

Geraldine Pilgrim

Traces

2008



Photo: Sharon Mutch

This installation and performance was created by artist Geraldine Pilgrim and was presented in different parts of Bluecoat in 2008, when the arts centre reopened following a major capital development.

She worked with pupils from the current Blue Coat School in Wavertree, which was celebrating the 300th anniversary of its founding. This first school, in a smaller building, was demolished to make way for the larger school, the present Bluecoat in School Lane.

Traces was inspired by the artist's discovery of a document listing the names of 53 girls who left the school in 1949 when it became a boys-only school, having always been mixed since it started in 1708.

Pilgrim's work drew on the building's history, paying great attention to detail and creating a very evocative and compelling piece. The children's participation, wearing historical uniforms, and the spaces themselves, were used to create a special environment, one in which you could sense the ghosts of the past.

The clatter of a plate, a glimpse of children in the corridors and the toll of the dinner bell. The school room of yesterday became the museum of today, as the spirit of Blue Coat girls haunted the old school building.

THINK ABOUT

- Do you like this artwork?

TALK ABOUT

- What do you think people thought of this artwork when they saw it at Bluecoat?

- Do you think it is important to remember the history of buildings?

- There were installations around the Bluecoat building as part of this artwork. Do you think different areas of a building can tell a different story?

- The artist says "the school room of yesterday became the museum of today." What do you think this means?

- What do you think the artist is trying to tell us about the past and the present through this artwork?

FIND OUT ABOUT

- What was school like for children 300 years ago?

- What happened to the Bluecoat building in School Lane when the children left for their new school in Wavertree in 1906?

- Do you know anything about the history of your school?

Activity

Geraldine Pilgrim recreated the history of Blue Coat School with her installation *Traces*, which reimagined the school many years ago and took place in various sites around the building. What would you like people hundreds of years into the future to know about your school?

Working in small groups, split your school into areas that you feel are important to your

experience studying there, and that people should know about in the future (for example, your classroom, the canteen, the play area etc.)

Once you have selected your areas, decide what methods you want to use to record the experiences of school life for future generations.

You could:

- Create an installation like *Traces* of particular activities that take place in different parts of the building and photograph this, e.g. playing a game in the playground.
- Write a poem or story, e.g. a poem about the food you eat in the canteen.
- Paint a picture of a particular part of the school that is important to you.
- Conduct interviews about what particular areas of the school mean to different people.

Once you have completed this gathering of information you will have a project similar to *Traces* which will preserve your school experiences for future generations and show how important a building's history can be.