

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

MOTHERSHIPON: GROW AND PLAY



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MANCHESTER
1824
The University of Manchester

 **Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

**RURAL
ART
HUB**

**MSA
LIVE 23**

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Partners

Joseph Schneider, is an artist whose practice, though centered on the processes and objects of painting, is multi-disciplinary. As part of his practice, he founded and runs the Rural Art Hub and continues to use the Mother Shippon studio to work alongside and collaboratively with participants of workshops at the hub. He has a BA in Philosophy (University of Sussex) and an MA in Painting (Royal College of Art). He has facilitated interdisciplinary and skill-building workshops across art, play, and social history at a diverse range of organizations including WM College Camden, South London Gallery, PACE, Frieze, Royal College of Art, Goldsmiths University, and Greenwich University.

Rural Art Hub is focusing on climate change and sustainability and intends to use creative solutions to address the lack of creative thinking about sustainability in the community. They believe that this initiative will help them achieve their goals and offer opportunities for local communities and visitors to get involved sustainably, both in theory and practice.

Agenda

Mothershippon: Grow and Play

The Rural Art Hub and its Mothershippon Studio has nurtured a community, in rural Ellesmere focusing on engaging in sustainable art exploration through experimentation and play. This live project looked to elevate this exploration and to further provide a platform of growth particularly for the community of children who visit the site. The Rural Art Hub has a focused mission towards sustainable living and finding creative solutions towards a better future, and we looked to amplify this mission by focusing on how our interventions can have a lasting influence on sustainability through upcycling and adaptability.

Through a collaborative engagement, we looked to design a "Growing Pavilion" and adaptable "Play Structures" in the courtyard of the Mothershippon Art Studio – together forming the "Grow and Play" that has become the running title of this live project. The project looks to design a sustainable space that promotes awareness about climate change and encourages experimentation with materials. The "Growing Pavilion" speculates on the potential of growing spaces for sustainable craft material, to promote social inclusion and awareness on sustainable practice. The "Play Structures" proposes an architectural response on how an adaptable, temporal system can augment the exploration/expansion in the Mothershippon Playground!

The project meant for the development of a physical site model and the exploration of sketch models as a means of design speculation. A preliminary visit to the site allowed for a deeper integration with the social context of the project, as we rolled our sleeves and got stuck in with the 'messy' exploratory culture cultivated at the Mothershippon. We looked to present our interpretation of the Mothershippon and provide a series of interventions that would become the canvas for future expansions and experimentations.



Image Bottom:
Site Visit to the Rural Art Hub

Our Process

Mothershippon Mania Map

With the MSA Live Action Weeks, it was full steam ahead for the Mothershippon group! We sought to engage in a wide range of media and to emphasise group activities as a method of research and collaborative practice. Captured below was a great example of one of these activities, as we joined together to unleash our inner child-like fascination (akin to the Rural Art Hub community) and produced our very own Mothershippon Mania Map!

Our initial plan with the exercise was quite different and abstract, but we found the Mothershippon Map as a more relevant backdrop to initiate a contextualised playfulness. It allowed for a fresher perspective and dynamic change of pace within the team, and we were thrilled to see the final piece!

Further collaborative exercises included speed-sketching workshops, which encouraged all ideas for the Mothershippon Playground. It was a great chance to nurture a more informal environment and we were happy to see the team bouncing ideas off each other as we continued towards a stage of idea refinement.

