



There are so many good memories to choose from. In one school, a child who was known for her disruptive behaviour and inability to concentrate asked to be allowed to continue painting through two break times. At the end of the day she looked physically different, more relaxed and open. Her work was beautiful. The



teachers were amazed and I told them that I thought she needed to paint and asked them to allow her to do it every day for a while, even just for a short time. I hope they did!

Inspiring practice no. 2: Maria Hayes, artist

What are the distinctive features of your practice when you work with children?

I would say they lie in the ways I seek to blend skill building with enabling the individual's imaginative expression through a group experience of the creative process. Working together, often in collaboration with other art forms, can develop the work in unexpected and rich ways. Everyone is naturally creative, but social *mores* often inhibit and block our imagination, so I devise workshops that allow and encourage spontaneous creative expression.

How would you describe your own practice as an artist?

Drawing is at the heart of everything I do. Sometimes I draw with time (film or performance), sometimes in paint, sometimes three dimensions, sometimes pixels, but most often I draw with ink on paper. Investigating how to draw movement has been a constant theme in my work, and I've drawn a lot of dancers, music and the natural world in motion. Looking at the world is important to me, as is developing an intelligent, sensual response. Observational drawing is a skill I continue to develop. I am intrigued by the relationship between the facts of the world as we are now coming to understand them through new scientific discoveries and other forms of research, and the myths humans create - narratives that seek to explain mysterious aspects of being. Increasingly I work between the facts and the fictions, the observations and the imaginings.



How does that relate to your work with children?



I have always devised workshops that relate to my current studio practice. Whatever processes, techniques and ideas I investigate in the studio are tested in workshops. The participants, who have been children in the main, always give me new ideas and my whole practice has developed in collaboration with all those workshop interactions. I know it's going well when I see a child completely absorbed in the creative act, when they are at one with themselves and the world, lit up with the excitement of discovery and learning.

You've given us one of your good memories. Are there any bad ones?

Only from the early days when I didn't really know what I was doing and made mistakes in how I set workshops up. It's rarely the children that are the problem, it's much more likely to be the adults around them and the situations they put children into. The more frustrating aspects of delivering workshops are the increasingly short times and being asked to deliver to large numbers. My preference is always for quality over quantity.

Maria Hayes was interviewed for ACA by Neil Rathmell