

# Artistic Fusion



**Susan Ogier demonstrates how children can explore their creative talents within citizenship and geography lessons...**

**A**rt and design can be a key curriculum area in which to base compelling learning experiences. It is a subject that can help children to understand difficult concepts through practical activities; and it also provides space for them to reflect on prior learning and consolidate their ideas.

A good art class will be both relaxed and focused. It should encourage children to be more independent and develop their organisational skills - the social aspect of making artwork also provides an important space in which children can discuss ideas, negotiate with each other and develop confidence in their own creativity.

Images and Identity, the EU funded action-research project based at Roehampton

University London, is an excellent model of how creative, cross-curricular learning can work in practice. The following example provides a model that links art, geography, ICT and citizenship.

If you decide to try any of these activities we would love to hear from you, but always remember the exciting part is designing a framework that suits your individual setting, and one that will enable your own creativity to flourish.

## European Union

Leila, a Y5 teacher in outer London, used an art project to explore her pupils' perception of their identity as European citizens.

Teaching a multi-cultural class, which included recent arrivals from Eastern Europe and Africa, Leila hoped to develop community cohesion and encourage children

Look at contemporary artists such as Wendy Ewald, Cindy Sherman or Gillian Wearing to inspire photography projects that explore identity

# Quick draws

## THOUGHT-PROVOKING STARTING POINTS FOR INSPIRING ART PROJECTS...

### CREATE A CULTURE

Show children examples of art from different cultures around the world and then ask them to create their very own culture. Which colours and patterns would feature on their national costume, for example? Can the children design a flag that symbolises their culture? Can they use ICT to design a pamphlet that will encourage others to find out more about their new civilization? The children might even invent their own art movement!

### ADD LAYERS

Many artists use layering techniques to add depth and interest to their visual work. Why not use aerial views and maps to inspire the children to make a multi layered, large scale wall hanging? It's a great way to combine geography with art.

Tape long pieces of lining paper together to make a large surface for children to work on. They can use rollers to paint a background and then alternate collage and paint. Sections of each layer should be allowed to show through as the children build up an image that is reminiscent of an aerial view. The last layer might be made of smaller geometric shapes to signify detail.

### DISPLAY MIND MAPS

Make mind-mapping a thoroughly arty experience by providing each group with a large sheet of paper along with collage materials and paints. As children explore an idea, suggest they add their own drawn or painted images, as well as pictures cut from magazines and newspapers. Add text and annotations on top of the graphics to express ideas. When finished, immediately displays the maps on a wall space to allow whole class comment and reflection.

*“They explored the idea that each person's identity consists of many layers”*

different aspects of their cultural identity. These were now printed out and glued to the new landmark, so children could physically place themselves within the work.

The rich discussions that took place during the practical activities, and the whole class reflection that followed, gave Leila the opportunity to assess the children's understanding of very complex notions, such as their perception of themselves in a wider community. She could see that working in this way had allowed the children to appreciate each other's individual contributions to the diversity that existed within their Y5 class.

to gain a deeper understanding of each other's lives.

She began by using mind-mapping exercises to find out what the children understood by the concept of 'identity' and how they might define an identity for Europe. Pupils were also asked to find an image they thought represented Europe and bring this to school. Famous landmarks and flags emerged as common features and this information provided a theme for the project.

## Layers of identity

Leila selected a range of digitally manipulated self-portraits produced by different artists, as well as examples of European architecture, and put these on display. Looking at the pictures with the class, she used open ended questions to start a discussion between groups and the whole room.

The children soon started to spot similarities and differences between themselves and the portraits. They explored the idea that each person's identity consists of many layers and is therefore unique.

Pupils went on to express this by drawing images to illustrate the different aspects of their own lives; sketchbooks, for example, provided a valuable home-school link as children interviewed their parents about family heritage.

## A landmark event

In the next session, children worked in groups to create a new 'landmark for Europe' in 2D on large sheets of paper using charcoal, paint and collage. They learnt about colour mixing and using materials in experimental ways.

Earlier on, the pupils had photographed themselves wearing costumes that represented

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Art and Design	What does our appearance say about us? Ask children to bring in clothes that express aspects of their identity. Pupils should dress up and take photos of each other in their outfits.	Make masks or costumes that show aspects of children's own family backgrounds. Introduce craft and textile techniques, such as embroidery and appliqué, or batik.	Visit an art gallery. Use the trip to encourage children to observe and record landmarks along the way.	Groups invent their own new landmark: Use 2D or 3D media to make representations, and collage the dressing up photos that children took earlier into the work. Display these in a central exhibition area.
Citizenship	What is identity? What makes us unique? Which aspects of our identity do we share with others?	How diverse are the families in this class? What traditions do they uphold?	How should children behave in the gallery? Why is this important? Open a discussion about rights and responsibilities	What have you learnt about each other whilst doing this project? What have you learnt about diverse cultures in Europe?
Geography	Look at maps of Europe. What aspects of life do the different countries in Europe have in common? Make group mind maps that show these ideas	What part of the world are children's families from? Use a large world map for children to place drawings or photos of themselves and family members.	Ask the children to create a map charting their journey to the gallery. What landmarks will they place on the map?	Create European 'passports' or ID cards: Chart which countries would accept these imaginary documents.
ICT	Use the internet to find an image that represents Europe. Ask children to explain why the image was chosen.	Children collect photographs of themselves wearing the masks and costumes and place these onto a shared class site.	Ask children to choose and print out a selection of photos. How are they making their choices?	The children make individual PowerPoint presentations based on their work during this project. These can be shared with each other, parents and exhibited on the school website.