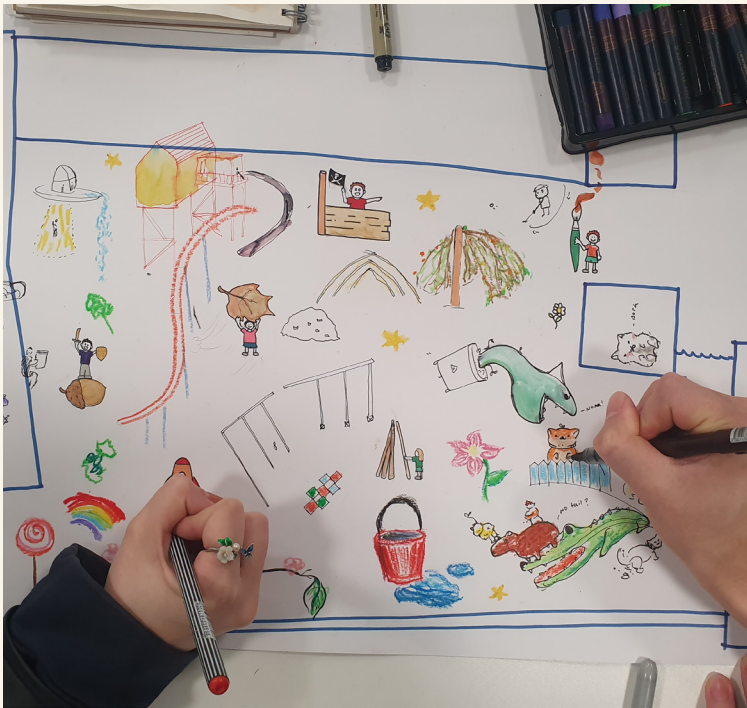
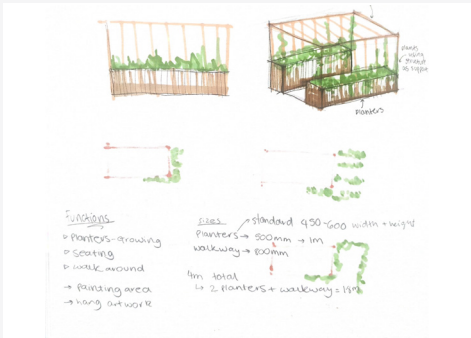
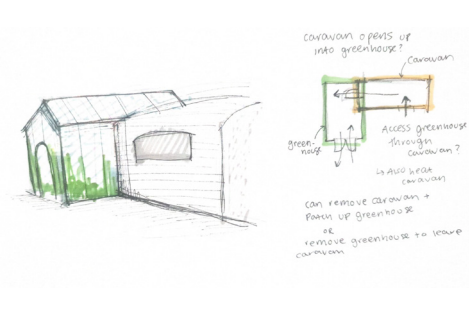
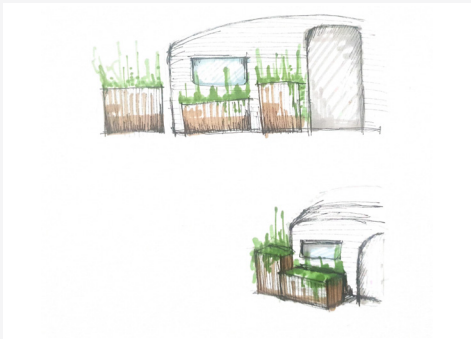
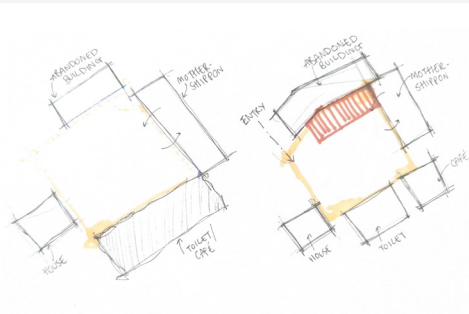
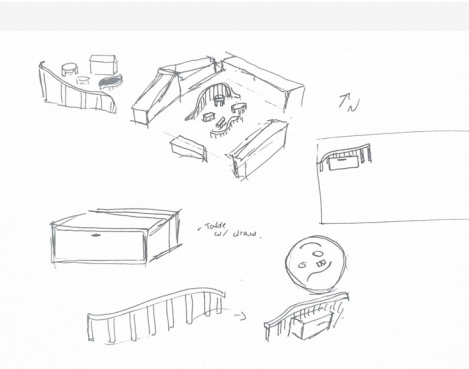
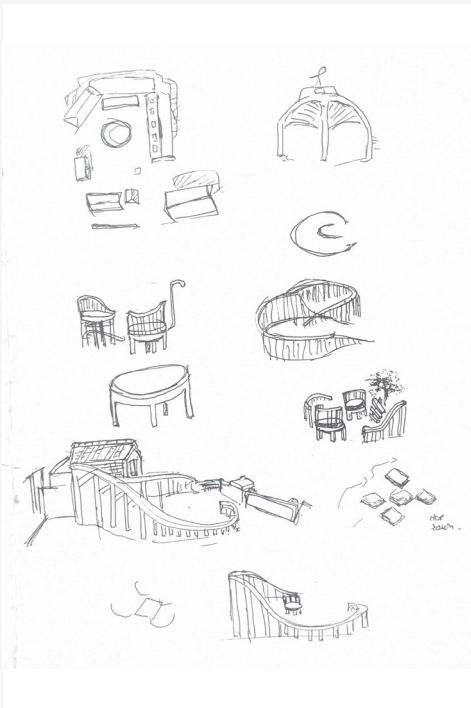
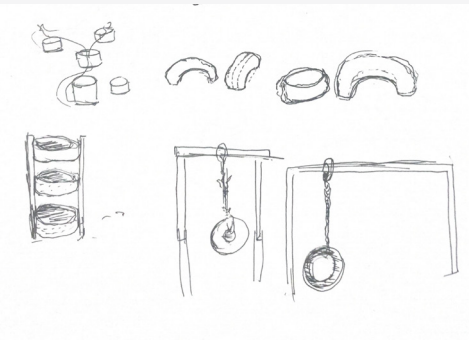
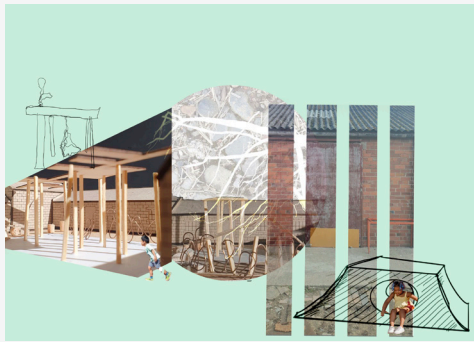


