

Designing with Children

Chimney Park

Snug and Outdoor's work, led by Hattie and Tim Coppard, is primarily focused on 'creative playground design', often carried out via facilitation and mediation for and between clients and architects. The work almost always uses play and embodied design as tools to physically engage children and young people in aspects of spatial design processes. Chimney Park, so-called because of the large brick chimney which dominates the site, began as a social regeneration project in 2008 and was completed in 2009 for Dublin Docklands Development Agency with LDA as the landscape architects.

Motivation

Snug and Outdoor's ethos is one in which their work with children is seen as: *'creative consultation and design process that opens up new possibilities and leads to original and welcoming play environments'*. Both the Snug and Outdoor team's work and the products they create illustrate that they value the importance and ability of children to have some control over how they shape their play environments; both during a design process and as an on-going state of play. Hattie Coppard of Snug and Outdoor states that their work uses *'a variety of techniques that encourage children to think beyond their initial assumptions and imagine something new. We frequently work with writers and artists and many projects involve the use of large-scale objects, music, physical interventions. The aim is to develop an understanding of what children want in order that something really engaging and exciting can be created'*.

Children's involvement

At Chimney Park, in Dublin, children were chiefly involved through school workshops between April and September 2007 and by means of a creative consultation event. This event was the culmination of several consultation sessions carried out with: a small group of teenagers, between 14 and 16, as part of a youth forum; informal discussions with young and adult

What

Playground

Where

Dublin, Ireland

Age

2-18

Group Size

200+

Project Stage

Design Development, In Use

Children's Roles

Clients, Expert Consultants, Placemakers

Timescale

2007-2008 (8 day workshops, informal discussions and open day)

Partners

Hattie Coppard (Designer)

Tim Coppard (Designer)

Snug and Outdoor (Designer, facilitator)

Dublin Docklands Development Agency (Client)

Simon Corder (Lighting designer)

Chris Meade (Poet)

Children from local schools (Participants)

residents; meetings with young resident children aged between 2 and 8 years old as well as design workshops. There were four design workshops in total, engaging young people in both local junior schools (8-10 year olds) and secondary schools (12-14 year olds). The concluding open day at a community centre saw children between 8 and 16 presenting, performing and displaying their ideas. In each of Snug and Outdoor's playground projects, children were involved in early stages where ideas were gathered and in the case of Chimney Park, also at a later stage when the consultation event called for children's comments upon designs reached at a certain stage.

Outputs and outcomes

The final product – the park itself – has a large mirror wall, climbing structures, swings, palm trees and seating. A poem created by local children is engraved into the walls that curve around the park.

Resources

Dublin Docklands Development Authority <http://www.ddda.ie/index.jsp?p=121&n=591> (accessed 25 March 2013).

Snug and Outdoor 'Spark Park'

<http://www.snugandoutdoor.co.uk/publicspace/sparkparkvid.html> (accessed 25 March 2013).

Snug and Outdoor <http://www.snugandoutdoor.co.uk/index.html> (accessed 25 March 2013).



Children's early design ideas for Chimney Park
Courtesy: Snug & Outdoor



Children drawing in early design work for Chimney Park.
Courtesy: Snug & Outdoor





Chimney Park, Dublin Docklands. Courtesy: Snug & Outdoor (artist/play design); LDA Design (landscape design)