

## **Conversations Over a Brew**

Strong Women: Harriet Hall and Maura McKee of Interference Art with Carol Sharrock and Bella from Holy Spirit Primary School

Transcript

Recorded on Tuesday 2nd July 2024 in Holy Spirit Primary School, St Helens

N - Nat

B - Bella

C - Carol

H - Harriet

M - Moura

**51:15**

## [INTRO MUSIC]

**N:** Conversations Over a Brew is a series of intimate, recorded conversations exploring the stories and ideas of the people we make art with. This podcast is about the power of listening and conversation, and how making art can bring us together and create change. In this series of Conversations Over a Brew, we get behind the scenes of the Strong Women Project, a mural project highlighting the untold stories of local women. It has been created by mosaic artist Carrie Reichardt in collaboration with communities in St Helens and Knowsley. In this episode, we meet up with Maura McKee, Harriet Hall and Carol Sharrock. Together, Maura and Harriet are Interference Art, an artist duo who work in collaboration with communities to build resources on a wide range of subjects. Their work encourages us to engage with a fresh perspective. Carol is a year four class teacher at Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School in St Helens. Carol and her class have been collaborating with Interference Art to build two key stage two resources informed by the Strong Women project. We also hear from Bella on her experience of making the resource together with her classmates. The conversation comes in at the point where we begin chatting about the making of this work.

## [THE SOUND OF A KETTLE BOILING FADES IN, THE CLICK OF THE SWITCH INDICATING IT IS BOILED, WATER BEING POURED AND THE CLINK OF A TEASPOON STIRRING TEA IN A CUP]

**N:** And so together, we've been working on building a number of schools resources or two schools resources with Holy Spirit Primary School and that link in with the Strong Women project. And so I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about that process of co-creating with children on this project.

**C:** So as the class teacher obviously I know these children very well. And when we were approached to do this project, we thought that this would be an excellent opportunity for our children to explore different aspects. So, for example, history and art and lots of other cross-curricular areas. And, the project has been very successful for us. We've really enjoyed all the resources that you've been bringing in for us, and we've been able to enhance the children's learning by working alongside you and looking at that vision and everything else that that, that you've brought to the table. So yeah, as a school, we've embraced it massively because we enjoy mixing things up and we knew we had to enhance our historical learning and lots of other areas of learning. And using art always helps our children to be enthusiastic about learning. So. So that was one of the reasons that we decided to take on board this fantastic opportunity.

**M:** Yeah. We feel really lucky to have been working with you. We couldn't have asked for a better school partner. So really, across the last academic year, across this academic year, we've been working with Year Four at Holy Spirit and Mrs. Sharrock. And that's involved a process of us also working with Heart of Glass then. So we've had this work that's been

going on in school and work that's happened outside of school. So we've been doing some research and connecting with local historian Claire Rigby and the archivist for St Helens as well, Vic. And then we've also been working with another local historian, Sue Gerrard, thank you. Who's been absolutely brilliant and learning about how they have been not just seeking out, but sharing local stories about strong women in this local area. And they were a really brilliant source of research for us. So we've kind of taken that on and worked with you Nat to, to sort of pull out lots of different stories of strong women across the, across the centuries, really in this area, and then bring those back into school and work in creative workshops with the children in class and with Mrs. Sharrock. And key to that whole process as well, at the beginning was working with the school and working with you to really think about what what we wanted to get out of this, what experiences we wanted the children to have, what learning we wanted them to have, and also how we could go about doing that and really make something that's very useful for schools in this area and easy to use, practical to use as well. So that whole process of the research and working together collaboratively with all of these different voices has sort of gone into this melting pot over the last few months where we've been testing things out and trying things in class through learning history and making like, putting timelines up. And the children have been making artwork and drawing portraits of strong women from different decades and then finishing up with this sort of outcome of the resource, which is to actually interview a strong woman in your local community, and that being then that the children are taking part in building a local legacy and collecting up local history and sharing it, whether it be through an assembly or a display board in school or some other other way to share it with the local community. But that was sort of what we came up with together as what a really useful outcome could be. And yeah, using creativity and using art to explore history and change over time and connect with our local area and the strong women in it today.

