A large white rabbit sculpture is the central focus, positioned inside a red metal archway. The archway has a lantern hanging from its top. The background is a modern building with a glass facade. The scene is set outdoors with greenery and a clear blue sky.

# House of Imagination (formerly 5x5x5=creativity)

## ANNUAL REPORT 2019





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# 1. Introduction

During 2019 we developed the Vision and Strategy for the House of Imagination (HOI), with the renaming of the organisation from 5x5x5=creativity to House of Imagination in August 2019.

The Vision statement sets out the future development of HOI including keeping open the ambition of creating a permanent base in Bath. It states that the

House of Imagination provides a range of spaces for children and young people to collaborate with creative professionals. It is a home for improvisation, creativity and innovation and a place to make those things visible to an international audience through research.

The development of House of Imagination from 5x5x5=creativity builds on what has been achieved since 2000, but with a focus on reaching wider audiences, developing public engagement and professional development in a more co-ordinated, effective and accessible way. We want to bring schools, cultural organisations and local communities together to develop creative learning so that it is part of their long-term vision too. Local partnerships are central to this – especially with Bath Spa University and local creative and cultural industries, with whom we're working more closely on professional development and public engagement, including this year's Forest of Imagination.

HOI is a research organisation with a focus on understanding, nurturing and inspiring children's and young people's creative and critical thinking. In practice, HOI uses action research to plan and deliver innovative programmes that enable children to shape their lives through creative activity and schools to change their practices through professional development and school-based activity. At its heart is co-enquiry between children, teachers and creative professionals.

HOI is driven by a desire for change in both children's lives and in schools, focusing on an exploration of the possibilities that creativity offers. Children need more opportunities to develop their creativity and to experiment and teachers need more support to integrate these skills. Through research and dissemination HOI provides evidence for educational and cultural change, helping to build a strong cultural ecology that in turn supports children, schools and creative professionals.





## 2. Summary of areas of research activity

**House of Imagination** is a studio for children and young people to work alongside artists and creative professionals. We are researching the difference that working in a studio environment, as distinct from a traditional classroom, makes to the creative process.

**Forest of Imagination** is a free 4-day contemporary and participatory arts event co-designed by Grant Associates and 5x5x5=creativity in collaboration with Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Herman Miller, Bath Spa University, RSA and Imaginnovation [www.forestofimagination.com](http://www.forestofimagination.com). This year's event was held 20-24 June at the Holburne Museum and Sydney Gardens Bath.

**School Without Walls** involves a creative collaboration between the egg theatre and 5x5x5=creativity with local primary and secondary schools. <http://www.schoolwithoutwalls.org.uk/>

Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to continue SWW with schools, artists and cultural centres. Focus on integrated evaluation, transferable evidence, responding to school development plans with a peripatetic residency using the city as a cultural campus.

**Play Together, Learn Together Report project and evaluation report** completed working with Twerton Infants and First Steps Nursery, funded by Roper Trust, Medlock Trust, Bath Boules Trust and Quartet.

**My Place, Our Place – early years and family project:** a creative collaboration between Bristol Architecture Centre, House of Imagination, 2 Bristol City Council Children's Centres and evaluation experts from the University of Bristol. The project, funded through Paul Hamlyn Foundation, aims to explore and test methodologies to creatively engage early years children and educators with architecture and place, and to champion the innate culture and creativity of young children and their families.

**Bath Cultural Education Partnership** supports the development of cultural education provision for under-served children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset with 5x5x5=creativity working in partnership with the egg theatre and Bath Festivals. **BCEP** produced a vision statement as an invitation to all cultural organisations in B&NES to focus on access and provision for creative and cultural education for all children and young people.

**South West Creative Education Hub** working closely with key individuals from five universities and regional creative and cultural industries, (Bath Spa University, University of Bath, University of Bristol, University of West of England and University of Gloucestershire) plus regional creative industries include Grant Associates, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC), Vision 21 and Cheltenham Hackspace.

