the Design For Life exhibition private view

Right: Young person's sketchbook notes on Porca Miseria!, designed by Ingo Maurer, 2004 © Manchester City Galleries



I like this Design Because it is fancy AND I like the way it is made.



2 Ten practical tips for planning a group visit to a museum / gallery

1 Contact the museum or gallery

Ask to speak to someone who organises education /learning /schools /community events. Find out if they are running any special sessions that you could bring your group along to.

Ask if the museum/gallery offers any introductory trails, activity packs or other self-guided activities that would be suitable for your group.

2 Visit the museum/gallery before your group trip

Check out the facilities, chat to staff about activities and find out which exhibitions or displays are open. You can also find interesting objects to direct your group to on your visit and prepare any activities. See the downloadable resources in Section 6 for ideas for activities to use in the galleries.

3 Carry out a risk assessment for your visit to the museum

Some museums will be able to help you with this.

4 Check accessibility

Do you need access and facilities for young people with disabilities? If you're bringing a group that includes young children, is there somewhere to leave prams, coats, bags and other items?

5 Check entrance costs, if any

Most museums and galleries have sections which are free to access but they may also have ticketed exhibitions. You may want to book tickets in advance.

6 Check the museum's policy on photography

Sometimes photography is not allowed for copyright or conservation reasons, for example in temporary exhibitions.

7 Bring notebooks, pencils and coloured crayons for your group

Sketching objects they find interesting can help young people to notice details and engage with exhibits. These sketches could also inspire individual designs later. Most museums do not allow felt-tips, charcoal or other 'messy' drawing materials in the galleries, but you may be able to use these materials in a separate workshop space. Check with the museum before you visit.

8 Pace yourself!

Choose a theme or a focus for the visit, however simple. There are some suggestions included later in this guidance. It's best to limit yourself to a manageable area, let young people have an orientating wander and then encourage them to focus on two or three objects of their choice through an activity.

Drawing at the V&A



9 Talk to your group about behaviour in the museum, if appropriate

Young people should feel free to relax and enjoy the visit, but you may want to take a moment to remind them to be respectful of other museum visitors and careful near the exhibits.

Explain that exhibits in a museum/gallery should not be touched, unless there is a label inviting you to touch them. Even clean fingers leave a small amount of grease which can cause damage over time.

10 Talk to your group throughout their visit

Help to engage individuals and keep them interested in the tasks. Be aware of their attention span and build in small breaks to the visit where necessary. Most museums will have a space where you can rest and have lunch etc.

3 Working with an artist or designer

You may want to employ an artist or designer to run further workshops with young people.

Young people could develop ideas and designs inspired by their museum/gallery visit in an extended project. They can upload their final designs and original museum inspirations to the V&A's Designshare interactive gallery. You could also add the incentive of making the project part of an accredited Arts Award. There may be an Arts Award centre near you which you can use. For more details of this scheme see www.artsaward.org.uk

Ways to find suitable artists/designers

- Ask the museum education or learning department to recommend artists or designers.
- Phone your local authority arts education or arts in the community department and ask for their recommendations.
- Speak to local colleges or universities about recent art or design graduates who may be keen to take on this kind of work.
- Speak to your local Arts Council office. Go to www.artscouncil.org.uk to find details of your local office.
- Useful databases include www.artistsinschools.co.uk and www.axisweb.org.uk



Lighting designer Daniel Davis-James with young people in Manchester Art Gallery

Things to consider when commissioning an artist

- Do they have a clear CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check completed by your organisation? If not, do you have time to complete one? You will need to refer to your organisation's policies and procedures around CRB checks.
- What experience does the artist/designer have? Is it appropriate to the particular needs of your group? Can you get references from other people who have employed them?
- Allow time for you and the artist/designer to plan the project. You may want to visit the museum together to discuss activity ideas.
- Make sure you fully brief the artist/designer on the nature of your group, any learning needs they should consider and any potential behaviour issues.
- Ask the artist/designer for a workshop plan and materials list. Be clear about who is providing what, and how your colleagues will support the activity. Ensure that activities are achievable within the time and resources available.
- Explain to the artist/designer that you will remain in charge of the group and deal with any behavioural issues.
- Make sure artists and designers are aware of your policy on taking photographs/using names as they may want to take pictures for their own records
- Set down all financial arrangements in a clear contract. Are you paying them for planning time or just direct delivery time? What happens in the case of last minute cancellation of the session? You will need to discuss this with them and include it in the contract.