**H:** And I think that the process of co-creation means that you don't kind of know what's going to happen at the end, that you have to do that sort of period of research and prototyping. And it's really important I think, to have those partners on board, like, like this school have really embraced and been happy to kind of co-... "Can we have an extra session? Do you think we can do this? What do you think about that?" And you've brought in your peers to have a look at it as well, which was really helpful but you need that open mindedness and that open door when you're doing something that's about co-creation to make it right and you need time as well. So it has taken quite a long time to sort of work out what's working and what isn't working, and kind of really it's that process of editing down an awful lot of information. And we're really passionate about art being useful and actually see a great benefit in using our design skills and creative skills to actually make something that other schools will use. So this will be printed and shared with other schools. So I think that it's been, I think that doing co-creation is quite a challenge sometimes, and quite a challenge to get your head around when it feels so woolly at the beginning for some people, and I think some with busy lives and a lot of expectations that teachers have put upon them externally, that actually it feels it feels like a bit of a risk. But the great thing about this school and with Heart of Glass' support that actually that that we

came to a place where we kind of worked through the muddy middle and kind of created something which is, which is going to be a good and useful tool for school,

**C:** I think as well from the children's point of view, there was a purpose to it. So very often, you know, we teach the lessons, obviously a purpose to them all. But I think for this one, because they knew that they were working in collaboration with you and you weren't coming into school just to teach them a specific skill, an art skill, it was all part of a bigger picture. They have enjoyed that journey. So when I said, "They're coming back in to show you all the artwork that you did last time" they were so excited because they were so passionate about it and all the different skills that you've taught them, we might not necessarily have the skill set to do that. So the fact that they've been able to see that journey from the beginning to the end and see how, "Oh, that's that's what that was for. That really works." So for them having a purpose I think is really important.

**M:** And it was invaluable having you from the outset with knowing the children and knowing the teacher's voice and also knowing the challenges that other teachers face in different schools and different classrooms as well, that the thing that I suppose you maybe walk into a school and you might expect teacher to say, "Oh, it would be great to deliver this part of the history curriculum or that." But actually, when we began speaking, you were like, it's about confidence and communication and oracy and that's what we really want to get out of this and use this resource to have conversation and dialogue going on, and confidence to stand up and share a story and talk about it by the end of it. So that's what that whole process has been designed to do, and hopefully it's worked.

**C:** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, they're very passionate about it. They really are.

**N:** And another thing I noticed when I took the prototype of the resource into the cluster meeting, which you helped me set up; the history cluster, so just for the listeners, these were history teachers from a group of schools that work with Holy Spirit. So a group of schools in St Helens. And when I took this resource to them, they commented on how important it was for children to see themselves in their own history. And this resource delivered on that. And when they had OFSTED coming in, that was one of the comments, like they needed evidence of the children being able to link themselves in with the history curriculum.

That's a nice, I think, example of when something that is an external expectation of you from somebody who's overseeing you actually matches up with an aspiration that you would have for your pupils. Is that sort of "Yeah, this is a nice way to do that." It's not a, it's not an imposition.

**N:** Yeah. That's that's the word. It felt very organic. And the children seem to really get on board. And so so moving on from that and linking in with all of that, I was wondering if you could speak to, and I think this a question for Carol - the impact or effect that this process has had on the class.

**C:** It's definitely had a very positive impact on the class, as you know. I mean, from the first day that you came in to when you... from the last day, which was last week the children absolutely loved the whole experience. And when you first came in and we're kind of in the hall, we were doing lots of different things and they lapped it up. They absolutely loved it. And they made quite a lot of links themselves between the people that we were looking at and the history that we'd learned last year in our local area project, we were learning about Bold Miners, and we'd learnt about a lady, Annie Nicholson, and she was somebody that you'd also brought to the table as well. So we'd learned about this lady because one of our members of staff here had found a letter from this lady, and so we used it as a resource. And then when you came in with more information about this lady that we'd learned about in year three, completely unbeknown to us, the children related to that and then could say, right, well, we learned this last year, so we actually know all about this lady. So this lady was a strong woman in St Helens from years ago. So then they started to piece it all together and, and since that first workshop where they created all of the different artworks, and then you went away and did the beautiful bunting and everything else, and they could see that their inspirations were all being used. They've just absolutely loved it. They've lapped it up. So every time you've come in to show them a new resource that you've created with them and because they've been on that journey, it's not just been something that they've been given, it's something that they can relate to. And yeah, like I say, they've absolutely loved the experience. And when I've told them that you were coming in last week, they were so excited. They were like, "What are we going to do next?" "What kind of things are we going to do next?" And I think as well, because we're using a lot of artistic, artistic stuff for them. Those barriers that some of our children do have seem to be broken down because there's lots of different aspects of art that you are using to tell the story. So even if there is a child who finds it difficult to do that particular piece of art, there's lots of other things going on around that they can try. And it's all about trial and error and making it work. And I think the way that you've delivered it, being really empathetic, excuse me, with the children and knowing them because you do know them now and they know you and they like you in the classroom and having that relationship, I think it's almost kind of built up so much now that, that they expect you to kind of be there and by their side and help them. And it's nice. It's a nice, nurturing relationship that they like.

