

The  
Fitzwilliam  
Museum  

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CAMBRIDGE

inspire



A celebration of children's art in  
response to Jacob del Sellaio's  
*Cupid and Psyche*

The Fitzwilliam Museum

10<sup>th</sup> December 2019 - 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020

# About AccessArt

Our project partner AccessArt is a registered UK charity founded by Paula Briggs and Sheila Ceccarelli. AccessArt aims to inspire and enable high-quality visual arts education by running workshops, projects, and events and sharing teaching and learning via their website. Income created by memberships is used to develop inspirational resources and advocate for the importance of art in education.

Find out more at [www.accessart.org.uk](http://www.accessart.org.uk)

Cover Image:

Jacopo del Sellaio (1442 - 1493)

*Cupid and Psyche*

c.1473

Tempera and gold on a wooden panel

# Introducing *inspire*



Year 2, Arbury Primary School  
Pencil on paper

‘Going to the Fitzwilliam really inspired me that art isn’t just a thing: it’s emotion -it shows how the painter feels, and that museums are magical places. It gives people the chance to experience history and to make memories.’

Matilda, aged 9, Cheveley C of E Primary School

Looking at objects is an excellent starting point for research and investigation. Over the course of the Inspire project, artists, research scientists, conservators, educators, and pupils have all spent time looking at and learning about Cupid and Psyche by Jacopo del Sellaio.

Inspire builds on The Fitzwilliam Museum’s long-established schools programme which encourages students and teachers to look deeply and thoughtfully at objects and images, and to respond imaginatively through thinking, talking, and making together. Over the last year, hundreds of children have visited the museum to look at the painting, and thousands more have studied it at school using our digital learning resources.

Developed in partnership with AccessArt, Inspire celebrates young people’s creativity at a time when there are widespread concerns over the decline of arts subjects in schools. It builds on the National Gallery’s Take One Picture project and takes one painting as a source of inspiration across the curriculum.

# About Inspire

The Inspire project was developed in response to findings from the 2016 NSEAD (National Society for Education in Art and Design) survey which found a significant decline in the number of art specialist teachers in primary schools, with 55% of subject coordinators rarely or never attending subject-specific training. Although 67% of art teachers stated that they would like to attend museum training, only 25% were able to do so. Inspire provides this much needed training to develop teacher knowledge of art and design and to improve their confidence developing cross-curricular projects taking inspiration from museum collections. In early 2019, 68 teachers from 40 schools participated in Inspire training sessions led by museums educators and artists from AccessArt.

## Looking



Many teachers brought their classes to visit the museum and look at the painting of Cupid and Psyche. Those who were not able to come to the museum looked at reproductions of the painting.



Remy and Jakub from Wheatfields Primary School discussed perspective, buildings, and trees. 'The artist did it like that so you could see what was going on inside' said Remy.

## Making and trying things out



Teachers and students challenged themselves to test new ideas, materials and processes as part of the project.



Some students re-told the story using drama, role play, and creative writing. Stamford School turned the wooden fort in the playground into a stage set and used dressing up clothes to act out the story.



Reception pupils from Thriplow Primary School re-created Psyche and her sisters in clay and made their own natural landscapes.



## Working together



Some schools worked with a small group of students, who then shared the project back at school. A steering group from Samuel Pepys School visited the museum and used props and sensory materials to develop a role play inspired by the painting. They then went back to school and led a project on Greek myths with other students in the school.



St Laurence Catholic Primary School combined many different forms of art to create a whole-school project which re-told the story of their school as they had recently celebrated their 50th anniversary. Pupils interviewed past and present teachers, students and parents to collect memories to be represented as collages

Many schools looked at the painting in different ways with pupils of different ages, providing opportunities for pupils to take the lead in their own learning and follow their own lines of enquiry. They held celebratory assemblies and exhibitions and invited families and members of the local community to admire what they had made.