Image Bottom:
Mothershippon Mania Map

(Opposite Page)
Image Top:
Students' sketches of
Growing Pavilion

Image Bottom:
Students' sketches of Play
Structure



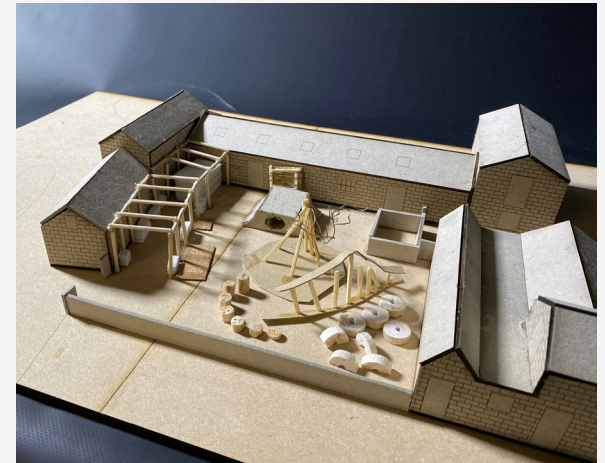
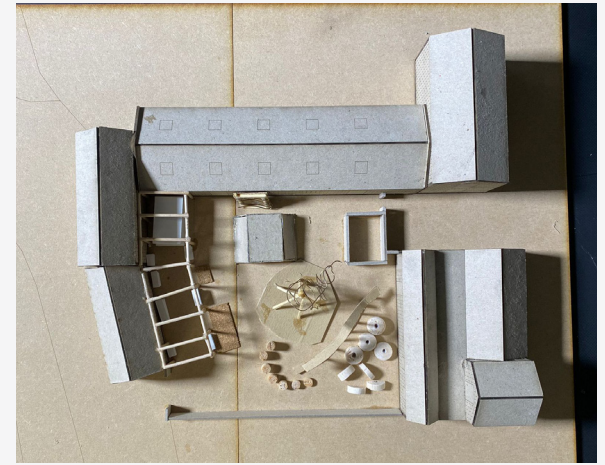