**H:** Also, we're bringing the creative chaos. Do they like that Carol?

**C:** They love creative chaos. Now, teachers might not particularly like that. We quite like order. But. But the creative chaos, even though it can sometimes feel that way, they will sit and they will absolutely love the thing that they're doing. And it was interesting last week when we were doing the trial and error on the black paper. And, and halfway through it was like, this isn't working. We need to go back and try it again. And it's nice for children to see that mistakes can be made and rectified quite quickly, and they don't need to worry if they make a mistake. So yeah, it's been a fabulous experience for them.

**H:** I think there's something really... doing something that's kind of history related, but also bringing that creativity. I think it gives us an opportunity to sort of process, so sort of interjecting kind of factual things and sort of one of, one of the things that we asked for the young people to support us on, the pupils to support us on this kind of like what text works and reading things out loud. So there was kind of that critical eye on how history might normally be presented, which is through words. But having that creative aspect helps us and gives us time, I think, to do a little bit of processing to, by looking at a picture of a person, a photograph of a person, and then making a drawing about that person you're spending a bit of intimate time with, with a bit of history, aren't you?

**M:** There's also that thing of whenever you've got an archive image that you're working at and getting to know that person, just as you're saying that you're using what, like what will refer to it as like your artist eye to look at that image and suddenly you're starting to notice things of like they're very contextual and it opens up all sorts of conversations. And it's such a lovely thing I think that that happens in the classroom. It's one of the great pleasures of the job that we do is making a new space or a refreshed space for children to have those encounters with things and to talk amongst, you know, when I come up with ideas and suggestions and questions and really get their curiosity fired up, and also it's a different space for the teacher. It just creates a different space for you to actually, like, have a moment and be able to like, step back or step in in a different place.

**C:** And it's lovely to be able to sit with those children that you don't, you wouldn't normally sit next to in a normal lesson. And look at their creativity and listen to the conversations that are taking place. And the conversations are about what they're learning. They're not just talking about anything. And those conversations are really sometimes, can be really quite deep. So it does bring that out of them. Yeah.

**N:** This is the second time that you've worked with Heart of Glass on creative projects. And also it's the same class as well. So the first time was when your class helped build a mural with Billy Colours, which is just around the corner from this school. How do you see, what's the benefit of working with artists, would you say? And how are the children - are they getting used to working with artists? Are they changing their ideas about how they perhaps approach creativity, or is that just a bit too much for them right now?

**C:** I'm not sure. It might be too much for some of them, but I think for some others there's definitely an aspect, especially when we work with Billy Colours that was really key because they knew that it was going to end up in the local area. So for them, it's something that they've created and something that they can be proud of every time they go past it. We also did another bit of work with Heart of Glass, and that was like we did the lovely structure that looked like glass. And it was an art installation that we actually had in the corridor for ages, because it was so beautiful, and all the colourful lights coming through and stuff like this. And the children absolutely love that, those aspects. They are, we're really lucky because we do get a lot of people to come into school to enhance their learning. And I think when having artists in school kind of frees their mind a little bit to think

outside of the box. So if it is a case of sitting in the classroom and, and doing some painting or some rubbings or something different than they would normally do in an art lesson that's opened up their minds a little bit more. So I think working with Heart of Glass over the last few years has definitely enhanced their outlook on art skills, because we do have a curriculum, as you know, and we do stick to our curriculum. But that doesn't mean to say that we can't enhance it with other areas of art. So yeah, I do. I definitely think that having the artists in school shows them that actually this is art isn't just a subject that you do on a Friday afternoon or whatever. It is actually something that is out there and all around us and seeing some of the street art that they've created brings it to life for them. So yeah.

