

# I wonder what we can't see?

Animation project in collaboration with Surbiton Hill Nursery School & United Response  
Spring 2024, Exhibited as part of Autism Assemblé 29 May – 1 June 2024

*I wonder what we can't see?* is a collaboration between Stanley Picker Gallery and Kingston University Autism Peer Network with United Response and Surbiton Hill Nursery School, Green Class and Support Place pupils.

These groups, who are neurodivergent, participated in separate workshops but with a shared inspiration; [Thomas Pausz \*Haunted Ecologies\*](#) and the examination of what lies beneath the surface of both individuals and Hogsmill River.

Stanley Picker Gallery is situated on an island on the Hogsmill, a tributary to the Thames. The ecology of this chalk stream is increasingly endangered due to excessive extraction of water and increasing sewer discharge, which change the nutrient level of the water as well as introduce polluting substances. Pausz's installation echoes the transformations of the river over time, and traces how from Millais' *Ophelia* painting and Muybridge's landscape photography, to contemporary digital image making techniques and media, the narratives we are presented with filter our perception of our ecosystem. Equally, how a similar philosophy can be applied to understanding neurodivergent communities.

Participants were asked to consider what curiosities lie beneath the Hogsmill River, which, like themselves, conceals a world of curiosities and depth. Using craft materials, sensory play, and natural objects, they made small sculptures of 'hidden creatures', drawings, background scenery and sound effects that have been brought together to create an animation, completed by Erin Christopher, BA Animation student at Kingston School of Art and representative of the Autism Peer Network. The movement of the creatures were either directed by the artists or are a response to comments and actions which reflect their personal characteristics, for example, the artwork of a child who likes twirling spins as it moves across the screen.

Erin writes *Autistic creatives have expressed time and time again how difficult it can be to make our way into the industry, feeling the need to hide our traits. But our differences to neurotypical artists means that we are capable of making some of the most unique and creative art you will see! This applies to our collaborators. It has been a pleasure to meet them and share inspirations.*

Natalie Kay, Stanley Picker Gallery Participation Curator, whose son participated in the project comments *I am fortunate that my son, who is autistic attends SHNS. It is a wonderfully caring and engaging provision, where all children, especially those with additional needs and their families, feel valued and included. He is also a regular gallery-goer, and I have been delighted to bring the sensory experiences and introspection of Thomas' exhibition, along with the skills of our talented student cohort, to the nursery and our adult partners at United Response. We hope that all will continue to visit and play!*

We feel extremely proud and impressed by the participants and hope that all will join us in celebrating their achievements.

**Exhibiting Artists & Supporters:** Surbiton Hill Nursery School Shania, Elliot, Otto, Kazim, Casper, Maryam, Gabe, Zander, Max, Samar, Gwen, Codi, Aysel, Stuti, Ffion, Billie, Dougie, Ryan, Eliza, Adelia, Anthony, and Ever Reign. United Response: Darrell, Jake, Max, Pete, Jack, James, Alex, Dylan, and Ian. Supported by Erin Christopher and Gallery Assistants and KSA students and alumni Max Lystor, Ahlam Ahmadi and Jamie Young. Huge thanks to Emma Furlong, Sam antha Gillbody and all in SHNS Green Class and Supported Place, and Matthew Campbell, Rose Chalke and friends from United Response.

**Erin Christopher** is a third-year BA Animation student at Kingston School of Art, Kingston University, and founding member of the University's Autism Peer Network. She is the Project Leader and Curator of Autism Assemble, Brill Prize Winner 2023, and runner up 2024. Her work on Kingston panoramas is currently exhibited in *Muybridge and Panorama's* at Kingston Museum, while other pieces have been commissioned by the Ashmolean in Oxford.

**Kingston University Autism Peer Network** provides a community for autistic Kingston students to share their experiences Read more about the [network](#) and [neurodiversity projects](#) at Kingston University.

**Surbiton Hill Nursery School** is the only [maintained nursery school](#) within the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Local Authority. They were graded as Outstanding by Ofsted for the fifth time in January 2020, and have a specialist provision for children with Social Communication difficulties. [surbitonhillnursery.uk](http://surbitonhillnursery.uk)

**United Response** is committed to making life better for people with disabilities. They are a charity that supports people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs, at home and in the community. Find out more by visiting [unitedresponse.org.uk](http://unitedresponse.org.uk)

**For more information** about this and other projects contact Natalie Kay [n.kay@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:n.kay@kingston.ac.uk)