Initial Exploration

Stemming from our preliminary visit to site, we carried out our analysis of site and developed a series of research with the team on issues of construction methods and sustainable practice. As we began analysing the potential of our brief through group discussions, we felt it was ideal to create collages to portray our interpretations of the site and speculate on its possibilities on an experimental level. With upcycling and DIY methodologies in mind, we were able to start considering a variety of materials along with the possibilities of the space through our collages.

Modelmaking provided a fun and engaging exercise to translate thoughts into physical forms, we were fluid and instinctive in our thoughts while modelling. We visualised ourselves as the children at the Rural Art Hub and continued to produce process models to test on the site.

The yard has two main components, the growing area, and the play area. Initially we designed these within two sub-groups, each collaborating with core themes in mind. This was followed by a group exercise, wherein the two teams collaborated in intertwining the two, establishing a hierarchy of spatial languages whilst maintaining the functional poetics associated with both.



Growing Pavilion

Following our analysis of site, and research on sustainable practice, the team began speculating on the "Growing Pavilion" intervention. We started off assessing elements that constitute a growing space, considering soil, irrigation and lighting. Situating the pavilion on the North side not only met the collaborators requirement of barricading a derelict building from the children, but also allowed for significant sunlight. Following our speed sketching workshop, we found an open timber structure capable of expansion to be the leading proposal.

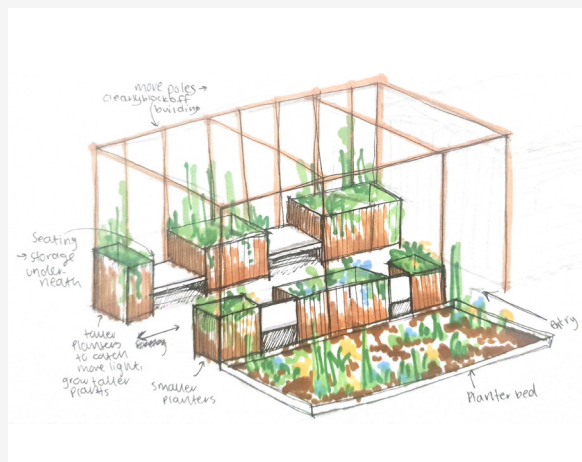
To develop our proposal, we created physical models with the existing site context. Recognising our team's preference towards physical models, we revelled at the chance to explore in the modelmaking workshop. This gave us a sense of feeling of the growing space and gave us the freedom to experiment with different elements at a truer scale.

From our modelmaking workshops, we developed the ideas as we illustrated over them, analysing the finer details and context. We found a hybrid mode of working, allowed the team to expand on their own individual skillsets and produced more articulated representations with a greater experimentation of materiality and scale.