4 A sample contract for working with an artist or designer

The example contract below, used by Action for Children, can be adapted to suit your organisation. To get updated details of this contract please contact the Arts Initiatives Manager for Action for Children at arts@actionforchildren.org.uk

Sample Contract: January 2011

Agreement between Action for Children and artists or designers employed to work on [complete title]

This document is an agreement between Action for Children and freelance artists employed to work on [complete title]

Requirements of the artist/designer [Example tasks below. Please adapt for your project]

- To attend and fully participate in a training day
- To liaise with the key contact at the project around the practicalities of the workshop, dates, venues, abilities of children and young people etc.
- To plan and lead the artistic element of the workshop day(s) in conjunction with the Action for Children project.
- To work at all times with Action for Children service users in a respectful, appropriate and inclusive manner
- To liaise with the project staff around any behaviour issues or concerns regarding any children or young people but to never discuss these directly with the child or young person.
- To never exchange or request contact details from any service user directly. All contact should be through Action for Children.
- To provide to the project lead a copy of a clear CRB check which has been undertaken in the last 3 years (this will be destroyed once details have been noted).
- To work with the key contact at the project to ensure the work is completed to an agreed deadline.

Payment

- The artist will be paid [complete with fee] per day for workshop delivery
- The artist will be paid [complete with fee] for planning and preparation
- In the event of cancellation of a workshop with less than [x] days notice.... [complete with rearrangement notice or agreed percentage of fee]

Please sign below to say that you have discussed and agree with the above;

Name of artist/designer _____

Signature of artist/designer _____

Please return this to the person who sent it to you.

5 Find a museum or gallery near you

The V&A, Cromwell Road, London



Engage

www.engage.org

A unique database developed by Engage (The National Association of Gallery Education) allows you to search for galleries, art museums, art centres, education projects and related advice in your area. Visit the Engage website and look under 'Resources for all'. The database has over 500 UK venues listed and is an ideal first stop if you are planning a visit. Contact details are also available on the site enabling you to get in touch with an education officer who may be able to help you get the most out of your visit.

Culture 24

www.culture24.org.uk

The 24-hour museum has an index of 4500 venues including museums and galleries. You can browse by area and click through to find further information and contact details.

Other sources

Tourist information centres and local authorities also hold information on local museums and galleries in the area.

6 Making a visit to a museum / gallery enjoyable for young people

Engaging in discussion in the V&A's Ceramics galleries'



Making a visit to a museum/gallery enjoyable for young people

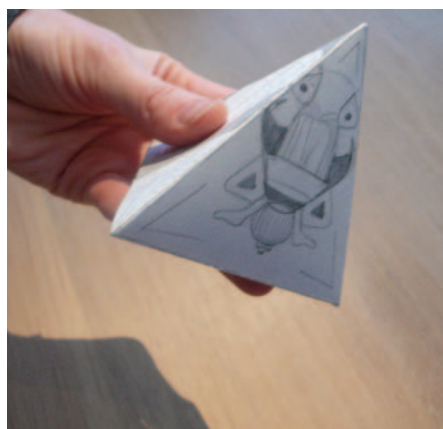
Help the young people to explore the museum by using a personal approach. Encourage the young people to explain their first reactions to objects. Do they remind them of anything they have seen before? What connections can they make between the object and their own lives and experiences?

Don't worry if you don't have expert knowledge. We all look at objects differently depending on the individual experiences we bring to them and the connections we make. It is important to make sure young people have the chance to express their own opinions, listen to others, and appreciate that they all have something valuable to offer.

Try using open questions to draw out discussion

- Would you like to own an object like this or not? Why?
- Who do you think might own an object like this and what would it say about them?
- How old do you think it is?
- How expensive do you think it was to produce? Was it easy or complicated to make?
- What kinds of skills were involved? What value would you place on it and why?

Two complete downloadable project ideas which start off with a museum/gallery visit



1 Ideas Collector

Download the Ideas Collector drawing activity to help you gather your thoughts for a theme or specific design project.

