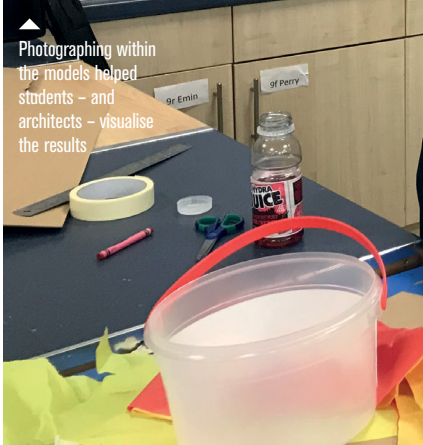


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▲ Photographing within the models helped students – and architects – visualise the results

▲ Concentration is everything – Adam Peavoy and student Blanka Valcsicsak (far right) helping pupils with model making



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The next generation

How could we bring young teens closer to the world of design and architecture? In what way could we better connect Cambridge's local communities and university students? The Cambridge Association of Architects (CAA) joined the University of Cambridge's Department of Architecture, and the staff at Chesterton Community College to help answer these questions

CAMBRIDGE'S DESIGN WORKSHOP WAS ORGANISED AND CARRIED OUT BY: ZOE CHAMBERLAIN AND SOPHIE HAWKINS OF CHESTERTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE; DR IRIT KATZ OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY; AND ZE'EV FEIGIS, ANASTASIA ORPHANIDOU, MARGHERITA CESCA, ADAM PEAVOY, ROWAN LOGAN, SUSIE LOBER AND ANN BASSETT OF THE CAA

Architects from around Cambridge, students and academics, joined secondary school teachers in March for a design workshop at Chesterton Community College.

The workshop consisted of a number of design-related challenges culminating in a model of a pavilion designed to enhance an under-used area of the school grounds. A cohort of some 60 pupils from Year 7 worked enthusiastically in groups of four or five on each project. The programme was designed and

▲ Student Camille De Waele demonstrates model making techniques to pupils

RICHARD FRASER PHOTOGRAPHY
 Photographer for RIBA House of the Year 2018
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led by University of Cambridge Year 2 architecture students.

The CAA relishes the chance to engage with the public in any meaningful way, both to enrich the understanding of local communities in architecture and design, but also to flex our own abilities in multidisciplinary design and teaching. To work with school-age pupils is all the more rewarding, not only because of their energy and imagination but also because their uninhibited expression of thought and way of looking at things is often less burdened than our own.

This was the fourth workshop at Chesterton and the first collaboration between the CAA and the Department of Architecture.

When the workshop was first conceived and organised in 2017, its overarching objective was to promote and help develop skills usually associated with design courses, through the lens of architecture and its practice. Similar exercises in spatial reasoning, designing, and particularly in making are often well outside many school-subject curricula. Yet, an architect's (or designer's) skill set – be it graphical and verbal representation of ideas, spatial understanding, developing and responding to briefs, conceptual thinking or simple hands-on making – is widely applicable and transferable to a multitude of professions and necessary life skills. Promoting and developing these skills can have an impact on not just those pupils-architects participating in the workshop but on everyone's understanding of the value of good design.

Change trigger

This year's workshop was conducted as part of Year 2 course 'Acting through Architecture', which aims to introduce students to architecture and architects as catalysts that could potentially trigger socially orientated spatial and urban change.

The course discusses the historical and theoretical aspects of design activism and related approaches such as 'tactical urbanism', 'grassroots architecture', and 'participatory design'. It examines their constant change from the responses to the modernist architecture of the welfare state to current contexts of neoliberal urbanism worldwide. By aiming to reformulate socio-spatial structures, such as questioning the gap between 'the designer' and 'the user', and by seeing architecture as key for generating positive social changes, these approaches offer

alternative forms of spatial production based on democratic processes.

The workshop provided an opportunity for students to collaborate with the CAA and Chesterton pupils, a process in which they have learned, through a hands-on experience, possible ways to engage others in a design activity that they have prepared. The workshop provided a first-time experience of the challenges and opportunities of guiding and working with others in developing design ideas.

Collaborative process

The university students immensely enjoyed the workshop, particularly the valuable chance it gave them to work with children on the principal stages of a design process while becoming aware of the complexities and joys in such a collaborative activity. They were amazed by the children's imaginative and creative capacity, while understanding the importance of allowing meaningful space for such abilities to be expressed and developed.

The students noticed the importance of the social structure of the groups they were working with, identifying the challenges in enabling all children to participate equally. The workshop has also allowed students to engage with communities living in Cambridge, both schoolchildren and CAA architects, reducing the distance between 'town' and 'gown' while enabling everyone to learn from each other.

Importantly, the CAA members present provided the Year 2 students with examples of how they could contribute to their future communities, beyond their standard working day. This experience was invaluable in encouraging students to become socially involved architects and aspire for design activism in their future communities and professional life, with the pupils enjoying the guidance of architects and of young students, who, like them, have also engaged in a new experience and studied new skills.

The day was thought to be a great success, with the students, pupils, and architects all gaining valuable insight. The CAA intends to repeat the workshops in the coming years and hopes to roll them out to other schools in Cambridgeshire, possibly with a real building project.

Elegance of shape and form created from simple materials



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