Over 3800 primary school pupils across Cambridgeshire took part in Inspire project over 2019. Sadly we were unable to exhibit every project by every school. However, the exhibition marks the launch the next phase of Inspire as we expand our offer for schools and develop these partnerships. We will continue to invite teachers to celebrate and share their work with us as part of a growing community of dedicated and talented artist teachers. Together we are committed to ensuring that all children have access to art and culture and much needed time and space to look, think and create.

Kate Noble, Inspire Project Lead  
December 2019

# List of Works

## Wall 1



Brilliant Makers Club, Year 4 and 5,  
Morley Memorial Primary School  
**Magical Cupid's bow and arrows**  
Mixed media

'Focusing on the theme of 'change' and 'love' in the painting, the group discussed inspirational people who were changing the world for the better. The children decided what positive change they would make if they had a magical Cupid's bow and arrow to shoot into the world. Responses ranged from arrows that stopped deforestation to arrows that helped people read.'

Maya Dalby, Art Coordinator and Year 5 teacher



Year 2, Arbury Primary School  
**Cupid and Psyche**  
Pencil on paper

'After running a training session for staff based on the painting and activities from AccessArt we held a whole school assembly where we heard the story of how the painting was made, what it was used for, and then we heard the story of Cupid and Psyche as it is shown in the painting. Year groups and classes then engaged with the project in many different ways. After studying the painting at school, we extended the offer of learning to families, inviting them to the museum. Comments from parents and carers underlined that they enjoyed having the chance to come along and learn about something the children were working on at school. Families were able to stay on, following our time with the painting, as part of the Museum's monthly Family First event. This drawing is by Olivia, aged 9. She coloured it in at home and brought it back into school as she was so proud of it.'

Diane Rawlins, Deputy Head Teacher

## Wall 2

### The Story of Cupid and Psyche

This picture tells the first half of the ancient Greek story of a human princess, Psyche, who marries the god of love, Cupid. It was painted for a very grand bedroom in fifteenth-century Florence, which doubled as an entertaining space for the wife's friends. The bedchamber was furnished at the time of a wedding, with a bed and chests but also painted stories that celebrated the love of a newly married couple. This story highlights the loyalty of the bride to the groom, as was expected in the fifteenth century.

### The story is read from left to right like a cartoon strip

1: Cupid is sent to cast a spell on Psyche by his mother Venus, who is jealous of Psyche's beauty

3: Psyche is blown off the top of a mountain by the god Zephyr who carries her safely down to rest in a soft bower.

5: He invites Psyche to live with him on the condition that she will never ask his true identity.

7: A drop of oil lands on his skin, he wakes up and is angered by Psyche's lack of trust.



2: Cupid falls in love with Psyche and is unable to carry out Venus' evil plan.

4: When she awakes, she finds herself at a beautiful palace where she is welcomed by an invisible, but kind, master (Cupid, in hiding from his mother).

6: They are happy for a while but then Psyche's sisters persuade her to look at him whilst he sleeps.

The story continues in a second panel (in a private collection). Cupid returns to his mother, Psyche searches for him and is captured and enslaved by Venus. Cupid pleads with Jupiter, king of the gods, to free Psyche. He agrees and Cupid and Psyche are married.

Does the story remind you of any other fairy tales you know?



## Wall 3



Year 5 and 6, Willingham Primary School

### Landscapes

Tempera and gold on a wooden panel

‘I enjoyed learning about different techniques and it was fascinating to find out how artists made paint from natural sources.’

Jessica, aged 10, Willingham Primary School

‘The children were fascinated to learn about the materials that artists used in the early Renaissance, when there were no art shops or ready-made paint. They read a little of the writings of Cennino Cennini and experimented with making a form of egg tempera of their own. The pupils concentrated on the temple in the background and were keen to try adding gold leaf. They felt reflected the fact that the oracle was a special person, whose advice came from the gods and was trusted in difficult times. The gold leaf was a new and exciting technique to the children.’