**Re-imagining Libraries** vision group working with Bath Spa University, University of Bath, Bath College and key individuals to re-imagine the city centre Library as a space for thinking, creating and innovating.

## 3. Highlights of research activity

### House of Imagination

Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios created a pop-up House of Imagination for this year's Forest of Imagination. It provided a space for creative making, performance, spoken word events and discussion which made visible how we are working together creatively in different ways, with imaginative approaches to education and a focus on creative thinking, making and design processes alongside presentations and installations by established artists and other creative figures. Workshops raised awareness of the powers of drawing with the Big Draw, and the power of imagination with author David Almond. The pop-up House of Imagination hosted workshops with our Comino South West Creative Education Hub partners, for example Soundbites, inviting children and young people to create innovative digital sound using found objects.

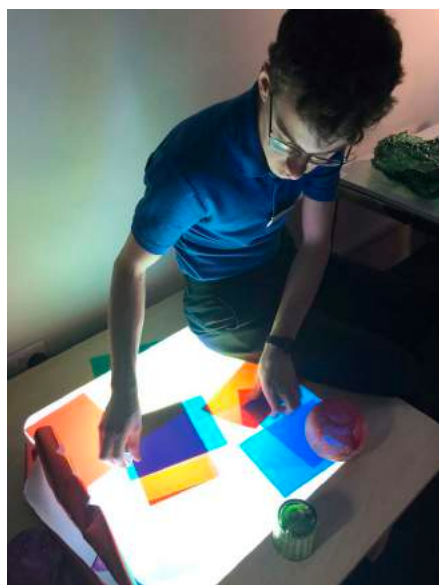
The studio provided a dedicated and inclusive space where children and educators could work with alongside artists. For example, a group of 6th form students from Three Ways Special School who had complex needs were invited to draw things they loved from nature. The class teacher commented:

*'It was perfect for us. They could all engage with it, it was all natural materials and covered all the range of abilities ... It is ideas and materials we can take back with us.'* (Hayley McMahon, class teacher)



Events included a round-table discussion with Wera Hobhouse, MP for Bath, who suggested the idea of a Citizen's Assembly for creativity, culture and the arts in Bath, so that ways could be found to provide all children and young people with access to creative arts education, no matter what their background or circumstance. The pavilion hosted performances by Fofoulah, a London-based afro-dub ensemble and Ballet Nimba who also led school workshops during the day (in partnership with WOMAD); Toby Thompson, a spoken word poet, performer and playwright; the Children's Laureate (2017-19) author Lauren Child; artist and activist Bob and Roberta Smith who set out his manifesto for creativity; and the Bristol-based artist Sir Richard Long, a Turner Prize-winning sculptor and land artist. Each event extended the typical audience, including younger and older people.

Norland College invited us for a third year to share recent 5x5x5=creativity research and to provide creative workshops for 100 of their Early Years Development and Learning degree and diploma students. 3 studio spaces were set up where the students could immerse themselves in finding and following their own creative co-enquiries: with materials that supported enquiry through drawing/mark-making; light/reflection; natural and sensory materials. The students were asked to curate and share their galleries of learning with each other and to reflect upon how the '100 languages' supported them in their enquiry processes and what they discovered about their own learning.



## Forest of Imagination

Forest of Imagination is a free public contemporary arts and design event created by Grant Associates, House of Imagination (formerly 5x5x5=creativity), Bath Spa University, Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, and local creative, cultural and educational partners. Over the last 6 years we have responded to new sites and worked closely with many individuals and organisations. The 2019 event involved extensive collaboration between the co-designers and Holburne Museum and Sydney Gardens, with 55 organisations and over 100 artists and designers participating overall. The event took place over 4 days in June with workshops and activities at the Holburne Museum and Sydney Gardens, complemented by evening, partnership and satellite events in the city, widening participation and engagement and work with new artists. We worked directly with 20 schools (Primary and Secondary) plus Pre-school and Home-educator groups, over 500 children from local schools and over 8,000 children and adults over the whole weekend.

