SunSpaceArt - Our Dynamic Sun

Helen Mason*[1,2]

[1]Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics / Centre for Mathematical Sciences (DAMTP/CMS) – DAMTP, Centre for Mathematical Sciences, Wilberforce Road, Cambridge CB3 0WA, United Kingdom

[2]Helen Mason – United Kingdom

Abstract

The SunSpaceArt project is a team of scientists and artists who work together to deliver workshops in UK schools. Their aim is to spark imagination and develop creativity. The project is led by Dr Helen Mason, University of Cambridge, and funded by the STFC (Science and Technology Facilities Council). The team have worked with thousands of children (7-12 years old) and hundreds of teachers. The children have produced wonderful artwork about the Sun, Solar System and space science. We have focussed on schools in regions where an enhancement in science attainment is needed. Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have responded particularly well to our activities. The feedback has been outstanding *'Today I loved this lesson because the art and science inspired me'* (child). '*The SunSpaceArt activities provide an opportunity for all children to shine and take pride in their work and achievements.*' (teacher).

When 'in person' workshops were no longer possible (March 2020), we delivered material online (SunSpaceArt.org and YouTube) and held virtual workshops for children and training for teachers. In February 2021, we even ran a 12 hour long STEAM (STEM + Arts) Festival involving science, astronomy and space talks, craft activities, art, poetry and music. This celebration was aimed at children in the daytime and adults in the evening. It was a great success, reaching thousands of people, bringing a bit of sunshine to a rather dark and difficult winter. These online activities have enabled us to reach much further afield. In 2021, the SunSpaceArt team was the proud recipient of the Arthur C. Clarke Award in Space Achievement for Education and Outreach.

We wish to share our outreach work with the solar physics community, in particular the Loops community, to stimulate debate and to encourage others to share their own work with the public, students and children. The solar images and movies, and 3D models are truly inspirational. With new and exciting ground based solar observatories, recent NASA and ESA space projects such as Parker Solar Probe and Solar Orbiter, and future plans, there is a great opportunity to engage the public in our field of research.

*Speaker