Image Top:
Growing Pavilion - Hand Sketch

Image Middle:
Growing Pavilion - Sketch Model

Image Bottom:
Growing Pavilion - Sketch Over Model



Play Structure

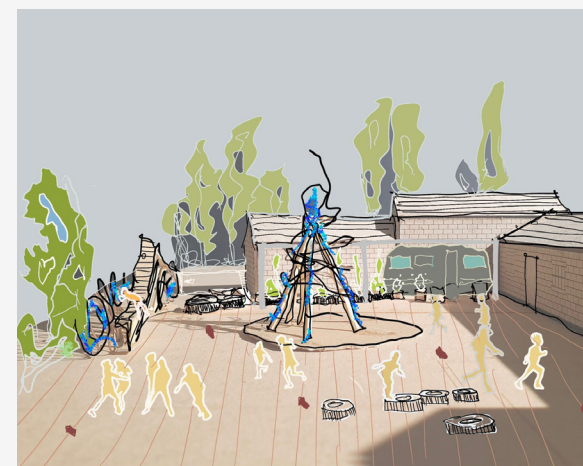
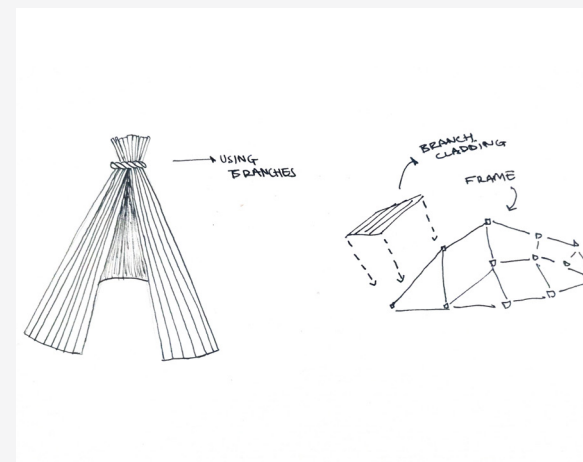
From our various sketch ideas on paper, we wanted to develop our feel of the composition and scale and transitioned to developing sketch models. The workshop provided the chance to continue themes of upcycling as we worked solely with scrap materials. This allowed us to experiment with spatial layouts, modelling where children would play and gather to, allowing us to see how our interventions impact the movement across the site and the implications to the children's 'play'. The modelling allowed the team to create structures with a sense of scale and physicality of it, which encouraged us to add and remove elements of play like what the children would do at the Mothershippon.

Finally, after multiple iterations, and utilising photography and collages, we added a level of life to these pictures through our design development workshops. Further developing our designs, we added different detail and textures creating a expressive and personalised illustrations for us to use. The collage workshops provided a chance for the team to expand on their modelmaking and to truly articulate their collaborative vision of the Mothershippon.

Image Top:
Play Structure - Hand Sketch

Image Middle:
Play Structure - Sketch Model

Image Bottom:
Play Structure - Sketch Over Model



Final Outputs

Following our initial design developments, we found ourselves questioning the effectiveness of the "Play Structures" and sought to develop a proposal which allowed for maximum adaptation over time, and to benefit from upcycling and locally sourced materials. Through the collaboration between the "Growing Pavilion" and the "Play Structures" the team expanded upon a shared affinity towards a post-beam system.

The concept for the "Play Structures" evolved into a series of posts, with slots down each end that would allow for the addition of beams, frames and nails. These posts would provide the chance for an entirely adaptable expansion as they are filled in over time. The team speculated on the possibilities of a strategic expansion, with temporary cladding, mesh and canopies.

Furthermore, the team speculated on a 'messy' expansion, incorporating site elements like tyres, palletes, and willow weaving. From here the idea expanded into a truer expression of a temporal art exploration space.

