Eltham Arts
Multimedia community arts project

What is a wall? Is it just the brick wall or a fence at the end of the garden or something else? We are surrounded by walls, walls to keep us safe like the Thames barrier, or to keep others out or in like The Tower of London. Then there are the walls of culture, religion, and language that may divide us or bring us together. Once we start to think about walls we start to see how they can and do affect our lives and who we are.

It is Eltham Arts fifth anniversary and it is perhaps fitting that this project is perhaps the most ambitious that we have undertaken. It aimed to be an opportunity for all members of our community, individuals, schools, or groups to join in with a project which encourages imaginative and creative thinking.

It is about our response to the walls that we build both physically, culturally and mentally. It is about the materials and textures of the walls around us. It’s about the past, present, and future, wherever we are from, or it could be about our relationship with the materials that make the world around us. In exploring through Art what walls are and what they do we can gain insights to the world we live in and the community of which we are a part.

To ensure everyone could participate the wall project is a multimedia project, made up of a number of separate projects that come together in this exhibition. Over a thousand people have contributed to this project with poems short stories, music, painting bricks, ceramics or songs. It didn’t matter if they were professional artist what mattered was joining together to create an expression of our community. We asked the community to come forward with ideas and this is the result.
The Wall projects -

Bricks on the wall

Project leads: Pragya Kumar and John Wingham

Bricks on the wall is a visual arts response to the Wall project by artist Pragya Kumar. She was joined with John Wingham and together they encouraged the community to think and respond to walls that we build physically, culturally and mentally around us. There are walls of mind, culture, race, mental health, personalities and identities. Then there are walls with heritage, telling us stories, architecturally strong, decorative and impressive walls. In exploring at what these walls are and what they are for, people can gain insight to the world we live in and how we may break them down or use them as connectors.

She invited the community to draw/design/decorate/write or use any medium to express themselves on 2D, bricks (size-20cmx 6cm) cardboard. The brick making was facilitated through a series of workshops starting in Feb 2018. There were over 900 bricks created representing different age groups and backgrounds. People used various materials to create the bricks. They contributed collage bricks, sewn bricks, knitted bricks, drawn bricks, written bricks, glass bricks, sculptured bricks, resin brick and 3D bricks. The schools explored topics of multi-cultural walls, heritage walls and art on pre-historic walls. 51 children achieved their Explore Arts Award qualification through this project. A community wall installation was built using all the bricks and exhibited in Sept 2018.

These five bricks were contributed by the Eltham community in New Zealand who were inspired to do their own Bricks on the Wall project!
Bricks on the Wall Participants -

Structured workshops were held at various venues in the area such as Haimo primary school, Wyborne primary school, Middlepark primary school, El Recrea - local Spanish club, Greenwich Stroke Association, local knitting group, Hooked on Crochet – a local crochet group, FolkMob – a local music group, open workshops in libraries and parents/carers workshops in schools.

The brick template with making guidelines were made available in the local library for those who could not attend these workshops. People from the community could pick a template, create the brick in their own space and time and drop it back to the library.

Few participating groups continued to celebrate their joy of creating by displaying the bricks they created in their own spaces after the exhibition.

More photos at –
- Music & Dance Festival 2018
- Wall project photos
Find more info about the project
- Bricks on the wall
Songs across the wall

Project leads: Zahira al Zahira and Dave Kenningham

Musicians Dave and Zahira, who also run a Folkmob group, invited the community to write and perform songs around the theme of Walls. They received more than 50 song entries and more than 25 participants performed in a celebratory dance and music event in the Passy Place in July 2018.

Wall - Music and Dance Festival July 2018
Click this link to play the video

More photos at –
• Music & Dance Festival 2018
• Wall project photos
Gaynor and Miriam took the lead on the Wall short stories and poetry competition. They invited everyone in the community from all writing skill levels to write short stories and poems around the Wall theme. They received more than 700 entries which were judged by five judges from Dublin, South Wales and London. The winners were awarded in a celebratory event hosted in the local library on the World book Day in April 2018. The National Library Director for Better, Diana Edmonds (MBE) took the time out to join us for the award ceremony and did the honours of giving awards to competition winners. The winning entries were compiled and published in a book – “Writing on the wall” launched in Jan 2019.
Three photographers from the local area created a photography exhibition (Sept 2018) using different approaches and techniques to address the theme.

