

Case Study

Maunder Maps: a residency and commission by Jane Pitt at Ditchling Museum

Background

Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft is a small, independent museum in the quintessentially South Downs village of Ditchling. It celebrates the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement, and the artists who came to Ditchling and established an influential creative community. This is still reflected by contemporary arts inspired by their creative approach that linked rural authenticity with the connection to nature.

During October 2018-April 2019 the museum held an exhibition of work by MacDonald Gill which included illustrated maps commissioned in the 1920s by Frank Pick for the London Underground, and later work for the Empire Trade Board and others. Ditchling Museum wanted to complement this exhibition with contemporary work using mapping to encourage visitors to explore the village and countryside around the museum, increasing their understanding of the relationship between their collection and the heritage landscape of the South Downs National Park.

They wanted to attract new visitors, and to offer people familiar with the museum different and inclusive ways to experience the landscape.

Maunder is a Sussex dialect word meaning 'to wander about thoughtfully'.



The project

Ditchling Museum of Arts + Craft worked with interdisciplinary artist Jane Pitt to create a temporary installation at the museum. The installation was based on a period in residence working with a range of participants to explore and map the surrounding landscape. Those involved included local experts including the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Dark Skies Officer, archaeologists, local history enthusiasts, geologists, pupils at the village primary school, and families and individuals who came to drop in sessions.

Jane used a range of techniques to take people on walks to explore and record or 'map' where they went. This included making wind vanes and walking where the wind went, following contour lines rather than paths, and 'listening walks' all using an accessible multisensory approach. While walking, Jane would ask people she met for suggestions for routes/destinations. She used historic maps from the museum's collection for reference, tracing the historic landscape beneath the contemporary one. She collected Sussex dialect words linked to landscape and used these to write a poem, which she then printed on the historic Stanhope printing press at the museum – the original printing press used by Eric Gill, Hilary Pepler and Edward Johnston.

For the installation, Jane had the poem reproduced at large scale on vinyl. She also produced a drawing, representing a 'sound map' of the area around the museum, including the wind and rooks in the trees, which was printed on to optically clear vinyl and applied a large window at the museum. Alongside this, historic maps and drawings created by participants were displayed in the gallery space.

A music event, *Maunder Music*, produced in collaboration with the University of Sussex School of Media, Film and Music, drew inspiration from Jane's window drawing, using it as a musical score from which musicians improvised a performance, mapping the landscape musically. This was followed by a discussion between the musicians and the artist and was well attended, with people coming from as far away as Kent.

“Jane’s project brought music and art lovers together with people interested in landscape and the natural environment in a creative and unique process surprising and delighting visitors”

Stephanie Fuller, Director Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft

The outcome

This project achieved the following outcomes:

- Jane engaged 347 people through 10 workshops, talks and the *Maunder Music* performance, as well as additional people she met along the way.
- 3,905 visitors to the museum saw the installation in the William and Margaret Rowling Gallery.
- Jane produced a set of UnMap instructions, enabling people to create their own walks and maps using her multi-sensory techniques in any location.
- The museum has published an additional 3 walk trails during this period.
- Partnership with the University of Sussex has enabled students to engage with this project and experience the landscape around Ditchling and the museum.

The South Downs National Park Authority funded **£6,000** towards the project.

The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2014–19 sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 11 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

Outcome 1 - *The landscape character of the South Downs, its special qualities and local distinctiveness have been conserved and enhanced by effectively managing the land and the negative impacts of development and cumulative change*

Outcome 4 - *The condition and status of cultural heritage assets and their settings (including monuments, buildings, towns and buried remains) is significantly enhanced, many more have been discovered and they contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place*

Outcome 6 - *Widespread understanding of the special qualities of the National Park and the benefits it provides*

Outcome 7 - *The range and diversity of traditional culture and skills has been protected and there is an increase in contemporary arts and crafts that are inspired by the Special Qualities of the National Park*

Outcome 8 - *More responsibility and action is taken by visitors, residents and businesses to conserve and enhance the special qualities and use resources more wisely*

Outcome 10 - *A diverse sustainable economy has developed that provides a wide variety of business and employment opportunities, many of which are positively linked to the special qualities of the National Park*

southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/SDNP-Partnership-Management-Plan-2014-19.pdf

The future

Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft offers a number of walk trails on-line and for sale in the museum shop, as well as Jane Pitt’s UnMap instructions to create your own multi-sensory walk.

The museum will continue to work with local partners to create opportunities for people to experience the heritage landscape, both independently and with guided walks and events.

Enabling visitors to enjoy the heritage landscape of the South Downs National Park as part of their visit to Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft is an important part of their offer.

For further information please contact:

Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft, Lodge Hill Lane, Ditchling BN6 8SP

Tel: 01273 844744

Email:

enquiries@ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk

October 2019