Sara Varty, Art Teacher



# Doorway 1

**Cupid:** Salve Psyche. Why did you do it Psyche? Why couldn't you trust me?

**Psyche:** Salve Cupid. Because I have never seen your face and I just can't bear not knowing what you look like.

**Cupid:** Well I'm sorry but I still think you could have trusted me. I have given you a beautiful palace to sleep in, I have given you the most wonderful food, I have given you a splendid garden with fountains and goldfish and I have given you invisible servants to serve you day and night.

**Psyche:** Well I know Cupid but I'm married to you and I needed to see your face. If the drop of oil hadn't spilt, you wouldn't have woken up and then you would never have known I'd done it.

Year 5 and 6,  
Little and Great Shelford Primary School  
**Psyche's phonecall**  
Creative writing

'We studied the painting together through role play and creative writing and used Cupid as inspiration for dressing a mannequin in our village phone box. Classes take it in turns throughout the year to dress the mannequin as a different character. We imagined what Cupid would say to Psyche if he telephoned her and then displayed this dialogue in the village phone box and in the village newsletter. The pupils were drawn to the corner of the painting where Psyche lifts Cupid's wing. We discussed what someone would see if they lifted our wing to reveal our own secret selves- a side to us that maybe no-one else knows about. We thought about what we would secretly do instead of going to school- what activity would truly reflect who we are? The pupils painted a miniature portrait of themselves engaged in this activity and made paper feathers to form two large wings to hide their secret selves.'

Mrs Rosamund Ashton and Mrs Dawn Scott,  
Year 3 Class Teachers

Year 5, St Peters Primary School  
**Love letter from The Resilience of Psyche**  
Mixed media

'Use the pockets of the jeans to put Cupid's love letters in. He was really with her when she went on her quest. He said nice things to her and put them in her pockets.'

Harry, aged 10

'A group of children, 'The Fitzzy Peters,' became fascinated by Psyche's resilience during her period of grief and loss and made significant connections to the story during our PSHE lessons. We decided to extend the children's learning by running a Summer holiday project. The children decided to tell the story of Psyche through a dress designed especially for her at Studio 15 in Wisbech.'

Natalie Bailey, Year 5 Teacher and Art Lead

# Wall 4

Year 1, Bottisham Primary School

## Trees

Collage and paint on paper

‘Ash class noticed the number of trees within the painting. This led to a discussion of different shapes and exploration of ways of drawing trees. Children used a range of resources and techniques such as collage and colour mixing. For their final piece, children chose their own preferred methods.’

Mrs Swift, Class Teacher

Year 3 and 4, Bottisham Primary School

## Wings

Pastel, charcoal and paint on paper

‘Cedar Class were inspired by the movement of the characters in the picture, particularly those with wings. We studied how different artists interpreted winged creatures including humans and the movement of wings. We then completed detailed studies of real feathers and wings using different mediums. The children were encouraged to look carefully at the shapes of different types of feathers and the structure of wings.’

Miss Cridland, Class Teacher



Year 3 and 4, Bottisham Primary School

## Landscapes

Mixed media on paper

‘Elm Class were inspired by the landscape in the picture, possibly because it is so different to Cambridgeshire and what they know. They imagined they were in the painting at particular times in the story, looking out at what they could see. We tried lots of different materials, experimenting with the effects they could produce.’

Mrs Ociepko and Mrs Walker, Class Teachers

## Wall 4

Year 1, William Westley C of E Primary School

### **Birds**

Paint on wooden panel

‘Rory was fascinated by the falcon on the suitor’s arm and so we decided to focus our Year 1 project on falconry and birds of prey. With the Raptor Foundation, we sketched real raptors and learned about their behaviour. We watched a Harris Hawk and a Barn Owl fly over our heads. We decided to paint onto wood just like the painting.’