**My Wall –**
Photographer Elizabeth Isitor teams up with designer Ikuko Kato, in a photographic effort to visually depict physical and internal walls. The project aims to visually explore our walls in relation to the environment we live in. It is a project that aims to discuss and celebrate who we are and where we are and/or how far we have come from. The walls have a connection to the internal walls of the subject in question. In many ways the subjects continue to build on the (in)visible stories left behind.

**Wall: The structure of existence –**
Photographer Sandra M.R. Marques collected specimens of leaves and fallen petals from Parks in Eltham which are the subject of a series of enlarged photographic images. The images render multiple perspectives of the concept of wall in so far as it shows the relationship between man and nature, the aesthetic qualities of plants and their intrinsic structural making, bringing together science and art, nature and photographic process.

**Walls are big weapons –**
Photographer Robert Piwko, inspired by this quote from Bansky, takes us on a journey to the walls that draws attention of the entire world. He used his photomontage technique to create interesting compositions through photography.

More information and photos available at –
- [Wall project photos](#)
- [Eltham Arts Projects](#)
Other Projects -
Project leads: Pragya Kumar and John Wingham

El Muro En Castellano
Artist Pragya Kumar worked with local Spanish group in May 2018 to create an installation representing the Mexican wall. The message from the group was that of darkness moving towards hope and finally being set free forever.

Over the Wall and Far Away –
Mural on vacant shopfront in the town centre which became the focal point for their Xmas lights celebrations.

Film screening – The Acting Class
The screening of ‘The Acting Class’ at Bob Hope Theatre as a part of their WALL project on Wed 21st Feb 2018. This film which focused on the class barriers within the acting profession led to a lively Q and A with the Directors, Tom Stocks Trevor Macfarlane. A good evening with a thought provoking film.

Click this link to play the film
A short film about the Wall project by Gaynor Wingham and Robert Piwko
Released on social media channels in Oct 2019

More info at –
• Wall project
Individual Artists -

Walls from the Water
Artist: Dave Kennigham
Medium - Resin and objects found in Thames foreshore
Dave’s work documents the story of London and the changes that we have forced on the river Thames.

Hands from a wall
Artist – Jean Bright
Medium - Plastic clay, wood, wire wool & straw
Jean is a local artist, working mostly in glass. For this artwork she uses her hands as models and documents her relationship with materials and the art of making.

Wall Art is Forbidden
Artist – Sarah Harper
Medium - Glass, Plastic clay and Wood
Sarah Harper is a local artist and creates her artworks using mosaic and mix media. She has exhibited at galleries around London including Tate Modern, Tate Britain and Saatchi Gallery.

More photos at –
• Wall project photos
• Eltham Arts Projects

Exhibition was curated by Pragya Kumar and John Wingham.
Venue: SE9 Container Gallery

Click here to take a tour of the Wall exhibition

More photos at –
• Wall project photos
• Eltham Arts Projects
The Wall exhibition -

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What did the SE9 community think about the project?

“I have really enjoyed the project, especially from the prospective of an African. I felt very included and that I was part of my local community.” – Rosetta Ahmed, a local resident.

“A fantastic exhibition which created such positive excitement for the children seeing such pride and enjoyment. Looking at their work on display was a pleasure to see.” Miss Tanne, Wyborne Primary School.

“I was very keen to get involved in Eltham Arts projects since I found out about them. When I heard of the Wall project even more so because it is such a big community project and my artistic skills and art form fits in perfectly with the theme” – Nushrat Sayeed-Hussain, local artist.

“To see something like this is really rewarding because it is the whole community coming together to celebrate arts and culture” – Governor, Haimo Primary School

“My daughter is coming home wanting to do more arts and getting inspired by it.” – Parent, Haimo Primary school.
Participants and Partners

It gave us a great sense of achievement to deliver this multidisciplinary arts project which involved more than 2000 people from different age groups (from 18 months – 80 years old), from diverse backgrounds and from all artistic levels, bringing them together to celebrate arts in an extraordinary way. We are proud that we could bring the community together to celebrate creativity, enjoy arts and to advocate that creativity has no barriers. Everyone is creative and no matter how big or small the participation, it brings joy in people’s lives and boosts their wellbeing.

Eltham Arts have carried on the legacy by asking people to revisit the Wall project. In 2020, we are inviting people globally to create bricks about their experiences in the lockdown. We want to know how do the walls feel now? Have they changed lately? Do they bond you or are they more isolating?