

ARTS AWARD Case Study 3

Penlee House Gallery and Museum, Penzance



Penlee House is a Cornish public gallery which specialises in the Newlyn School artists (c.1880-1940). The collection also focuses on West Cornwall's archaeology and social history and is housed in an elegant Victorian house and park.

WHY DO ARTS AWARD?

This was the first time Penlee House had been involved with Arts Award. Arts Award was one of the strands of the strategic funding which the gallery received as part of the 'For Cornwall' partnership of five Cornish museums and galleries. Part of the funding was used to appoint an Arts Award Co-ordinator who made links between the local schools and the five museums and galleries.

WHICH LEVEL AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE IT?

The project involved students from a local Academy working at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of Arts Award. They had already started Arts Award in their school with their Community and Music Co-ordinator, who was trained as a Bronze / Silver Arts Award adviser:

- Bronze level students needed to develop their artistic skills
- Silver level needed to organise an event
- Gold level needed to gain feedback in response to the film that they had made

Penlee House offered their gallery as a location to do all of these things.

WHO DID IT?

The project was split into two stages. During the day there were nine Bronze Arts Award students and six Silver. During the evening another 19 Bronze Arts Award students and one Gold student joined them.

The Arts Award Co-ordinator worked with the schools Community and Music Co-ordinator to develop a range of activities suitable for different levels of Arts Award and the assessment was done by the Community and Music Co-ordinator.

WHAT DID THEY DO?

The project started with an initial meeting with the Director of the gallery and the Silver Arts Award students. They discussed the organisation of the event which was to be held at Penlee House. The event was a showcase for music, poetry and dance produced by the Arts Award students in response to the gallery's temporary exhibition. After an initial planning meeting these six students took over the organisation of the event. They thought about what limitations they might face in the space. They decided on a 1940s theme as many of the works on display had been produced at the time of the Second World War.

The gallery also linked this event with Takeover Day (www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk/takeoverday/takeover-day/) the national initiative run by Kids in Museums which encourages children and young people to actively participate in

their local museum or gallery. On Takeover Day the Silver and Bronze Arts Award students went to the gallery.

At the gallery the students:

- Were introduced to the exhibition
- Composed poetry directly inspired by the works on display
- Rehearsed a dance piece for the evening event
- Took over Penlee House's social media to promote the evening event and to publicise examples of their poetry – a haiku fits nicely into a tweet!

In the evening the additional Bronze level students arrived. They were musicians and technical crew and they set up their equipment and refreshments stand in the gallery. A combination of Bronze and Silver level students performed 1940s songs and music, plus their poetry and dance pieces, to an audience of 100 family, friends and members of the general public. Within the galleries the Gold Arts Award student exhibited a film they had produced.

WHAT DID THEY LEARN?

The Bronze Arts Award students and Gold Arts Award student were able to further develop their artistic skills in poetry, dance, music and film, producing new works in response to new stimuli.

The Silver Arts Award students gained an understanding of running an arts event and working in partnership with an arts organisation.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

The gallery was very pleased with the event for several reasons:

- The gallery connected with a teenage audience which they would like to do more often
- The staff developed a good relationship with a local Academy and they hope to work with them again
- The Academy is now more aware of the support a museum can offer students undertaking Arts Award

The gallery signed up to be an Arts Award Supporter. They now promote the opportunities they can offer to support Arts Award to other schools and groups using this event as a model.

QUOTE FROM MUSEUM

This project successfully brought together Arts Award and Takeover Day. For the gallery, it highlighted an excellent way to engage young people with our collections. It was fantastic to see and hear the students' responses to the works and to have our exhibition interpreted in new ways. The students really took ownership of the project and we were very impressed with all their hard work.

As this project shows, museums and galleries do not necessarily need to run Arts Award themselves but by working in partnership with schools and other Arts Award centres we can very effectively support young people in gaining their Arts Award.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH OFFICER, PENLEE HOUSE

Contact the Arts Award helpdesk at
artsawardenquiries@trinitycollege.co.uk
020 7820 6178

Arts Award is run by Trinity College London in association with Arts Council England working with 10 Bridge organisations.

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