Anna Shepherd, Class Teacher



Year 1, Mayfield Primary School

### **Black and white tiles**

Ink on paper

‘All the children were introduced to the painting of Cupid and Psyche and their teachers used it as a basis for discussion; each class then chose their own specific focus and each child was able to explore and create an artwork, either individually or as part of a group. The project culminated in the schools annual end of year art exhibition, where the corridors of the school were transformed into a gallery and parents and children were invited to walk around the school to look at the work created.’

Hannah Dupré, Year 2 Teacher

‘Year 1 looked at the details in the painting and chose their favourite parts. They used their drawings to make tiles of their chosen part. They used the tiles and inks to print in black and white.’

Clare Hewlett, Ruth Cambell and Steph King, Class Teachers

## Wall 5

Year 5, Linton Heights Junior School

### **Upscaling Cupid and Psyche collaboratively**

Mixed media

‘10 teachers and 242 pupils studied Cupid and Psyche as part of our creative art week. Every class in the school approached the project in a different way. At the beginning of the week all children were given a new book to record the lessons that they took part in. All subject areas were covered across the school using the picture as inspiration.’

Rosie Komodromos, Year 4 Teacher

‘The children were split into groups and given a section of the painting to upscale and recreate. The children had to think about precision of where their details were going to go, so that when we joined the sections together they matched as much as possible. The pupils needed to use a range of media, texture, tones and materials to create their collaborative pieces.’

Kirsty Webb, Class Teacher

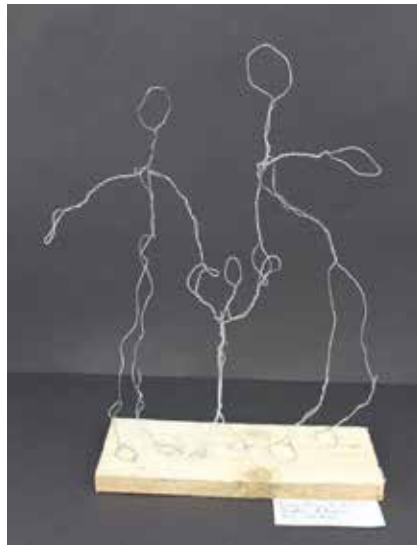
Year 4, Kings Hedges Primary School

### **Preliminary sketches for Psyche’s Bower**

Mixed media

‘After discussing and enjoying the painting, we thought about how it could inspire our own artwork. We settled on making a beautiful bower of plants to break Psyche’s fall from the mountain. We drew examples of real meadow plants and then turned them into sculptures using wire and tissue paper.’

Helen Marshall, Class Teacher



Year 2 and 3,

Harston and Newton Community Primary School

### **Wire armatures**

Wire on a wooden base

‘After deciding on the theme of love from Cupid and Psyche, the children used wire and reclaimed wood to represent what love means to them. Some children showed the love between themselves and their parent or sibling. Others showed love for the Earth. Many children chose to create their much loved pet in wire, even Blaze the Turtle. The children were able to bend and twist the wire quite skillfully. Importantly, the children were able to problem solve when the figures did not go according to their original plan.’

Janette Evely, Class Teacher



## Wall 6



Year 2, Wilburton Primary School

### **Collages**

Mixed media collage on paper

'Pupils created a quick collage of a small section of the painting as a warm up. This was an activity I had learnt on the training day. They each chose a small section of the painting to reproduce. I modelled how to do this and showed techniques such as tearing and curling the paper. Pupils then began a larger collage on A3 and could choose from a range of materials to recreate a scene from the painting.'

Rowena Winn, Class Teacher

Years 3, 4 5 and 6, Heritage School

### **Bedrooms**

3D mixed media, fabric, cardboard

'Year 6 went to visit Cupid and Psyche at the museum. We drew parts of the painting that we liked and decided to concentrate on the bedrooms. We made furniture from recycled objects. After studying Renaissance patterns, we drew portraits for the walls from this period. This showed children how art style and taste changes over time, and help them to build an idea of what life was like historically.'