Forest of Imagination is actively inclusive, inviting children and adults to explore, make and learn in a creative, intuitive and imaginative way, engaging with a thought-provoking series of experiences for all ages. This year the theme placed an emphasis on children's inspiration from nature, their connection with the natural environment and how this informs our adult creativity. Activities were designed to offer a range of high-quality creative opportunities for participants to respond to the environment in different ways - in creative engagement acts of making, storytelling, drawing, music and play. These activities were intended to spark children's

and adults' imagination and engagement, as part of an understanding of how we can use creativity in our everyday lives. Working alongside artists and designers, together with other children, young people and adults, they were given the opportunity to develop their own ideas and responses across a wide range of activities and art forms.

### High quality, diverse commissioning and activity programming

Every year Forest of Imagination develops new ways of working creatively together, in a spirit of ambitious co-operation and artistic co-production. In 2019 creative engagement and participation were developed in new directions, with innovative events, workshops and public talks, covering artistic education, the role of activism in children's lives, and creative approaches to education. Core aims included creating and commissioning ambitious new work, reaching new and different audiences and working with new people; providing professional development; and developing high-quality creative place-making.

### Creative engagement and educational opportunities

The two designated Schools' Days provided a clear opportunity for widening participation, and many artists, participants and organisers noted the increased mix of background and social demographics. Alma Foster's 'Marble Fun' forming part of our research with Three Ways Special School, aimed to show how 'a marble run, enlarged for accessibility, facilitates turn taking, problem solving, cooperative play, communication and

focus across a neurodiversity of young people. The class teacher from Three Ways Sixth form wrote: *'The marble run was also very inclusive and that captured their imagination for a long time.'*

Children and young people were engaged in: making, exploring, experimenting, problem solving; transforming materials and objects, adapting and reinterpreting things they made; imagining, making narratives; exchanging ideas and questioning (including about the environment, the planet and sustainability); dialogue with artists, scientists, writers, engineers, designers, architects; active and embodied learning, dancing, making music, drawing; expressing aspirations for their future selves; collaboration; thinking out loud and showing their creative processes; communicating their ideas (verbally and through design, making, drawing). One parent commented:

*My children were utterly absorbed, for hours at a time, in different parts of the Forest throughout the weekend. Particular highlights for them were exploring the world from the perspective of a bee; clay, clay and more clay, just clay, available right there, in the moment, to create a clay forest; and constructing, and endlessly experimenting with, refining and reconstructing, giant marble runs under the trees and on the grass. It offered new, facilitated but not prescriptive, ways of engaging with an outdoor environment my kids are very familiar with, suggesting ways of seeing, exploring and playing differently, more deeply.*



The engagement activities on the schools' days are able to make a greater impact beyond the event through the involvement of teachers and other educational professionals, who can experience different ways of learning and interaction to take back to the classroom. One class teacher observed the children's responses to the environment, the green space, the materials and their engagement with these: *'You forget, in the day to day, what they really need. It is so lovely to see them like this.'*

### Creative place-making, collaboration and community

This year's event was a confident act of creative placemaking that drew on local skills, inspiration and ingenuity and engaged a wide public audience. The grounds of Holburne Museum and Sydney Gardens were transformed with artistic and architectural installations, connecting these outdoor landscapes with creative activities. People were invited to explore this haven of art and nature in an entirely new and open way, making and learning in creative, intuitive and imaginative ways. One parent commented:

*At a time when schools are being cut so much that they have no glue sticks in my eldest daughter's class, the chance to play with huge amounts of clay, to take part in incredible storytelling and music, to build and explore the 'world's biggest marble run', to see the world through a bee's eyes, are all amazing learning experiences and something my*

*children have carried with them and continued to create from in the weeks since the festival. They have become storytellers of their own travelling theatre, they have made homes for bees and they have shared their bee facts with friends and family encouraging all of us to take better care of our natural world.*