**H:** Yeah, lots of them have, we're working on this new project about strong street art. And actually because of all of the work that Heart of Glass have done throughout the years, it's there, visible straight away on the streets and they're incredibly sort of proud of that and that and that fact that it's art has been embedded throughout their years. I think it's not just that. Show up. Do something quick.

**M:** Do a workshop. Yeah.

**H:** And that's what for us is really important about co-creation actually that it sort of is a sustained thing that is really going to impact and embed in their thoughts for the future really I think so, yeah. They've brought up Billy Colours quite a bit and that's quite interesting isn't it? There's lots of things by doing these projects that are kind of come to the surface and it's sort of consolidating learning, but also consolidating all those positive experiences that you've had with creativity. So I think that's really important that that's sort of continued throughout time.

**M:** And creating those, those new and positive connections with the place that you live as well as with each other, and the fact that maybe it maybe you start to look at art not just as an experience in a moment, but as a tool and a tool for thinking and maybe progressing your own skills. And you may not end up being an artist, but certainly it gives you things that you can use in your everyday and how you notice things, or how you maybe reflect on something and, you know, take a moment to actually stop and pause and talk to somebody about it or share it with somebody too. That's all part of it, isn't it? Not just makers, but thinkers and then also the very tangible thing of using your hands and your body and to learn with as well as using your, your mind and your knowledge.

**N:** And I think that leads me on really well to my next question. And it's for you, Maura and Harriet. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about the importance of creating the resources that you do in the way you do, and how Interference Art have developed this practice over however many years you've been working together.

**H:** We were chatting about this earlier, weren't we? And just that I think as artists we're always learning and doing and making mistakes. So that's, that's something I think that's

really fundamental to our desire to kind of create resources perhaps that look at things from a slightly different angle, how we recognise that some of the things that we do can share information in perhaps a different way. So I think that's really important. And we always sort of within our workshops, one of the things that we think is really important is, is that art is a place to sort of make mistakes, because we recognise that there's lots of expectations of you know, thinking about the school curriculum and thinking about my child within school and working a lot in school. There's kind of targets to meet, and they can be met by kind of quite a rote learning sometimes. And there's kind of rights and wrongs with, with some subjects. And the great thing about being an artist and creativity is there's, there's room to explore those a little bit more and not having that kind of polarised right and wrong, and also within creativity and kind of some of the processes we use, which is kind of quite, quite mindful, arty activities that mistakes can be made. And I think there's learning to be had from not getting things perfect. So I think that's sort of some of the things that I think that an artist might bring to perhaps something that seems more, kind of like we are making a history resource, but along the way we've done lots of other, lots of other things towards it.

**M:** I think, yeah, this question really has made me think about my motivation for getting involved in this sort of work and why co-create things with people. And it made me think back to the big television getting wheeled in in school to watch like an educational programme for 20 minutes, and it was always an English accent or an American accent. And I think that's sort of stuck back with me of like, actually that importance of hearing and seeing yourself in something and how much more connected you feel to it. And also it makes you feel valid if you're, you're being represented. So I think that's something that's really important to both of us that it's sort of whatever it is that we make, whether it's a really long term project where we're changing, making a built environment, or we're making a paper based resource to take you through a, you know, a series of, of, of lessons that might lead to an outcome. And it's for you too - that's not always the message that you get in life. And when you see your local place and names from your local area, and women who have traditionally not been celebrated, or working class histories that have not traditionally been written about and they are being, it's great to see being addressed and this is part of it, and the children are now part of that as well. It is sending out that message very clearly that it is for you too.

**H:** And their hand is in there as well, quite literally. You know, when you look at this resource, you recognise that a child has taken part and made things and drawn things. And I think that that also becomes a very strong message that they're their design, their letters, their drawings are within there. So another child recognising that even though it's not directly them will see, "Okay then I see where this is coming from." And I think that those sort of, it's a background message really to a piece of information, but they're so important in making something feel welcoming, which I think is an interesting term to talk about and to talk about a resource. But yeah, we we want to kind of have it as a -

**M:** It's an invitation.



**H:** Yes. Yes.

**M:** And and also by being an invitation it provides, we like to do things and it's really clear that you do as well, like for loads of different learning styles. Like you brought all of that expertise to this and all of that feedback and richness to this whole process for us. And what that does is it results in something where there are lots of ways in, like you were talking about, you know, things not necessarily being a traditional way that you would consume history. There were images and drawings and patterns and you know, maybe reading a fact and sharing it and talking like all these different things, they provide a different way into something that you might not have felt was accessible to you before, and also through doing a range of different creative processes to create an outcome. There's also lots of different things you can take out of it as well. I think that's important. One of the things that's really important to us about co-creating resources and having something that's there to be used and be useful.

