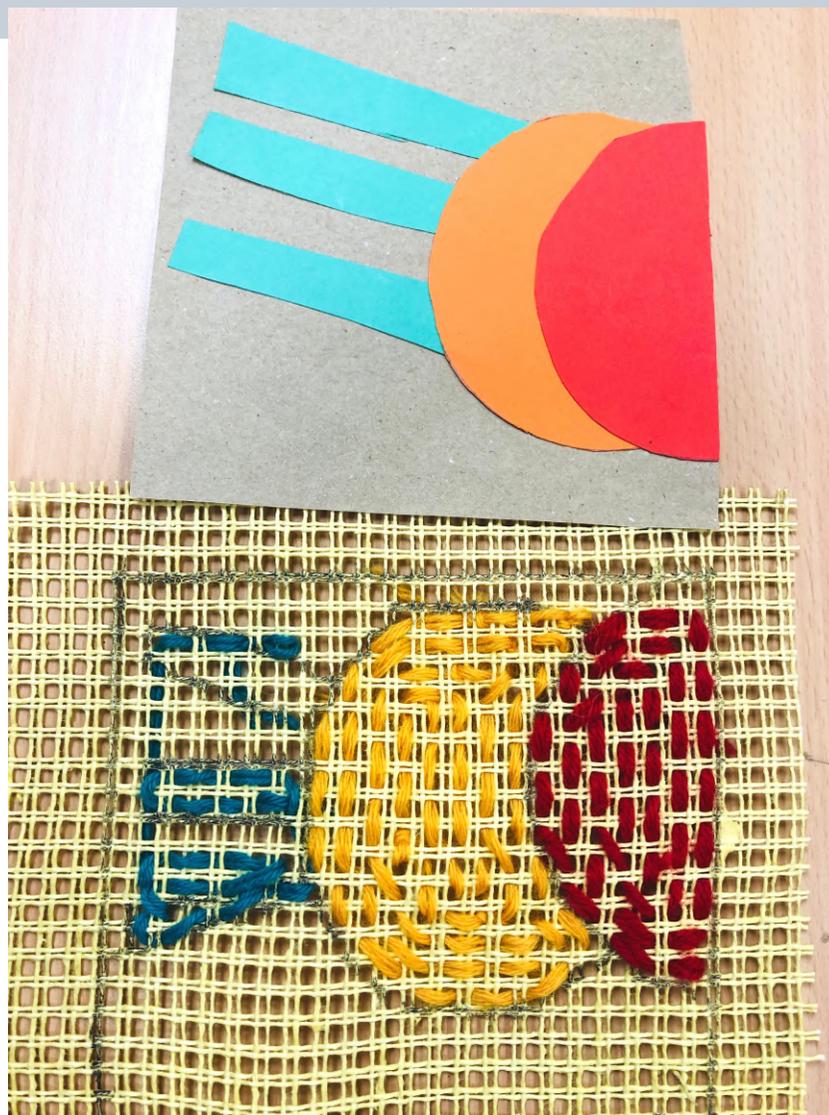


ARTIST PRACTITIONERS IN
SCHOOLS

CHARLOTTE'S BLOG 5



*Sewing Simple Tapestry Designs,
with Charlotte Pyrah*

Inspiration for Creative Learning

CHILDREN USING THE TEXTILE DESIGNER
LUCIENNE DAY AS INSPIRATION FOR A DESIGN
PROJECT

CREATIVE PRACTITIONER - CHARLOTTE PYRAH

SESSION- YEAR 4 BRAMBLES , LUCIENNE DAY TEXTILE PROJECT



During the Autumn Term of last year I worked with the teacher and Year 4 Children at Brambles School over 2 afternoon sessions to create textile artwork inspired by Lucienne Day. I found Lucienne Day to be a really interesting starting point for the project and we spent the first part of the afternoon session looking at and discussing different pieces of her work. The children worked in small groups and answered questions about Day's work, pointing out things like the key colours and shapes used as well as recurring patterns. The children were able to form opinions about Day's work in their groups and express these to me during a class discussion. It was interesting to hear what kind of materials the children thought were used and this sparked lots of conversations around textiles, home furnishings and the job role of a Textile Designer.

I was very keen to incorporate a design and technology element to this project by bringing in some design tasks for the children to work on. I really wanted them to understand the importance of planning and developing an idea and refining it before starting work on their tapestry piece. We kicked off the design process with some paper collage designs where the children cut simple block shapes and layered them up to make a design. I encouraged the children to evaluate their collage designs and think carefully about the practicalities of translating this into stitch.

The next step was to show examples of tapestry pieces and talk about the potential difficulties of working with a needle and thread and how some designs may prove trickier

than others. I wanted to give the children another opportunity to refine their designs and make sure they had a clear plan before starting the stitching process. We did this using graph paper so that the children could plot out their shapes using the gridded lines as a guide. It was important at this stage that the scale of the graph paper mirrored the piece of canvas that would be used as a base for the tapestry so that the children could envisage how it was going to look as a finished piece. Some children had realised that their collage was too busy and needed simplifying and this gave them a perfect opportunity to do that.

Once we were confident that the children had a clear plan and colour pallet in mind we started work on the tapestry piece. We used the first afternoon sessions for concept, planning and design and then the second afternoon was all about making and getting hands- on with the textile techniques. For most of the children this was their first experience of using a needle and thread so we started with the basics. Over the years I've found certain strategies that need to be put in place in order to make sewing possible in a classroom setting with up to 30 children. It's really important initially that the children know how to thread up their needle independently otherwise most of your time as a teacher will be taken up with re-threading needles. Materials and equipment are also very important so I would recommend using a rug making canvas which has pretty large holes and is therefore easy for the needle to move through the canvas.

SESSION - OVERFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL,



Large plastic needles are perfect for this technique and have huge eyes for easy threading. Chunky wool is also a good idea as it builds the design up quickly and shows less of the holes in the canvas. I would recommend demonstrating how to thread the needle first so that the children can get comfortable with doing this themselves. Using a simple guide such as measuring the thread length against your arm span works well and hopefully avoids threads being too long or short and awkward to stitch with. I would even suggest tying a knot in the end of two threads to stop the needles pulling out of the thread and avoid unnecessary re-threading. A simple demonstration of the stitching method and taking the needle up and down through the canvas is essential before the children begin too.

The class did really well with the tapestry task. Once they had mastered how to thread up the needle themselves and got into the flow of stitching it was very rewarding to see how their confidence grew. There was a lovely calm atmosphere during the session as the children got deeper into the activity. Personally, I love stitching and find it very relaxing and a great mindful activity so was pleased to see that for most of the children this was the case too. The tapestries weren't totally complete by the end of the afternoon so I left all of the materials and the class were able to pick up their work and continue stitching as and when it suited them. It was brilliant to come into school a few weeks later and see the progress that had been made and the wonderful finished tapestry pieces that had been created.

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Charlotte Pyrah