### School Without Walls

We worked with 5 schools in School Without Walls (1 infant, 4 primary) and led a successful conference at the egg theatre for local schools and creative professionals, with an accompanying book and film documentary. Staff meetings with schools fed into a bespoke programme of professional development and learning. Consultations have been held with schools and cultural centre partners towards preparation of the Grant application to Paul Hamlyn Foundation for School Without Walls 2020 to consider: the key elements of a residency; how SWW can inform the whole school culture of learning; and how this might feed into the new Ofsted Framework and the Durham Commission. Staff meetings with Three Ways Special School, Roundhill, St Vigor and St John, Shoscombe, St Julian's Wellow and St Andrews Primary Schools were held to discuss areas of focus as part of their creative learning and co-enquiry and the key areas for the bespoke programme of professional development and learning. These included focusing on co-enquiry, well-being, oracy, creative engagement especially for vulnerable learners and widening cultural engagement for all.



## 4. Continuing Professional Development and Learning

*Forest of Imagination Research Day* with Three Ways School in Bath (a school for children and young people with additional and complex needs), with artists and teachers attending an event to understand how their work could be more inclusive. This informed the work and showed how we could develop more successful approaches to inclusivity.

*Learning Everywhere Heritage Schools:* Local schools were invited to participate in a free CPD day in conjunction with Historic England. Teachers and Headteachers from 5 Infant/Primary schools from Bath & North East Somerset and Wiltshire; students from Bath Spa University and representatives from 2 local cultural organisations attended. The ground-breaking School Without Walls initiative, award-winning Heritage Schools programme, and Curious-city approach (Lighting up Learning) were shared with participants and the group also considered how quality learning and learning dispositions related to the new Ofsted Framework. Michael Gorley, Historic England, also shared strategies, tools and techniques for conducting a local historical study.



## 5. Dissemination and Professional Engagement

National/International conferences:

Tate Modern London, March 2019

Aarhus Denmark, April 2019

European Cultural Literacy Symposium, Bath and Lisbon, May 2019

APPG Art Education, House of Commons, May 2019

Bath Spa University Research Festival, July 2019

Coventry and Slough Education Partnerships, June/October 2019

Oslo Norway, August 2019

Creativity, Knowledge, City Bristol, September 2019

Therapeutic City Conference Bath, September 2019

International Child Friendly City Bristol, November 2019

Ministry of Culture, Mumbai and Delhi, September/ December 2019

Creative Education Debate, Bath Spa University October 2019

Council for Higher Education for Art and Design, November 2019

International Journal of Art and Design, Conference and 2 articles February / June 2019

Creative Bath Awards, June 2019



## 6. Other Programmes and Partnerships

### Play Together Learn Together

This Early Years research project was funded by the Quartet Community Foundation, Bath Boules Charitable Trust, David Medlock Charitable Trust and Roper Rhodes. The research aimed to explore the role of the arts and creative experience in supporting school readiness and a positive transition from nursery or preschool to compulsory school education.

Documentation analysed after the first phase identified 6 emerging themes in relation to transition and 'school readiness':

- Key skills and characteristics that support transition
- Exposure and response to new experiences
- The importance of voice and communication
- The importance of active and embodied learning experiences
- Vulnerable children's experience of transition
- Developing a pathway through transition – the importance of stepping stones

Phase 2 research focused on 6 children as they transitioned to full-time statutory education in the Reception class, documenting their learning through creative experiences with the 2 artists and their class teacher. The child case studies illuminated how an arts-based approach can support children's transition into school. It showed how:

- each intervention created a context in which children's natural learning characteristics could be made visible, providing valuable insights in

to the ways different children engaged rather than constructing activities that were targeted at developing pre-defined skills

- the educators and artists co-designed learning contexts (in terms of people, materials, children's fascinations and ways of learning) which provided continuity or connection with previous observed creative interests. The children's confidence and feeling of capability had the opportunity to develop.
- it promoted the children's multiple and preferred ways of communicating (e.g. through their bodies, musicality, imagination, drawing or spoken word) and how these supported their confidence in themselves as learners and capable communicators
- the educators and artists recognised and gave the children ways to translate their feelings and experience of transition through different media
- the educators and artists created bridges between children's past and present experiences of transition