## **[A BRIEF RELAXING AND SOOTHING MUSICAL INTERLUDE PLAYS]**

**N:** I'll ask you some questions. We'll probably both make mistakes. It's fine. And we can repeat things, go back. Whatever. But I was wondering if you could tell me a bit about what we were doing together. So what were you doing with Interference Art? So that's Harriett and Maura, who are sat just outside. And me.

**B:** Street art. Mosaics. Rubbings. And some toothbrush flicking with, like, crayons on.

**N:** Yeah. So that was last week. And do you remember when we first came in at the beginning of the school year, and we started talking about the history of St Helens and the strong women. Do you remember that as well?

**B:** Yeah.

**N:** Yeah. And can you remember a bit about what you did then?

**B:** A little bit. Yeah We did. So we had these like stencils and we had a piece of paper and we had this like weird looking pencils thingies. We used the side of them and then started like colouring with them.

**N:** And it was fun, wasn't it? I had a lot of fun because I was helping you out as well. We were doing it together. So I was wondering after all that, because we've done a lot of work together. Do you have a favourite bit?

**B:** Yeah.

**N:** What was that?

**B:** The mosaics.

**N:** That was last week, wasn't it? It was a lot of fun. What was in your mosaic?

**B:** Some hearts, some dots, some blue squares.

**N:** And we were making some rubbings together. And do you remember what you said to me?

**B:** Yeah.

**N:** Yeah. What did you say? It was funny, wasn't it? So we were doing some rubbings, and Harriet and Maura suggested that we use more than one colour. But you didn't want to. And why was that?

**B:** Because it wouldn't look right.

**N:** And also, you told me it was because you were a strong woman. And you are. So we had a laugh at that. That was fun. I was wondering, did you learn anything new?

**B:** Yes.

**N:** What did you learn?

**B:** How to do mosaics. And I never knew you could put water crayons on a toothbrush and then start flicking it. And it makes that.

**N:** Oh, that was good, wasn't it? Do you reckon you'd do that at home?

**B:** Yeah.

**N:** Would your Mum and Nan let you?

**B:** Most probably. Maybe. Yeah, depends.

**N:** The first project we did, obviously was Strong Women. Now we're doing street art. And we've spoken just before about how you are a strong woman. What does the word strong woman mean to you?

**B:** That every woman are capable, so they can do anything that a boy or man can do.

**N:** Exactly. And do you think St Helens has lots of strong women?

**B:** Yes.

**N:** And who is - do you have a favourite strong woman?

**B:** Yes.

**N:** Who?

**B:** Annie Nicholson.

**N:** Oh, yeah. Can you tell me a bit about Annie Nicholson?

**B:** So, back in the day, in the pit thing, she was like a pit worker. And because women were not allowed to do many things, she did it anyway. And I think she really enjoyed that because it made her feel like she found a place where she wanted to be.

**N:** And do you think that's part of being a strong person, whether that's a man or a woman, that you just know your own mind and you're like, "No one's going to put me down. I'm going to do that."

**B:** Yes.

**N:** Yes. So I was wondering - because we spoke about the murals. I was wondering if you had seen the Strong Woman mural down the road.

**B:** I saw the one on the roundabout.

**N:** Yeah, because you made that one. That's a street art one.

**B:** And then further down you turn that way and there's like, a little strong woman thing there.

**N:** Yeah. Have you looked at it?

**B:** I drive past it every morning. Yeah. And going home.

**N:** What do you think of it? Do you like it?

**B:** Yeah, I think it just looks lovely, but on the side of some brick wall.

**N:** Yeah, it's on the side of Parr Conservative Club, isn't it? And maybe if you have chance, if you go up and look at it properly, it's a mosaic, just like we were doing in class. But the mosaic -

**B:** With the letters!

**N:** Yeah exactly. But the mosaics are made out of clay, and then that clay is baked. So it's hard and it lasts forever. And each of those, there's a lot of hearts. So the hearts are the tiles. And inside those hearts are the names of strong women. And so yeah. Have a look. It's really good.

