

Designing with Children

Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground

Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground was conceived after a radical brief was put forward by the London Borough of Camden to design a new adventure playground in a corner of Kilburn Grange Park. The initiative was driven by the need to provide working parents in the area with a year-round space where children can spend creative play-time. The project was intended to promote natural and adventure play and encourage social interaction between children, including those with special needs. The initiative brought together a range of collaborating partners, with The Building Exploratory - an education and resource centre in Hackney, East London – leading a range of activities to engage children and the local community in the creation of the adventure park.

Motivation

From the outset, it was important for the Borough of Camden and the architects to see the project as being embedded in the local community. This aligned with the broader aims of The Building Exploratory, which seeks to raise awareness of the local environment and buildings through its education and community engagement programmes. Actively engaging local children was also seen as being key to engendering a sense of ownership. The project aimed to highlight the value of participative arts as a way to empower children and young people and help them develop a sense of play. The activities were intended to inspire enjoyment and creativity in the young participants, teach them collective values and various skills: from collaboration, measuring, learning new words and making sense of information to design techniques and physical skills.

Children's involvement

What

Development of Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground

Where

London, United Kingdom

Age

Not available

Group Size

Not available

Project Stage

Brief, Construction, Design Development, In Use

Children's Roles

(Co) Designers, Builders, Creative Inspirers, Expert Consultants

Timescale

Completed in 2009

Partners

Richard Getti, Barbara Kaucky and Susanne Tusch from Erect Architecture (Design)
The Building Exploratory (Facilitation)
Visual artists (Facilitation)
London Borough of Camden (Client)
Year 5 and Year 6 classes from Kingsgate Primary School (Participants)
Students from Jack Taylor school, Specialist SEN (closed in 2012) (Participants)

The activities developed for the creation of Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground were led by various artists, who used everyday, easily accessible objects and materials (grass, feathers, seeds, pebbles, leaves, wooden sticks) to enable children to explore the adventurous park area. The activities were developed in such a way as to be fun and engaging, including: sun prints, photography, model-making, structures, animation, casting using clay and plaster and sign-making. These activities involved use of sun-print paper, cameras, barbecue sticks, cork tiles, balsa wood, cardboard, scissors, string, tape and glue, sticky tac, rulers, pencils and petroleum jelly. Intensive workshops were held both in the adjacent school as well as on site. The interaction with children helped the architects to understand their idea of play and adventure and their desire for risk and exploration.

Outputs and outcomes

The adventure playground comprises a sequence of distinctive yet fluid spaces of sensory quality across the site, something which is described by the architect Susanne Tutsch as '*controlled chaos*'. Importantly, the area situated furthest from the building is a child-only area, which allows children a hidden space away from adults. With structures such as tree-houses and the galleon, a series of walkways and ladders connected to the ground with a wobbly bridge, the playground apparently reflects children's own desires for the site.

On completion of the project, a free toolkit of activities that encourage exploration of creative activities and play spaces was issued by the Building Exploratory. This includes a detailed description of the range of activities developed with young people for the creation of Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground. Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground won an RIBA award in 2011 and the international Children's Making Space Award 2010, which is only offered every five years. The children of the jury reportedly chose the playground, because it is exciting, sustainable and unusual, but also '*... because the scheme allows us [the children] to make the space our own*', according to a jury member. The facility inspired twenty more similar spaces in London thus acting as a prototype for local engagement and creative activity.

Resources

Architecture Centre 'The Building Exploratory'

<http://www.architecturecentre.net/docs/network/centres/?The+Building+Exploratory/0:92:0>
(accessed 18 March 2013).

Dudek, M. (2011) 'Erect Architecture: Kilburn Grange Park adventure playground, London', 29 March 2011, Architecture Today. Online. Available <http://www.architecturetoday.co.uk/?p=13307> (accessed 29 August 2013).

Erectarchitecture 'Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground'

<http://www.erectarchitecture.co.uk/projects/play/141-p-kilburn-grange-park-play.html>
(accessed 19 March 2013).

Flickr 'Creative Engagement Sessions'

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/exploringadventure/collections/72157625051654242/> (accessed 18 March 2013).

The Building Exploratory Blogspot 'Kilburn Grange Adventure Playground wins international Children's Making Space Award' <http://buildingexploratory.blogspot.gr/2010/10/kilburn-grange-adventure-playground.html> (accessed 18 March 2013).

The Building Exploratory (2010) *Adventurous Guides. Step by step instructions for 8 creative activities.* London: The Building Exploratory.

The Building Exploratory 'Exploring Place and Play'

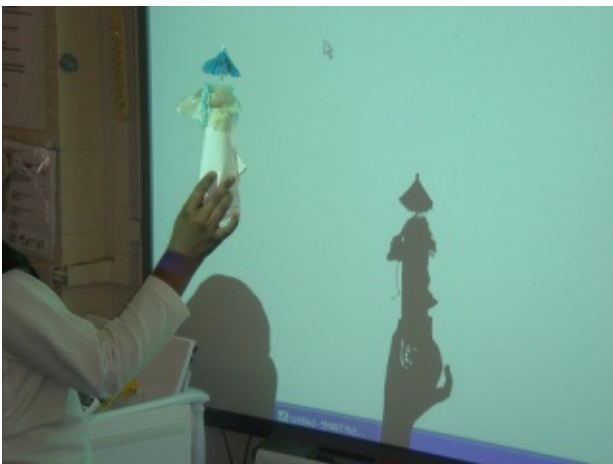
<http://www.buildingexploratory.org.uk/resources/#adventure> (accessed 18 March 2013).



Adventures in 3 Dimensions. Courtesy: The Building Exploratory



Jack Taylor casting paving. Courtesy: The Building Exploratory



Adventures with light. Courtesy: The Building Exploratory



Kilburn Grange Park Adventure Playground. Courtesy: The Building Exploratory