



Design Lab 2022: Joyful Spaces

Impact report



Who are we

Design Lab was started by **Architecture at the Edge**, a not-for-profit based in Galway. Introducing Galway's young people to architecture, design and making is central to what we do. Architecture at the Edge projects also include Architecture at the Edge Festival and a Summer School for designers.



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The project is delivered by **Architecture at the Edge (AATE)** in partnership with architecture education organisation **MATT+FIONA**. Based in London. MATT+FIONA is a social enterprise that believes all young people should have the opportunity to shape their built environment. Through their collaborations they offer unique, hands-on education programmes for children and young adults, which enable them to directly create full scale places and spaces. Design Lab is funded by **Arts Council Ireland's Capacity Building Scheme**.





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What is Design Lab?

AATE instigated Design Lab to create the conditions, expertise and network to enable young people to directly shape the built environment of Galway.

The innovative approach to engaging young people pairs 2 Architecture organisations, 4 schools, 8 Creative practitioners and 90 students to make 4 big builds. The programme involves hands-on designing and making using processes and collaborating with leading practitioners and current students in the field. It enables and empowers each student to participate in a genuine creative, design process that results in a design proposition for a space or place. Over three months, the creative practitioners lead co-design workshops with groups of students across Galway, teaching them how to conceptualise, research and collaboratively make a design project.

Evaluating Design Lab 2022's Impact

The second edition of Design Lab 2022 enabled (up to) 90 Third Year students to develop their ideas about the built environment into a collective brief and design ideas for a more young-person friendly proposal for an agreed project centered on the city of Galway. The programme took student's on a journey of a real-life architecture brief and design process.

Through a series of workshops, they developed the brief and designs for 'spaces for joyful collaboration'; exploring themes of belonging, well-being, imagination, purpose & meaning are our starting point for the collaborative brief. Through a series of workshops, including virtual site visits, designing through online resources and desktop model-making the students realised the brief. At the proto-build stage, MATT+FIONA joined the Ambassadors to lead a day-long scale build in Galway City.



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At every stage, Design Lab is a unique opportunity which aims to:

1. Empower students to physically realise their ideas
2. Build confidence and curiosity in the next generation
3. Provide understanding about the built environment through constructive teaching, playing and making
4. Inspire students, creatives and schools to see how they can shape and influence the spaces in which we live, work and play
5. Familiarising students, teachers and creatives to the processes involved in design and construction within the built environment
6. Enabling students, teachers and creatives to work collaboratively towards a collective goal
7. Encourage young people to consider studying or a career in design, architecture and construction. In turn, increasing the diversity of who enters these fields.
8. Build young people's essential skills in making, communicating and collaborating which are missing from the current curriculum

The Impact Report attempts to evaluate the Design Lab 2022 against its aims and identify future developments. The report uses data collected from the five stakeholders involved in Design Lab 2022 to discuss successes of the education programme and areas for improvement.



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The students and schools



“Aaron and Sona (Design Lab Ambassadors) created a wonderful atmosphere amongst the group and had them engaged and active from the very start.” Design Lab 2022 School

Design Lab 2022 engaged over 90 thirteen- sixteen-year olds from four Galway schools; Archbishop McHale College, Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, Dominican College and St. Joseph's College. The participants included DEIS schools. The students include those at risk of social exclusion and Asian (includes Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani or any other Asian background), Black or Black Irish (includes African, Caribbean) students.



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Schools were motivated to take part to:

- To enable the students to develop new skills and learn from other disciplines
- To give the students new experiences
- Specifically to work with artists and designers
- To add architecture and design as topics to the curriculum
- To take students out of their comfort zone
- To get students to reflect on their surroundings

“Very enjoyable and beneficial for their development” Design Lab 2022 School

Schools and Design Lab Ambassadors reported a range of skills and knowledge development for students, including:

- The students learned new skills
- The students learned about design
- The students learned about architecture
- The students worked as a team
- The students articulated complex ideas
- Design Lab changed their understanding of Galway and their local area
- The workshops were engaging for different learning styles
- Benefits to well-being/ mental health
- The students learned new making skills/ to use a new material

“Brian (teacher at Design Lab School) was incredible to work with, a huge asset to the program.” Design Lab Ambassador 2022

The school's supported Design Lab 2022 by::