**B:** Seriously?

**N:** Yeah. Seriously. So next time you're driving past, just ask to stop and just have a look and you can touch it and oh, it's really nice. And so last question and it's a big one. What do you want to be when you grow up.

**B:** Two things actually.

**N:** Go on.

**B:** I haven't decided yet though. A makeup artist or an author. I don't know which will suit me better yet.

**N:** Maybe you could do both. What kind of makeup are you interested in?

**B:** All sorts.

**N:** Yeah. Is this, is it makeup to make you look pretty, or is it makeup to make you look different? Or is it both?

**B:** Both. Except making yourself look like a clown.

**N:** Okay. Never a clown. But what about a cat?

**B:** Maybe.

**N:** Okay. And what kind of books would you write?

**B:** More like romance and different types.

**N:** Romance books I can't wait. We'll keep in touch. Okay. Thank you.

**[A BRIEF RELAXING AND SOOTHING MUSICAL INTERLUDE PLAYS]**

**N:** So you've mentioned this a little bit previously, in a previous comment, about the resource that we're currently building now. So it's the street art resource, that also links in with the Strong Women project. But this time we're linking it in with rather than local

history, but PHSE themes and I think from previous conversations with you Carol, this is sort of a new topic or there's more information that you now have to teach to the children. So I was wondering if you could speak to how a bit about the process of building this resource and working together and how this resource can help deliver that PHSE curriculum. And also in previous conversations, we had an interesting chat about that making of mistakes and how when you were listening to perhaps other podcasts about teachers, that reassurance that it's okay to make mistakes but learn together with the children. So big question, but yeah, if you would like to speak about that.

**C:** I know when we were asked to, to be involved in this particular project one of the things that we were talking about was the, the protected characteristics, which our children, we are working really hard with our children to get them to understand what these are firstly, and also those kind of links to British values, you know, respect and tolerance and all of the really important, fundamental things that these children really need to have and how we can kind of embed that not just in lessons that they do and learning about these things individually, but also in the way that you've been coming in and doing the artwork with us. So for us, the protected characteristics, it is quite new. And we have always kind of had an undercurrent of it in our PSHE lessons and in our British values when we've been talking about those. But recently we've, we've kind of brought it to the fore because we think that it's really important that our children learn those different characteristics of everybody in order to kind of promote that respect. So working alongside you and looking at things, you know, things like, I mean, there's lots of things around our school that say, you know, 'choose kind', 'mistakes help us grow.' Things like that. And these are all these little affirmations that we think are important, regardless of what our children's background, they are very important that our children understand that, that they are valued. And but that's sometimes not the easiest thing to teach somebody that they are valued. So when you came along with this particular project where we were looking at those thoughts and those characteristics, it was for us. It was, "Right, yeah. We need to grab this one, because this is one that we really need our children to kind of enhance in their own minds, really." And what we did last week was, was fantastic looking at, you know I would never think of doing this, but a magazine and taking pictures out of a magazine and cutting them out because that person looks happy or that person looks joyful or it's attributing all of those words that we know and we use with our children all the time. It's attributing them to then go ahead and do a piece of artwork that looks like how we want you to be feeling and speaking about people and people's characteristics and stuff. So yeah, that's why we thought this one was going to be a really, really good one, a meaty one, I think.

**M:** Well, yeah, the outcome that we're, we're working that out at the minute. So we're at the, we're getting towards the messy middle. We're sort of still moving from the beginning stage to discovering what is it and how. Now we're getting into the what is it, how can it work? And I think the children have been such an important part of that process like that, the last session that you were talking about, that we had in class, where we were trying out lots of different processes to inspired by street artists who've made street art that's visible in this local area that some of the children knew.

**C:** They did yeah. The street art, which is down the road. Yeah. For the strong women and and I think that again gives them that purpose, doesn't it? They can relate to it. It's their town. It's their art. They walk past it every single day. So when you showed them that, it was like, yeah, I know that. And then the resource kind of came from that, didn't it? It was almost like, well, we're going to do something similar.