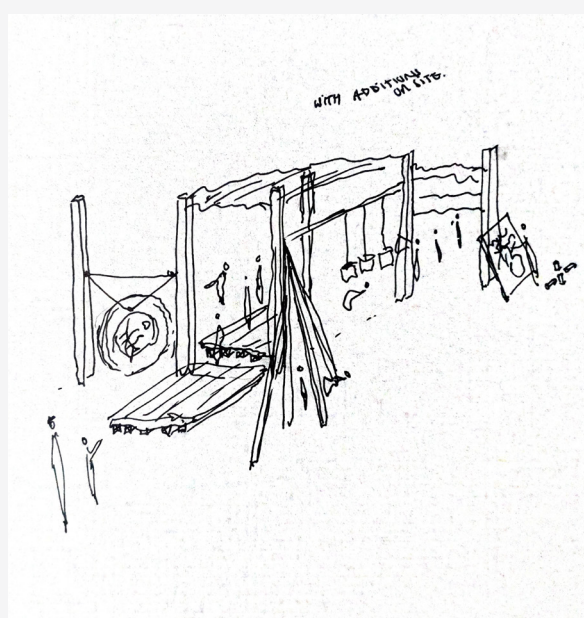
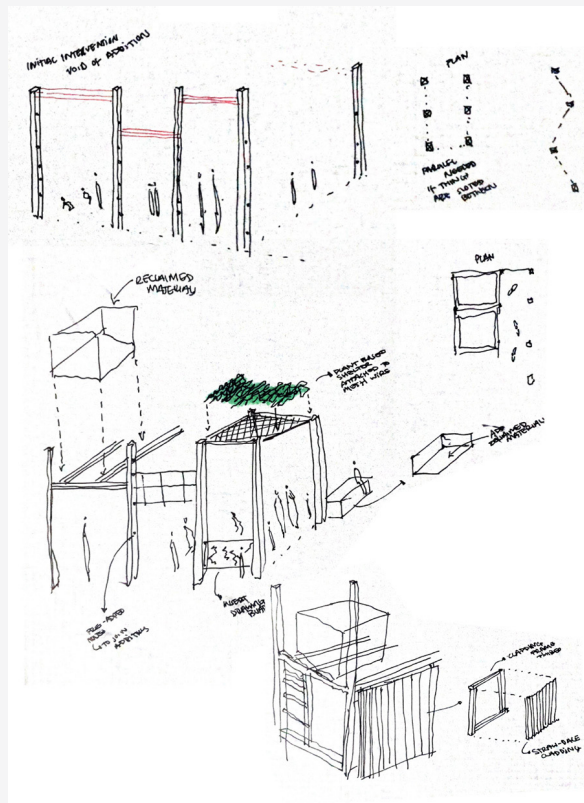


Image Top:
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Image Bottom:
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The "Growing Pavilion" followed a more robust process as it looked to meet a more specific brief/requirement. Having raised planters for the pavilion was the starting point of our design. This expanded into assessing ways to store materials and provide seating for adults that accompany the children to the yard. The hybridisation of the growing area, seating and material storage was a result of one of our group exercises.

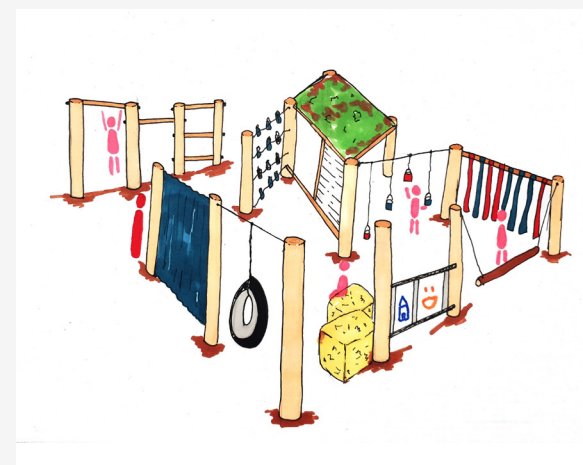
Placing the caravan was crucial in the final iteration, a separate addition on site by the collaborator, the intervention sought to ensure the caravan doesn't obstruct any views and has free pathway for entry and exit.



Image Top:
Site Plan

Image Middle:
Growing Pavilion - Elevation

Image Bottom:
Play Sturcutre - Hand Sketch



Growing Pavilion

We began to further visualise our proposal through use of perspective illustrations to bring the concept to life. Beginning with the perspective, we were able to see the design populated with people, movement, and plant life, and enabled us to envisage the area in use.

We then explored the area through different views, such as from the point of view of a child experiencing the area. This allowed us to put represent the most common visitor to the space and develop a greater sense of expression. It shows the area from an experiential standpoint, to further imagine what the design will feel like whilst it is in use.

The team continued with their collage approach of representation to articulate the arrangement of space, including the placement of the planters in relation to each other and the movement of people. It shows further how the design sits within the site, and the potential of future expansion as part of the design's temporality.



Image Top:
Growing Pavilion - Aerial Perspective

Image Middle:
Growing Pavilion - Children's Perspective

Image Bottom:
Growing Pavilion - Children's Perspective

Play Structure

As a group, we collaboratively brainstormed a range of ideas to come up with the most effective and intriguing design. We all did initial sketches of what kind of simple and abstract play structures we can incorporate. Keeping in mind the demographics that constantly use that site and how they use it.

