



Interview with Propeller Arts

What was Bunny and the UFO?

Bunny and the UFO was a 2016 ArtPlay New Ideas Lab project exploring childhood clapping games by Helen Kocis Edwards, Andrej Kocis and Rebecca Young (Propeller Arts). The language and imagery from the games were interpreted by the children through drawings and sculptures which were then photographed and inserted into animations relating to the songs. Interested participants were filmed to document their contribution and the resulting films and animations formed an exhibition at ArtPlay running from March to May 2017.

What drew you to work with children's clapping games?

Helen Kocis Edwards has been collecting, documenting and creating visual artwork about clapping games since 2011. Clapping games are a ubiquitous and enduring part of children's culture, played in the schoolyard and beyond. By an informal process they pass from child to child and generation to generation, mostly but not exclusively, between girls. Some songs alter as they are transferred. Others are new and appear from an unknown origin. Though changed, they exist today in an age where technology seems paramount. We wondered what the songs are about. Are they trivial or do they reveal something important about childhood, friendship, gender roles, and traditional and contemporary culture?

What was the result of drawing on material from children's own folklore?

Children and adults were familiar with the notion of clapping games from their own lived experience and perspective, so they readily engaged in the workshops by offering games they knew and learning new ones. There was a lot of discussion and cross pollination between children, adults and artists.

The project validated children's culture and artwork. The children enjoyed drawing the different elements of the clapping games and loved seeing them pop up in the animation. Those who visited the exhibition were very proud of their work being displayed to the public.

The short film captured the subtlety of the interactions in these games. As well as being a valuable oral tradition that is alive and continuing to respond to contemporary culture, they invite touch, physical and mental connection, co-ordination and co-operation. They offer an avenue to develop friendship through rhythm, music, humour and nonsense.

Coming from the playground, sometimes the songs contain phrases possibly considered socially inappropriate! Rather than censor the content, we talked about what this language means, how might it affect others and which words or phrases would be more appropriate in a socially inclusive context.

Did you encounter any surprises?

Clapping games are often the domain of girls. We were surprised so many boys knew of them and were interested in engaging with them so enthusiastically.

It was also surprising that the games prompted so much thought and nostalgia amongst the adults. When two

women from Jordan visited the exhibition they spontaneously performed a clapping game they knew in Arabic and spoke of how it took them back to when they were children in Jordan. The clapping game evoked memories of a time and place from far away and long ago.

View the [animations from *Bunny and the UFO*](#)¹.

¹ <https://vimeo.com/propellerarts>