**M:** And there's something about that of like, so Heart of Glass had some really beautiful photographic documentation of, of that art practice and of those murals that have been created in the local community. And I think there's something about having that high quality look to something, as well as the high quality outcome that suddenly takes it from, oh, it's a wee local art project to it's on a par with the world, the world stage. And it really elevates maybe your aspirations for what you could do as well and how you think about something that you've taken part in as well. But yeah, the children's voices like in that session were so... they're brilliant. They're so honest. But thoughtful in what they say as well. So.

**H:** And I think there's something in that, of we're going to explore something that you see these artists are living and making art right here, right now. So they're not like long gone. And also that they have interesting interpretations of the world. And they're going to, you know, we're going to use them as people and the things that they make art about to sort of open up a question perhaps for, well, how do you see the world and, and, and how do you want to share what you see in the world? So it's kind of in using, using that sort of source material, which I think is really useful. And they can model, perhaps through their voices and through their messaging, perhaps some some things that bring up discussion. And I think being, making art is, is about kind of, it is about the doing and the making, which we did a lot of last week and a lot of creativity. But also along the journey, there'll be some thinking, because actually artists really sort of literally look at things from different points of view. So there's that sort of aspect of curiosity where perhaps we can kind of open up conversations and, and that will be a really useful thing, I think, when it comes to stuff, that actually is quite a challenging thing to to know where to start from and talk about. So I think that through that we'll be able to do that. And we did and we started doing some sort of mind mapping during that project and I think that was a sort of helpful way to get those creative thoughts flowing and kind of offering up sort of suggestions of, you know, sometimes prompts and provocations. I think because sometimes when you kind of look at that curriculum, it feels very there's a message there and it's very clear. And this is, this is what you are going to learn about. Whereas I'm really interested in sort of tipping, tipping that balance to say, hang on a minute, you're young people in this world actually, what what are your values? What's important to you? And actually, I think a school is such a fantastic little microcosm of a community that you can really have those conversations thinking just about this little world that you spend a lot of time in. And if the world outside school is very challenging and difficult and has all sorts of things going on. Actually, a lot of children find school a place where it can be a haven of things. So when you learn about how to interact with each other, how to not get on and how all of those things work within this, this world of school, I think that's a really important thing. And to bring attention to that

through making a resource that's going to go on display and be shared with the rest of the school, I think is a good, is a good way of looking at it, really.

**N:** And it gives the children credit. And I, I always catch myself when I'm working with a group of kids because I don't work with children all the time. And then it's your own prejudice. You think, oh, you're an adult, you know more than a child, and it's not - you catch a child and they're incredibly perceptive, just as intelligent as you are. They just don't have the years of experience or whatever that you have. And so building resources like this and particularly this latest one in this way, and I'm thinking of exercises like the mind map, it validates that young person's own opinions and says, you know, this is totally correct. That your opinions count. And let's work with this. And yeah, I'm thinking of particularly children like Annabelle, who are incredibly chatty, incredibly switched on, and you catch yourself like, oh, hang on, they know exactly what's going on.

**C:** Like, it's almost like they've been here before, isn't it?

**H:** And I think as a designer, I think that sort of feedback is really important. And, as artists, we have to take on kind of our constructive criticism and actually some of the best feedback and the best critical friends are actually the pupils themselves have really been kind of very insightful and make it very clear when things aren't working or when things are kind of clicking into place. So I think that it makes for a really solid end outcome. If you've got their voices and their eyes on it.

**C:** And they're very honest. Oh yeah. You know, they're very honest. So you know that when they're telling you something usually it's, it's from the heart. They mean it. And if they are finding something difficult then they're going to tell you honestly and, you know, brutal.

**M:** But it's such an important thing isn't it, going through that process of testing things out together because you yes, you get those, those potentially brutal comments, but you also have that experience of all of us have been trying it out together as artists, as in the teacher role, and Nat, you as that producer role as well. Being in that room of we've got all of these eyes and ears watching and observing as well. So it's not just in the the comments that get made. It's also in the questions that get asked. And it's also in the just observing, because children can be very good at knowing what is being asked of them, and sometimes trying to perform to that and being able to unpick that and interpret and watch the behaviour and discuss it afterwards has been such an important part of the process as well with you of just like, oh, I noticed this or what was that suddenly then that can totally flip something. So when you were saying earlier, Harriet, about like, you don't know what it is like quite, quite a long way along in the process sometimes. Or you think you might have got a hook into what it is, and then all of a sudden when you test it out, you're like, "Oh, no, it's not that at all is it." And it's that, you get such a moment of clarity and then that's like, "Oh, we've done it, we've got it. We've switched light bulb on together. We've, we've made it and we've made this thing." And you know, there's a little bit of magic

in it then. And you're like, "This is the way, this is what it's going to be and this is what it's going to do." And it's brilliant.

