

Designing with Children

Save the Children Headquarters

Children's involvement in the design of the colourful Tiukula Save the Children headquarters building in Helsinki, was a collaboration amongst three key partners between 2003 and 2005: child-students and adult facilitators from Arkki, School of Architecture for children and youth; Save the Children, Finland; and architectural firm, Arkkitehtitoimisto Hannu Jaakkola Oy. Over a two year period, fifteen 10-14 year olds from the Käpylä district of Helsinki were engaged in the project through their existing attendance at Arkki. Arkki provides children between the ages of 4 and 19, with architectural education within a variety of settings including after-school club, parent and child workshops, summer schools and study-courses. Two architects from Hannu Jaakkola architects (Vesa-Jukka Vuorela and Hannu Jaakkola) and Marjut Helminen heading the Save the Children team, collaborated with the children and two Arkki workers (Anna Bevez and Sini Karelia Meskanen) throughout the project.

Aims and Motivation

'Save the Children wanted to further children's participation. The aim was to give children opportunity to try a hand at architectural design. It was also an empowering experience to the children involved' (Carita Päivänen, Save the Children). Also for the architecture firm commissioned, there was a keen aspiration to have a representation of and connection with children in the building of the headquarters. Provision of architectural education was the chief rationale behind Arkki's involvement in the project. Arkki aims to help children fully discover and enjoy their built environment and architecture, understand the impact and meaning of architecture and understand everybody's joint responsibility for the environment. According to Arkki: *'Young people learn to observe the environment and analyze it critically. Their personal relationship to the built environment develops as well as their skills of participation. Through different activities Arkki wishes to light a spark in young people's minds so that they want to influence and participate in the development of the built environment in the future, whatever their occupation is.'* (Arkki website aims)

What

Interior design and artwork within a high profile new build

Where

Helsinki, Finland, Helsinki, Finland
Helsinki, Finland

Age

10-14

Group Size

15

Project Stage

Concept, Construction, Design Development

Children's Roles

(Co) Designers

Timescale

2003-2005

Partners

Pihla Meskanen (Coordinator)
Arkki (Facilitation)
Arkkitehtitoimisto Hannu Jaakkola Oy (Architects)
Save the Children (Client)
Children - Arkki students (Participants)

Children's involvement

The involvement of young people began early on in the construction of Tiukula ('bell house' in Finnish). The children took a visit to the construction site, aware that their designs for the building's artwork, were to be incorporated into the final building. At Arkki, the children drew, painted and played games around their ideas for the artwork, destined for mosaics and wall-friezes in the building. The participants chose sea life as the theme to be depicted in the final build. A visit to Seaworld in Helsinki enabled children to research, at first hand, the underwater life to be portrayed. Ultimately, children worked as designers within well-defined art/decor sub-projects of Tiukula and the children's artworks were reproduced directly in three areas of the main Tiukula building: within a large scale floor mosaic in the main entrance area; as wall mosaics in the bathroom areas and as art friezes within the building's offices. In a fourth area - the exterior of the building - some further mosaic tiling was based upon children's artwork and a story poem they had created. Thus the children's enthusiastic engagement as designers was lastingly showcased at Tiukula.

Outputs and outcomes

The children's designs were clearly translated into the project's final output – as integral artwork within the final Tiukula building. The project has been recognised publicly through the high profile involvement of the Finnish president and her husband variously in foundation-stone laying, a roofing celebration and an opening ceremony with the project's children. Tiukula has also been profiled by Solutia World of Color Design Awards.

For Arkki, design and collaboration processes were communicated to children throughout their involvement and this enabled the Tiukula project to have an educational function, also: *'Students increased their awareness of the building process, gaining insight into the design process and working in a team through the direct experience.'* (Pihla Meskanen, Director, Arkki).

Resources

Arkki 'Aims' <http://www.arkki.nu> (accessed 14 November 2013).

Personal Communication with Carita Päivänen, Communications Manager, Save the Children, Finland (29 November 2013).

World of Colour Awards. 'Design Project Profile: Save the Children Building' <http://worldofcolorawards.com/design-project-profile-save-the-children-building> (accessed 20 March 2013).





Save the Children Headquarters, Helsinki, Finland. Courtesy: Hannu Jaakola Architects Ltd. and Jussi Tiainen (photographer)

Child with his mosaic. Courtesy: Arkki; Adolfo Vera (photographer)



Secret of Neptune - main mosaic in Tiukula building. Courtesy: Arkki



Child participant with mosaic she designed. Courtesy: Arkki; Adolfo Vera (photographer)