



ArtPlay Artist Learning Interview: Bronwyn Pringle

What was *Colour Labyrinth*?

Colour Labyrinth was a 2017/18 New Ideas Lab project by me, [Dan Goronszy](http://www.dangoronszy.com/)¹ and [Sharyn Brand](http://www.sharynbrand.com/)². Children played with professional sound and lighting equipment in workshops, and their ideas were used to create a walk-through maze exploring ideas about colour that was exhibited in the ArtPlay gallery. Here is a short [video of Colour Labyrinth](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scqIXzbEiM4)³.

What were the benefits of doing a project in two parts like this?

We thought we were doing the workshops to prepare for the exhibition, but the workshops were wonderful and satisfying in themselves so, in a way, they were the outcome. Most children (aged 5-8) loved handling the tech equipment while others enjoyed the drawing station that we set up so those who were more intimidated by the equipment could slowly ease into the tasks. Together they made a great soundscape and learned how to continue this art making at home.

Each day of workshops we significantly improved the second session by tweaking the parts that didn't work as well - so much so that we feel there is an interesting school residency to propose with these workshops when we had originally considered the workshops only for the creation of the exhibition.

The success of the workshops means that, as well as a tourable exhibition, we now have a variety of experiences to take into different spaces. We are keen to repeat the whole process with other groups of children, so that each exhibition is unique to the participants.

Although the children enjoyed the workshops it's worth pointing out that many were excited by the idea of coming back to see how their work was turned into an exhibition which is really the main thing we could want.

Were there any challenges?

Although it can be good to have a break between stages because this allows ideas to settle, due to scheduling issues, the workshops in this project became more spread out than originally intended. While the reflection time was good, it felt a bit like we lost some momentum as we had to keep shifting from other jobs during the week to the workshops on the weekend.

It was a challenge to prepare satisfying workshops for the children while still leaving room for development and exploration of ideas for the exhibition. We note that this is a challenge for ArtPlay as well. The experimental workshops are marketed as such, with careful attention paid to the publicity wording, but they still need to have a mix of sure-fire and exploratory activities.

It was also hard to resist planning what the exhibition would be before we got the kids' input - we had so many ideas that it took a fair bit of self control to hold off on decisions! Happily the children were interested in many of the same things that we were so our ideas merged well and provided a great deal of material for the exhibition. It was really important to remember to trust in the idea, resist the urge to pin it down and wait for the

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input from the children. By doing this, we were reminded that if we find it exciting, it's pretty certain that we can turn that into something that others find exciting.

Do you have any other advice for artists who are creating a work for public exhibition through workshops with children?

I think most of us artists find the art part comes pretty naturally but it's some of the logistics that come with this kind of work that present the biggest challenges.

Making sure the workshop participants understand the connection between the workshops and the exhibition is important. In our case we always intended to redraw the kids' drawings in a larger, curated format so we made sure they didn't expect to come and see their exact drawings in the space. It is also important to be clear who the work is for, while also being responsive to changes as the new ideas unfold. We were clear that we wanted to work with 5-8 year olds for the creation part but were really keen that the exhibition would have appeal for a wider age range so that it was more family friendly. The workshop age range ended up being challenging at times as 5-8 years is actually quite a broad range when it comes to working with technology and children's understanding of it. And once the exhibition was complete we did discover that the main appeal was for younger children (under 10).

Exhibition-wise, it's simple things like remembering to plan for room for pram parking or working out if you expect participants to move through with prams etc., and allowing enough egress for that. Thinking about how efficiently the exhibition can be recreated is also important in terms of sustainability and resale potential of the work. It's also good to make sure if you have consumables, like torches with batteries, that you have enough of them. This is all the stuff that the ArtPlay staff are amazing at remembering so they are an incredible resource while making the work.