**N:** Final question. And we've spoken a bit about this before. About using art as a tool to teach other subjects. So I was wondering if you could speak particularly Carol, about the value in cross-disciplinary teaching and linking other subjects with art and teaching subjects through art. And if you see that as a value at all.

**C:** I do see it as a value. There are, like I said before, there are a lot of learning barriers with many children, and sometimes even just the thought of having a conventional lesson might put the fear of God into some of them. But when we try and teach them through a different way. So, you know, for example, we've now got a workshop going on which is drama in the hall, and it's all to do with democracy, which is part of our British values. And the children will learn that through drama, which is fantastic. As a Catholic school we try, if we can, through our Come and See lessons, our R.E. lessons, to enhance those by our, our, our R.E. books are ridiculously arty. They're beautiful. We get the children to use some mindfulness when they're, when they've looked at the scripture and then maybe do some colouring around it. Or we might re-enact part of the scripture by doing drama or doing things like hot seating and stuff like that. So there are lots of different ways that we like to try and interweave the arts into what the children are learning. But I think in this, for this aspect of things. So for the things like the PSHE, the protected characteristics and, and also from our point of view from history, the introduction of art into it has kind of, almost kind of brings it alive. There's lots of things where we can interweave art really. And we've just finished a piece of writing on Vivienne Westwood, and we're also doing textiles in D.T. So we've kind of looked at that and, you know, so there are lots of ways that we can do that. And I think as a staff here, we are now more aware of that. And probably because we've had the experiences with you guys as well, the fact that when you have come in, you've been able to show us that actually it's not just art. This isn't just an art slot, for half a day or a day, lots of other things come into play. So even little things last week, I'm sure there were lots of mathematic, kind of like things that we could have talked about last week when you were in - the size of the paper. And why did the square have to be that big so that we could get the paint through? And all of these things you can kind of discuss with the children and they don't necessarily know that they're learning it that way, but it is a way of bringing all of those subjects together. So yeah, there's lots of ways that we can interweave art into our curriculum. Definitely.

**H:** I think so, and we often sort of say, "Oh, we're going to use our artist's eye." Or actually, "Artists aren't just about the making, they're also about the thinking." And also, sometimes an artist might need to be a scientist or a mathematician or a historian. And the great thing about an artist is they bring all of those things to the table. And so I think it's really important to sort of reiterate that, that actually, you know, creativity comes in many forms and that's how our brain works. It isn't singular. And life's not, you know, life's not single maths or about history. As we walk through life, all of those things are going to come upon us. So being ready for approaching problems in a creative way, I think is really really a



useful skill. So yeah, I think it's really. And that helps us think about a subject from a different point of view.

**M:** And, and having that acknowledgement that everybody perhaps has a slightly different perspective as well is really important. You don't necessarily perhaps always get that experience in life of like, "We should all agree to this thing, but maybe we don't. Maybe we have differing or slightly differing opinions." And I think that's where an acknowledgement of each of us being individual when and because the thing that you make is different. Your drawing is different than the person next to you. You could be looking at the same thing, but it's just such an obvious and tangible thing that it opens up space for nuance that may not otherwise, there may not otherwise be space for. And where there's space for nuance or space for discussion, communication and for influencing each other, or for understanding each other I think that's what that does. Like it creates a different, a different space for different types of conversations, doesn't it? Whenever you bring the knowledge and the making and the thinking and all of those things together, it's just so rich and it's so clearly a part of your practice as well Carol, you know, that it was like lining up of the stars and meeting of minds and values. And when we came to meet with you and do this project.

**[OUTRO MUSIC PLAYS AS NAT SAYS THEIR FINAL THANK YOU]**

**N:** Thanks for listening to this episode. Check out the show notes for more information about this project. We'll be back again soon with another Conversation Over a Brew.

**51:15**

**END**