

# The Big Draw 2009

## Body, Sun, Sand and Sea, Crafting Critters, Think Maps and The Sketch

By Rolf Wiesemes

**T**he Visual Learning Lab (VLL) set up four events as part of the Big Draw in October 2009. The Big Draw is an annual month-long season of drawing activities running from 1st–31st October supported by the Campaign for Drawing. Event organisers use drawing, painting and a multitude of other media to connect visitors with museum and gallery collections, urban and rural spaces in new and enjoyable ways.

During October 2009, Big Draw events took place across the UK and internationally. Led by artist and VLL MA student Yewande Okuleye, the VLL in partnership with key university partners organised four Big Draw events reaching beyond the confines of traditional users.

Body, Sun, Sand and Sea was co-organised and co-hosted in the VLL and the School of Education Atrium by Yewande Okuleye and Dr Fergus Doherty (School of Biomedical Sciences). Based on 'virtual specimens' that allow the visualisation of complex models of molecules, this event was open to the general public and explored through observation, short lectures, and drawing on paper and interactive whiteboards the links between nano, microscopic, macroscopic and cosmic images and objects.

Crafting Critters – from pencil to pixel was aimed at primary school children. Two groups of 7–9 year old from local Southwolds Primary School worked with Yewande Okuleye and Mandy Roshier (School of Veterinary Medical Sciences). Based on a range of microscopic images of small organisms, the pupils explored interactively how macroscopic images enable scientists to take a close look and reveal the true identity of alien looking and fascinating critters.

They produced some fascinating work (see photographs).

As part of the Think Map event, Yewande collaborated with Andy Burton and Gemma Polmear from the Spatial Literacy in Teaching CETL. They worked with Year 9 secondary school students from Nottingham University Samworth Academy. As part of the interactive workshop, the students explored how a collective map of the city of Nottingham can be built using electronic multiple display systems available in the VLL and semi-immersive visualisation facilities from the SPLINT CETL. This workshop allowed students to use visual technologies that gave them the opportunity to develop both the art and science of representing their local area. This involved finding out how new types of maps are used on mobile phones, and how 3D worlds can allow us to explore the city without moving.

In The Sketch, Yewande Okuleye worked with the VLL interns on an activity aimed at engaging new students in a visual exploration of the main University library through developing a visual and interactive treasure hunt. This was based on visual artefacts in Hallward Library and with the Thunder Wall™ at its centre for recording observations and interactions.

The Big Draw activities highlighted the potential of visual learning in informative and informal ways aimed at non-specialist audiences. The Big Draw events also allowed the VLL to engage with audiences outside its traditional target group and to show the wide range of applications of the visual in the Sciences and the Arts and the overlaps between these areas. It is hoped that The Big Draw Event will be held again at the University of Nottingham in the future.