The participatory research team analysed the key strategies that supported the children's positive experience of transition and that are transferable: working with specific formed and small learning groups; artists and educators taking on the role of creative companions alongside the children; an approach that ensured continuity and connection, together with collaboration between and continuity of relationships with adults throughout the transition; the use of intelligent materials and the facilitation of creative co-enquiry; a creative and collaborative reflective cycle of observation, reflection and the consideration of possibilities to ensure the learning environment and creative interventions were responsive to the children's





ways of learning and curiosities. The report also offers practical suggestions and recommendations for early years educators that draw upon the research. The project reinforced the importance of experiential and full-bodied learning in early years where children can pursue their curiosities into the world around them and learn in more holistic ways.

## My Place, Our Place – early years and family project

My Place, Our Place is a creative collaboration between Bristol Architecture Centre, 5x5x5=creativity, two Bristol City Council Children's Centres and evaluation experts from the University of Bristol. The project, funded through Paul Hamlyn Foundation, aims to explore and test methodologies to creatively engage early years children and educators with *architecture and place*, and to champion the innate culture and creativity of young children and their families. 2 artists, 2 early years teachers, 2 mentors and 2 classes of 3-4 year old children collaborated over a period of a few months. The project aimed to explore:

- How to support children's understanding of their world through place-based learning
- How early years settings can creatively use their own environments to explore 'place' and to facilitate children's expression of their thoughts, ideas and feelings
- How meaningful relationships can be developed between early years settings, families, artists and art organisations
- The co-development of methodologies that can be shared more widely with early years/cultural settings

Whilst the 2 enquiries appeared distinctive from each other in response to the Children Centre contexts and the nature of the children's creative enquiries, they had many significant elements in common:

- The artists had time to get to know the nursery and community context including some involvement with/alongside the families
- The children showed their knowledge of their 'territory' and how it operated in the nursery setting and between nursery and home and were keen to share it with the artists as trusted outsiders
- The Children's Centres (staff and families) perceived their settings as an oasis/safe haven within the locality that was perceived as unsafe
- The creative enquiries focused on understanding how the children are experiencing and making sense of their environment
- Both settings explored maps with the children; their understanding and experience of them, use of maps and aerial photos of the local area, mapping spaces kinaesthetically and creating maps
- Observing and documenting how children use and occupy spaces; how they make themselves visible in it including physically taking it up with their sound; creating/adapting spaces; creating a sense of belonging and taking ownership of spaces including creating the role of 'gate-keepers'
- The project challenged the educators to explore the boundaries and blocks to venturing out from the nursery into the neighbourhood and the city. St Phillips Marsh explored the riverside nearby; Ilminster Avenue, the walks from nursery to children's homes, parks and shops they knew and on the last session the city centre riverside and some of its cultural centres.

An evaluation framework was developed and tested that reflected the *themes of belonging, exploration, being seen and heard, creativity and critical thinking skills* that emerged through the process of observation and reflection of the educators, artists, mentors and evaluation team. They were able to map these across different zones: within the room, the setting, the family, community and the city. The research team felt this was just a beginning: *"We start with the land beneath our feet and work out from there. We have begun and are following the river."* [Kirsty Claxton, artist working with St Phillips Marsh Children's Centre]

## Comino South West Creative Education Hub | Summer School Activity 2019

This summary report considers the work of the Hub so far and in particular the funded summer school programmes.

Participants included Knowle West Media Centre, University of Bristol's Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Cheltenham Festivals, University of Gloucestershire, Lumiar School Stowford and Forest of Imagination.