Emma Robertson, Art Teacher

## Wall 6

Cheveley C of E Primary School

### **Poseidon's storm**

Paint on paper

'After listening to the Greek myth in the painting Leland and Antoni researched more about other Greek gods. They learnt about the god Poseidon. They were inspired by their visit to the museum where they learnt to observe the backgrounds in painting to create mood. They worked hard on their own painting backgrounds to create the stormy mood.'



Bartosz and Toby from  
Cheveley C of E Primary School

### **Zeus**

chalk on brick

'Bartosz and Toby worked hard together on this project. They were interested in the Greek gods focusing on Zeus as he is the most powerful. They used this project as an opportunity to experiment and learn a different and new medium of art. They took inspiration from the different sizes of art work at the museum and the different types of canvases used.'

### **War is in the air**

Paint on card

'Harry and Jacob were fascinated by the painting being painted on wood so experimented with using a different canvas, which led them to use cardboard. They kept Cupid's wings and combined him with another ancient god, Mars. They wanted their object to be practical like the fans they saw in the museum, so they decided to make it into a badge.'

### **Hades in a boat**

Mod roc, paper and paint

'Jack and Brandon worked hard together and developed their ideas. They were interested in the Greek myth in the painting so researched other Greek gods. They found and liked an image of the Greek god Hades in a boat and wanted to make a 3D model like the objects they saw in the museum. They worked hard to use this new art form and proud of their finished piece.'

Tom Sweeney, student teacher and  
Anna Shepherd, class teacher

## Wall 6

Year 6, Milton Road Primary School

### **Cupid and Psyche**

Cyanotype

‘The children used sketching and shading skills to recreate a small segment of the painting in black and white. Then they chose part of the painting they particularly liked, and drew and cut out a silhouette from black paper. These were arranged on photosensitive paper and left in the sunlight. To develop the pictures we washed the paper in water – watching in astonishment as the silhouettes turned blue. The chemical reaction was like magic!’

Mary Williams and Gareth Williams, Class teachers

## Doorway 2

Year 1 and 2, Hauxton Primary School

### **Leaves**

Egg tempera and gold leaf (Taken from large class tree)

‘Using gold leaf was really tricky but it made our tree look really special’

Emily, aged 6

‘The class decided to focus our art project on the unusual looking trees in the picture, and linked this with scientific investigations into plants. We asked Professor John Love to carry out an investigation with us on what colour light plants thrive better in. Each part of a tree has a part to play in its survival and each pupil in the class had a part to play in the success of our project. These leaves are part of our beautiful final piece that show their experiments with egg tempera and gold leaf.’

Pamela Stewart, Class Teacher



## Central plinth

Year 5 and 6, Willingham Primary School

### Clay figure of Cupid

Clay

‘This group researched portrayals of Cupid and Psyche in other media. They looked at Psyche Revived by Cupid’s Kiss by Antonio Canova (1757 – 1822) and were keen to create a 3D clay figure. They were concerned that it might fall over before it was dry and cleverly decided to use Cupid’s arrows to strengthen and support the structure.’

Sara Varty, Art Teacher (55)



Year 4, Kings Hedges Primary School

### Psyche’s Bower

Mixed media

‘We settled on making a beautiful bower of plants to break Psyche’s fall from the mountain. We drew examples of real meadow plants and then turned them into sculptures using wire and tissue paper. We decided that we could not just exhibit single plants, but needed to show them all as they are all required to create an effective, soft, fragrant bower.’

Helen Marshall, Class Teacher (32)

Year 3,4,5 and 6, Great Giddings C of E Primary School

### Temples

Mixed Media

‘The children were inspired by the idea of symbolism and storytelling in art. They wanted their own creations to represent their own stories. They considered how they could display this through symbolism and were drawn to the temple on the hill within the painting. They decided to create their own temple to enclose a symbolic artefact that represents something important to them or their story. The children researched materials and ways to build their structure. The children were proud of their finished creations and intrigued by the similarities and differences between each of them, noting the uniqueness of each temple.’

