

SET DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

14th & 15th
June

ART SOCIETY REPORT

Creative Stirling delivered “An Introduction to Set Design & Construction”, a two-day practical workshop designed to support young people who could benefit from a hands-on creative learning opportunity.

The project aimed to:

- Develop practical skills in set design, construction, and scenic painting.
- Provide exposure to industry pathways through facilitators with lived experience of similar challenges.
- Support portfolio development for future opportunities.
- Build confidence and connection for and between young people.

Nine young people registered, with six attending. While last-minute cancellations and non-attendance remain common for free programmes, those who participated engaged fully. They gained practical creative skills, valuable hands-on experience, and inspiration from relatable facilitators. The completed work was displayed at the Creative Stirling venue, and the structures they built were used in upcoming exhibitions, ensuring the young people's contributions have a lasting presence in our cultural programme.

The workshops were led by Matthew MacMillan (a former Creative Stirling youth volunteer now studying Set Design & Construction at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and Matt Whittle (a Scenic Painting student at the Conservatoire). Both shared their personal journeys, showing how experiences outside of school helped them build portfolios and gain places on competitive degree courses. Sharing their journeys and experiences made them powerful role models for participants.

Day One: Set Construction

Participants worked with Matthew to design and construct flat walls and a tent structure that featured in Creative Stirling's exhibition Moon Tell Me Truth, in collaboration with the Hands Up Project. Young people learned to use a range of power tools, with an emphasis on safe handling, before collaborating to build the wall. The process demanded teamwork, problem-solving, and focus, giving participants valuable transferable skills alongside technical ability.



Day Two: Scenic Painting

With guidance from Matt, and Matthew, participants explored scenic painting techniques, learning to create textures and large-scale surface finishes suitable for theatre and exhibition use. They applied these skills to the flat wall they had constructed, gaining a real-world understanding of how set and scenic painting interact in professional contexts.

Outcomes and Impact

- **Practical skills:** Young people learned construction methods, safe use of power tools, and scenic painting techniques. These skills are directly relevant to creative industries but also boost confidence in using equipment and working with processes that may have previously felt inaccessible.
- **Collaboration and confidence:** Building a large wall and tent together encouraged peer learning and teamwork, helping participants develop communication and problem-solving skills in a supportive environment.
- **Portfolio-building:** Participants now have documented creative work to add to their portfolios, strengthening applications to courses or employment.
- **Pathways and role models:** Seeing Matthew and Matt's journeys from school into higher education helped participants understand that barriers do not limit potential.
- **Personal impact:** Two young people who had originally planned to attend for only one day chose to cancel their other commitments so they could return for the second session, a clear sign of how motivating and rewarding they found the experience. The engagement from attendees across both days demonstrates the impact of accessible creative opportunities.
- **Legacy:** The set pieces created will remain part of Creative Stirling's cultural programme for two months, ensuring that participants' contributions are visible to the community and celebrated as part of Stirling's cultural offerings.

This project demonstrated the transformative power of practical, hands-on creative learning. Being trusted with real tools and responsibilities built both skill and self-belief among participants. The involvement of young facilitators who shared their experiences was key, making career pathways in the arts feel accessible and achievable. Beyond technical training, the project fostered teamwork, resilience, and pride, qualities that will support young people far beyond this single workshop.

The project met and exceeded its objectives, providing young people with practical and creative skills, alongside the pride of contributing to a real exhibition environment where their work could be celebrated by others. With support from Stirling & Forth Valley Arts Society, participants gained confidence, connections, and clear insights into creative pathways, reinforcing the importance of inclusive and hands-on opportunities in building futures.