Comino South West Creative Education Hub summer school activity demonstrated the following:

- the Hub is building a sustainable network of creative educators working alongside creative professionals
- activity across 4 areas provided innovative opportunities for young people to be actively engaged in creative and critical thinking and making alongside creative professionals
- focus groups of young people prioritised those in areas of social disadvantage
- thorough evaluation of this activity has provided evidence that the Comino SW Consortium now has a substantial foundation on which we could build, with worthwhile creative partnerships established.

## Key successes for the Summer School activity

- interdisciplinary learning with an emphasis on thinking through making
- social opportunity – opening up, for young people many from deprived backgrounds, new spaces in their environment to be creative alongside their peers
- the power of intergenerational experiences, learning alongside different age groups
- co-design and co-production – encouraging an open culture of learning, helping to build a critical mass of change makers
- the increased potential that comes from putting partnership at the heart of this work
- the Hub has been very productive so far, sharing ideas, presenting new ways of working and reaching a range of young participants
- there has been co-operation, collaboration and rethinking our collective and individual aims as we develop influence and ways of sharing our work
- this year's summer activities inspired both the young participants and the partner organisations – who confirmed that they would be exploring how to incorporate some of the ideas they had seen in action into their own local practice





## 8. Strategic Summary for the House of Imagination

Our Strategy and Vision document describes a vision for House of Imagination for the future, setting out key challenges and strategic targets to help take forward HOI during the next stage of its development:

- HOI differentiates itself from similar projects that focus on creativity, children and young people in several important respects, including a focus on self-organised learning, research and co-governance.
- HOI's programme should be synchronous with a self-organised system of learning, namely, created and led by its users and centred on self-directed enquiry.
- HOI is construed simultaneously as a dynamic programme of events and temporary or pop-up spaces, a virtual space and a network hub that forms a creative ecosystem, a house without walls that engages with an international audience.
- HOI believes that from the outset young people should be leading, engaged in development, governance and democratic decision-making. They should be given a voice in HOI's development and its conversations with an international audience.
- HOI posits the crucial idea of 'learners and leaders' and seeks to redefine leadership so to ensure that social well-being is balanced with economic sustainability.
- For HOI to develop a healthy, sustainable creative ecology means partnering and networking with a wide range of partners here and abroad.
- 

- Research is central to HOI's mission, and this includes making the creativity of children and young people and their co-creatives visible to a wide audience.
- HOI is able to demonstrate diverse impacts in addition to behavioural changes in its user base; because it is public-facing it can demonstrate social and economic benefits such as visitor numbers and visitor spend through attendance at major festivals and other public events.
- As HOI develops with growing aspirations, new partnerships and network relationships and internationalization, it should explore the potential for a more permanent physical space, so more sustainable income streams will be required.

Our aims over the next three years are:

- To continue our research alongside children and young people, educators, policy makers, creative professionals and families to improve children's life chances.
- To support children in exploring and expressing their ideas and developing creative skills for life through the themes of children's voices, creative communities and a hopeful future.
- To establish House of Imagination as a thought leader in the national and international dialogue about creative education in order to contribute to shaping a more humanitarian and democratic society.

Our core objectives are to prioritise:

- opportunities for creativity that are inclusive, accessible and reflect the diversity of our communities
- creative education that is committed to excellence
- activities that have partnership, co-enquiry and co-operation at their heart
- knowledge and research that can be shared to improve educational and creative practice
- impact that can be felt across communities and organisations.

### Websites

[www.5x5x5creativity.org.uk](http://www.5x5x5creativity.org.uk)  
[www.forestofimagination.org.uk](http://www.forestofimagination.org.uk)  
[www.schoolwithoutwalls.org.uk](http://www.schoolwithoutwalls.org.uk)

### Films

Summer School Activity  
Comino Foundation Summer of Making.mov

Forest of Imagination  
<https://vimeo.com/344096572>  
<https://vimeo.com/353322086>



## 9. Acknowledgements

Special thanks to all the children and adults involved in 5x5x5=creativity, to the parents of the children and young people, all those in the educational, creative and cultural organisations involved who have given their support and to all sponsors.

### House of Imagination Team

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