Lyn Smith, Higher Level Teaching Assistant



## The exhibition continues

In gallery 31:

Year 5, St Peters Primary School

### **The Resilience of Psyche**

Mixed media

‘The main fabric is denim, we thought this showed resilience. It’s tough and can take the harshness of life. The underneath of the dress is soft, white tulle showing Psyche’s soft innocent side. Every single part of the dress has a message, a reason for being there.’

Tomasz aged 10

In the courtyard staircase:

Histon and Impington Junior School

### **Falling into Flowers**

Mixed media on fabric

‘The painting was introduced to all teaching staff and shared with the children in the school. We followed a suggestion from a Year 5 pupil to focus on the bed of flowers and the idea for the sheet of fabric came from the original purpose of the cassone to hold linen. Each week information was included in the school newsletter and families were encouraged to visit the painting in situ. Some members of the extended community also contributed flowers towards the final piece.’

Amy Hilton, Art Subject Leader



In the schools lunchroom:

Year 4, Haslingfield Endowed Primary School

### **Collaborative piece in response to Cupid and Psyche**

Collage on wooden panels

‘The picture was introduced to the class by the Year 6 children who had been to the Fitzwilliam. Year 4 then retold the story in their own words. The project fitted with our English unit on ‘Twisted Fairy Tales’. The painting was used as the inspiration for the children’s own Twisted Fairy Tales which we joined together into one story. The class was divided into groups and worked together to plan out how they wanted their part of the story to appear. On the day of the Big Draw we worked with artist Jenny Duke, parents and art students to bringing our vision to fruition.’

Christine Kimberley, Class Teacher

# Research



We also carried out further research on the painting here at the museum. Painting Conservator, Vicky Sutcliffe from the Hamilton Kerr Institute looked at the back of the painting and examined X-ray images to work out how the wooden panel had been built. You can see where the wood has been joined together on the back.

## How to make a panel

We also commissioned Elspeth Geldhof, a historic paint conservator to make the reproductions you can see as part of the exhibition. Paola Ricciardi, our Senior Research Scientist, analysed the painting and was able to tell Elsbeth exactly what pigments del Sellaio used.

1. Prepare wood by sanding the surface.
2. Paint layers of gesso (Carrara marble dust, fine chalk and rabbit-skin glue.)
3. Sketch outline of picture using charcoal.
4. Grind pigments, using a pestle and mortar, and then a glass muller.
5. Make paint by mixing egg yolk, water and pigment.
6. Apply gold leaf very carefully.



# The Schools

## With thanks to all the schools that took part in the project

Arbury Primary School, Bottisham Primary School, Cheveley C of E Primary School, Great and Little Shelford C of E Primary School, Great Giddings C of E Primary School, Harston and Newton Community Primary School, Haslingfield Endowed Primary School, Hauxton Primary School, Heritage School, Histon and Impington Junior School, Houghton Primary School, Kings Hedges Primary School, Linton Heights Junior School, Mayfield Primary School, Milton Road Primary School, Morley Memorial Primary School, Peckover Primary School, Robert Arkenstall Primary School, Samuel Pepys School, St Laurence Catholic Primary School, St Peters C of E Junior School, Stamford School, Stapleford Community Primary School, Thorndown Primary School, Thriplow C of E Primary School, Cambridge University Primary School, The Vine Interchurch Primary School, Wheatfields Primary School, Wilburton C of E Primary School, William Westley C of E Primary School, Willingham Primary School

## Thank you

We would also like to thank everyone who has helped realise the project including colleagues across The Fitzwilliam Museum and Hamilton Kerr Institute; our project partners AccessArt; exhibition lenders The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences; the teachers, parents, carers and wider communities that supported the the children's creative achievements; and the Marlay group and the funders, supporters and partners who make possible the museum's work with children and young people.



The reverse of  
Jacob del Sellaio's *Cupid and Psyche*

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