2 Repel/Attract Headgear



Create distinctive personal headgear out of card and paper. Choose whether you want to keep people away or attract them to you. Choose shapes and objects in the museum which inspire you and create a striking piece of headgear with paper and card.

Download both these activity sheets with full instructions at www.vam.ac.uk/dflresources

7 Further ideas for museum or gallery projects and activities

Action for Children's Foundations debating ideas at Manchester City Art Gallery



Curators Challenge

Assign the group the role of curators and tell them they have some tough decisions to make. In hard economic times just five museum objects from your selected gallery will be kept and five will need to go. Challenge each 'curator' to select which five to keep. Ensure that each curator has strong reasons for his or her decisions. Finally stage a debate and try to agree as a group which five objects will stay in the gallery and which will go.

A Sideways Glance

Give the group 2 minutes to find an object they each find interesting and keep it secret. Hand out blindfolds, clipboards, paper and pencils

Ask the group to get into pairs and label themselves A and B. B wears the blindfold while A takes them to their chosen object. B asks A questions about the object and tries to draw what they think it looks like. Once finished, take off the blindfold and reveal the object. Then swap and repeat the activity.

7 Further ideas for museum or gallery projects and activities



Investigating hand gestures in Indian sculpture at the V&A

Design a Celebrity Tour

Challenge the group to create a tour around a chosen gallery for different people, identifying key highlights and objects to avoid. Make a decision about who is visiting. A celebrity VIP? The Prime Minister? Another group of young people? You could create image cards of popular celebrities to distribute. Discuss which museum objects might appeal to different people and why. Establish what sort of style your important person has: Are they funky? Posh? Classic? Bling? What sorts of colours, patterns or shapes would you associate with them?

Design a map of the gallery marking out the journey and drawing the objects selected.

Or you could use one of the museum objects to inspire a design for a VIP gift for your chosen visitor, for example a piece of jewellery presented in the Ideas Collector box.

A Personal Space Suit

Expand your repel headgear into a whole suit. Where and when do you need most personal space? Is it at home, on public transport, walking down the street or somewhere else? Identify the sort of suit, armour or protective clothing you would need to deter others from invading your personal space. Search the collection

for objects, shapes or details that you can incorporate into your design to help fend off unwanted intruders. Gather these elements together and use them to design items of protective clothing demarcating your personal space.

Every Object Tells a Story: New Narratives

In pairs, select an object that you are drawn to. Together make a list of all the things you observe. Discuss who you think it belonged to. What did it mean to them? Where do you think it lived? Imagine what its journey was before it arrived in the museum. What special qualities does it have? How does it fit in with the new objects around it? What would happen if the characters and stories behind these objects came to life?

See if you can illustrate the story you have imagined for this object. Write and illustrate your own story. Have a go at making a storyboard and turning this into an animation. You can find out how to do this online, try websites like www.storyboards-east.com

NB. Before you visit you could watch the comedy film *A Night at the Museum* in which all the objects and characters come to life, tell their stories and create chaos.

Design for Life project links

Bolton Museum & Archive Service
www.crescentactivitybank.co.uk

Brighton Museum & Art Gallery
www.brighton-hove-rpml.org.uk/discoveryandlearning/designforlife

Manchester City Galleries
www.manchestergalleries.org/whatson/community-programmes/current-projects/design-for-life

Museums Sheffield
www.museums-sheffield.org.uk

Shipley Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums
www.twmuseums.org.uk/shipley/designforlife

V&A Design for Life projects
www.vam.ac.uk/dflresources

Other V&A resources

Teachers' resources downloadable from www.vam.ac.uk/schools include:
Drawing in Museums
Architecture
Textiles

Find out more about the V&A's collections at collections.vam.ac.uk



department for
culture, media
and sport



This Design for Life resource was developed as part of a national museums' partnership, which sought to engage young people in design through using museums. Led by the Victoria and Albert Museum, project partners included Action for Children, Bolton Museum & Archive Service, Brighton Museum & Art Gallery, Manchester City Galleries, Museums Sheffield, the Shipley Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Museums and ten local associate partner museums.

Design for life was funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Education (2008-11) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (2010-11) as part of the Strategic Commissioning programme for museum and gallery education.