- The teachers and support staff provided useful information
- The teachers and support staff provided appropriate space for the workshops
- The teachers and support staff were engaged with the project
- The teachers and support staff helped with delivery and encouraged student engagement where necessary



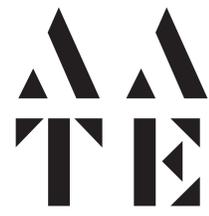
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The Design Lab Ambassadors

"I had the ability to encourage and nourish creativity in young people which my practice doesn't allow me to do on a daily basis. It's inspiring to work with young people and instill creativity and encourage a different way of viewing the world around them. It's wonderful working with young people and something I want to continue to do in my practice going forward." Design Lab Ambassador, 2022

For 2022, AATE recruited eight Galway-based creatives as Design Lab Ambassadors. They were Soňa Šmédková (Artist-Sona Smedkova-Galway @sonasmedkova), Orla Clogher (@orlaclogher), Aaron Conneely (aaronconneely.com @aaronconneely), Jacqueline Glynn (@jacqglynn), Ciara Coogan (cicoillustrates.com @cicoillustrates), Joanna McGlynn (@joannamcglynn), Kate McSharry (@kate_mcsharry) and Lua Flannery (@luaflannery). The diverse range of artists, designers, educators and makers were mentored by MATT+FIONA in training sessions. The Design Lab Ambassador's delivered all workshops and engagement with the schools and students.



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The Design Lab Ambassadors were motivated to take part to:

- Gain additional income/ economic reasons
- To develop new skills and learn from other disciplines
- To build a professional network
- To gain additional work experience
- It fitted around my practice and other professional opportunities
- To work with young people



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The Design Lab Ambassador's reported developing the following skills, experiences and other benefits:

- Worked with new materials
- Learned how to develop and manage a creative workshop.
- Worked with others to extend skills as a creative facilitator
- Delegating tasks, thinking of creative activities that are relevant to the brief and incorporating what the students enjoy
- Keeping a large group of students busy with work they enjoy for a few hours at a time
- Working with people of different skill set and learning from them
- Increased confidence of the creative practitioner.
- Opened the mind to the artistic approach to design.
- Reignited a joy in making beyond 2D practices



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What's next for the Design Lab?

"A great reminder that immediate responses can lead to big interesting things, I would definitely go back to work with secondary-level students in a creative capacity." Design Lab Ambassador 2022

100 percent of the schools and Design Lab Ambassadors who took part in Design Lab 2022's evaluation would like to stay involved with AATE's work in some capacity, including the Design Lab programme.

1. We will continue to engage existing Design Lab Ambassadors with opportunities, including paid projects, to utilise their skills and knowledge, alongside building sustainability and resilience in their creative practices and networks.
2. We will re-engage the schools and students who took part in Design Lab 2022 with AATE festival, Summer School and other events, continuing to build sustainable relationships with the young people of Galway.
3. We will attempt to increase corporate sponsorship and public funding of the programme to expand the programme's overall duration, as well as the ambition, frequency and length of the workshops delivered. This would include more training and mentoring for Design Lab Ambassador's, wider access to materials and greater scope of evaluation. The expansion of the programme was a recommendation of participating schools, design lab ambassadors and students.
4. We will work to raise the visibility, understanding and investment in Design Lab and the Design Lab Ambassador programme from Galway's communities, for example, by exhibiting the completed 'Big Builds'.
5. Design Lab will also take centre stage in AATE's continuing strategic focus on working with young people and development of opportunities to engage young people both with AATE and Galway.
Proposed additions to the programme include appointing an AATE Trustee under 25 from Galway and events for the AATE designed and delivered by young people in collaboration with Design Ambassadors.

For further information on Architecture at the Edge and Design Lab visit:

<https://www.architectureattheedge.com>

Or email: info.architecture.edge@gmail.com



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Architecture at the Edge would like to thank those who collaborated with us on and supported Design Lab including:

Arts Council Ireland, MATT + FIONA, Archbishop McHale College, Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, Dominican College, St. Joseph's College, Soňa Šmédková, Orla Clogher, Aaron Conneely, Jacqueline Glynn, Ciara Coogan, Joanna McGlynn, Kate McSharry, Lua Flannery and most importantly, the young people who took part.