

Press Release: 9th May 2019

Press release - Story Makers project: *Stories in the Garden* exhibition launches at Botanic Garden Family Open Day.

**Family Open Day & Exhibition launch
Saturday 18th May 2019
1-3pm, University of Oxford Botanic
Garden
Refreshments and art activities
Free exhibition
Admission charge for Botanic Garden**

**Continuing free Exhibition
22nd May - 18th June 2019
Daily, Fusion Arts
Open to the public
Free exhibition
RSVP: info@fusion-arts.org**

Imaginative new artwork created by children and staff from Rose Hill, Bayards Hill and Wood Farm Primary Schools will be exhibited on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th May 2019 at the University of Oxford Botanic Garden, as part of the Story Makers project.

The Story Makers Family Open day will take place on Saturday 18th May at the Oxford Botanic Garden, with refreshments and art activities provided, to celebrate the launch of the *Stories in the Garden* exhibition. The exhibition will then move to a longer run at Fusion Arts in East Oxford, between 22nd May - 18th June 2019.

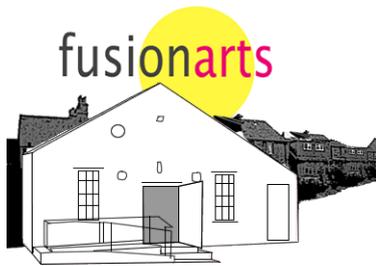
Both exhibitions are open to the public and free of charge, aside from the general admission ticket for the Botanic Garden.

The artwork is the culmination of a twelve-week Story Makers programme, working with children and staff in three primary schools across Oxford. Story Makers helps young people and adults increase their self-confidence and develop stronger relationships with others, through artistic and emotional self-expression.

2019 marks the sixth year of the Story Makers project, which is run and developed by Integrative Arts Psychotherapist, Helen Edwards, in partnership with Fusion Arts and a different member of the Oxford University Garden, Library or Museum (GLAM) department each year.

Throughout the project, inspiration is drawn from two visits to a GLAM collection. The theme for this year has been a response to the University of Oxford Botanic Garden's plant collection and explores the relationships between different plants, as well as the relationship between plants and

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humans. Story Makers is funded by BBC Children in Need.

All participants, adults and children, are thought of as artists and are encouraged to explore new ways of communicating their ideas and feelings and of understanding their identity and relationships.

Integrative Arts Psychotherapist, Helen Edwards says:

"We all work together as artists on the project and it always amazes me how quickly adults and children respond once they become immersed with the art materials and ideas, they forget the roles and anxieties of school."

"They relax their bodies and minds and start having fun. Story Makers is such a successful project because the project encourages everyone, children and adults, to be themselves, learn new ways of communicating their own unique ideas and feelings and realise their own intelligence."

Some weeks focussed on sensory learning, exploring the plants through movement, touch, smell and sight. For example, exploring the evolution of smell and how plants use scents as a means of self-protection and to attract animals to their advantage.

While another week children produced a large scale group painting together, carefully negotiating space for their beautiful images on the canvas, simulating the way plants share their space with other plants, to grow alongside one another.

Art techniques used include clay modelling, painting, drawing, glass, crafting and sculpture. The children also made beautiful clay imprints of seeds and leaves from the Oxford Botanic Garden and produced cyanotype prints (blueprints) of unusual design.

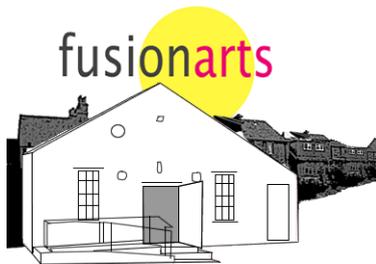
In addition to the exhibition, the vibrant and highly imaginative artwork and accompanying stories have been bound as a series of books for the schools and children to treasure and share with others.

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About Fusion Arts: Fusion Arts is a catalyst for creativity in Oxford, and beyond. Since 1977 we have connected artists with communities, and inspired hundreds of bespoke creative projects.

Fusion Arts aims to enrich lives through meaningful high quality arts experiences, supporting communities and artists, removing barriers, increasing inclusion and increasing community cohesion.

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For further information please contact Donnia Reafat, Marketing & Communications Coordinator on 07800 516 918 or donnia@fusion-arts.org.

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About Helen Edwards: Helen Edwards is an Oxford based artist and integrative arts psychotherapist. She works in visual media and movement. Her own art practice, rooted in bodily felt experience, portrays developmental forces from conception into life, individuation and the gaining of consciousness.

Helen has danced, drawn and painted all her life. From childhood in the North of England, she has explored and portrayed resonances of body and land. She has swum in rivers, seas and lakes for many years, studied Butoh dance in Japan, and since 2005 practised the Javanese movement form of Amerta movement.

As artist and arts psychotherapist she has developed community arts projects over the last 20 years in many community and organisational settings, including hospitals, schools, community centres, childrens centres, museums, gardens and galleries, seeking to inspire and distil artistic confidence for all. She has also curated many local and international exhibitions.

“Stories in the Garden” blog: <https://www.fusion-arts.org/stories-in-the-garden-blog>

Stories in the Garden, some children’s paintings from the exhibition: <http://bit.ly/2PUgGIN>

