

Susan Fitch

From the exhibition, *Somewhere in Particular*

1994

Bluecoat gallery installation



Artist Susan Fitch created several works at Bluecoat looking at the building's history as a school. The installation illustrated here was in an exhibition called *Somewhere in Particular*, presented in the old main gallery, now the Hub. The artist removed sections of the parquet floor and filled some of the gaps with panes of glass or pins. Pins were used to reflect the fact that pupils had to make pins in the 18th century, as a way of generating income for the school.

Making pins was just one of the jobs pupils did, together with weaving stockings, spinning cotton and picking oakum. Although the school was established as a charity to help orphan children, these jobs were detrimental to the children's health. In 1783, the school governors decided that such work was bad for pupils and also against the principles that the school was founded on, and ended pin-making for good. Instead of manual labour, more time was allowed for the children's lessons.

THINK ABOUT

- Do you like Susan Fitch's artwork? If so, why?
- Do you think it explores important issues?

TALK ABOUT

- Do you like Susan Fitch's artwork? If so, why?
- Do you think it explores important issues?
- Why is important for children to get an education?
- How do you think the children felt doing a dangerous job for much of their day?
- Does this make you think about how your life is different to that of children's in the past?

FIND OUT ABOUT

- What other jobs were children doing at this time?
- Are there still children who have to do manual labour today? If so, what kind of jobs do they do?

Activity

Around the world today, 218 million children between the ages of five and 17 are in employment. Among them, 152 million are victims of child labour and 73 million work in hazardous conditions.

You will be looking at modern child labour, specifically children working in the brick-making industry to create your own artwork. You will be building bricks out of a cuboid net and decorating them with symbols, words, patterns and pictures that express your feelings about child labour. As a class, you will then be able to build a structure out of all your bricks that tells a powerful message about child labour today.

Lesson aims and outcomes

Children will learn:

- about the lives of children in the past and compare these to their own
- about the education of children in the past, and compare this to their own

- that education was not available to all children and that some were fortunate to have access to learning
- about how artists use different materials and ideas to explore issues
- about problems affecting children around the world today