The site is predominantly used by young users, accompanied by adults - such as our collaborator Joseph, who was also fascinated at the "Play structure" as a means of storing reclaimed materials. Through our initial workshops focusing on understanding the Mothershippon culture, we decided that taking a more rustic approach in our design of the playground would help to preserve the essence of the site.

Building off our developed idea of a timber post grid sculpted onto the site, the team incorporated collages to articulate the flow of the user's journey, while also allowing the children's imagination to flourish. The timber system allows for the temporal adaptability of open and sheltered spaces and creates opportunities for to intertwine sustainable creative practices with the proposed structure, including Willow Weaving as well as expanding the exploratory 'play' that already exists on site.

Image Top:
Play Structure - Children's Perspective

Image Middle:
Play Structure - Children's Perspective

Image Bottom:
Play Structure - Children's Perspective



Reflection + Outputs

Working on a live project that revolves around a growing community of children, brings in a range of challenges alone. Designing a series of interventions that allow for the 'messy' exploration that is so core to the Rural Art Hub and questioning new modes of sustainability was even more challenging. However, it was from the nature of MSA Live, that we unexpectedly found the most ideal approach to tackling these challenges. The module emphasises the collaborative aspect of architectural design and having the opportunity to get involved in situated practice during our preliminary visit to the Motheshippon, provided the backbone for our project.

A significant success of this project, for us, stemmed from the relationship that developed with our lovely collaborator Joseph. From our first meeting through to our final presentation, an ecstatic energy of what possibilities this collaboration holds were always present. By preparing a series of workshops focused on developing a lighter atmosphere, coupled with the exploratory nature of this project, often left us immersed in our inner child-like fascination. As we proceeded throughout the design process, we collectively embraced playful possibilities and explored our own curiosity and creativity.

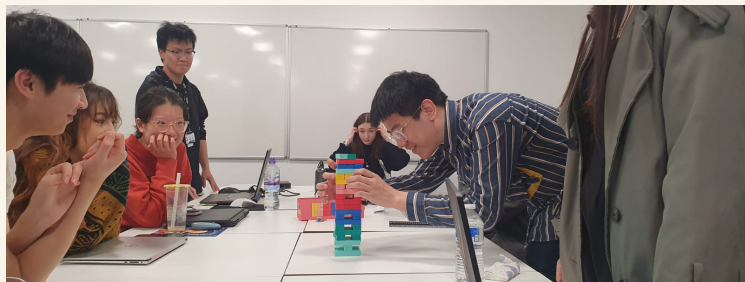


Image Top:
"Let's Model Make" Workshop

Image Bottom:
"Mega-Jenga" Icebreaker

(Opposite Page)
Image Top:
Final Visualisation of the Yard

Image Bottom:
Final Visualisation of the Yard



ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1 students with those in BA year 1 and year 2 and Masters Landscape Architecture 1 in mixed-year teams to undertake live projects with external partners to create social impact.

LIVE PROJECTS

All MSA LIVE projects are live. A live project is where an educational organisation and an external partner develop a brief, timescale, and outcome for their mutual benefit.

SOCIAL IMPACT

All MSA LIVE projects have social impact. Social impact is the effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of a community. Our agendas are set by our external collaborators.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

MSA LIVE projects work with many organisations: charities, community groups, social enterprises, community interest companies, researchers, practitioners and educators.

STUDENT-LED

Our MSA masters students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. Other cohorts joined for an eventful 2 weeks of activities at the end of the academic year.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Working in teams within and across year groups and courses; MSA students participate in peer to peer learning. In addition, collaborators, participants and students engage in the transfer of tangible and intellectual property, expertise, learning and skills.

LARGE SCALE

This year approximately 650 students from 4 cohorts in MSA have worked on 42 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team:

msalive@mmu.ac.uk

BLOG

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