

My House – A Cardboard Construction Project

By Paula Briggs

This activity is from a series on a site called [Access Art](#) and is by Paula Briggs. If you don't have all the necessary materials think about what you could use instead.

There is something special about transforming an ordinary, everyday material into an extraordinary object. These autobiographical architectural sculptures use corrugated cardboard, laid in strips on their side, to create sculptures designed to be peered in to! We made these houses following on from our [Sculptural Self Portraits](#). They were finally part of our [Autobiographical Suitcase Pop-Up Gallery](#).



My house – cardboard construction project

To Begin

Materials and Equipment

- Corrugated cardboard
- Strong scissors
- PVA glue and brushes
- Decorative paper / materials

Activity

We began by using lots of thin strips of corrugated cardboard. The strips should be about 1 – 1.5 cm wide, and cut against the corrugations. Although children did cut some of their own strips, I started the session with

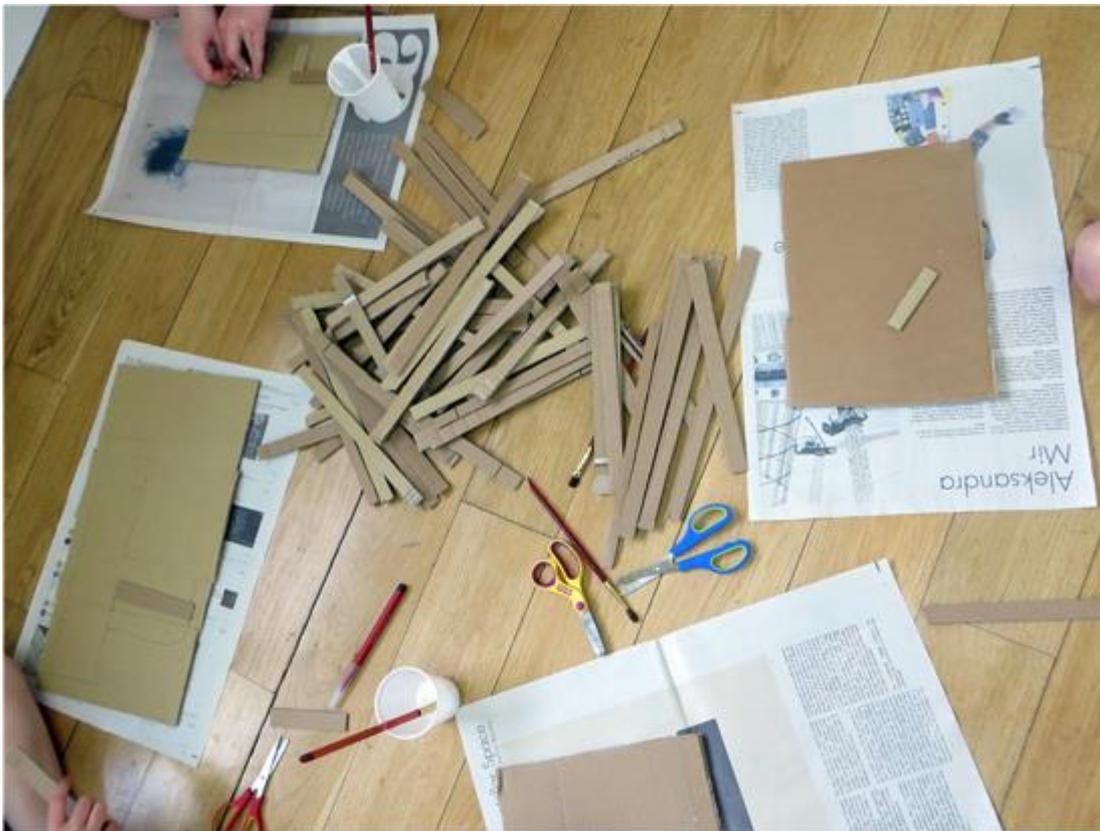
lots of precut strips which I had cut with a stanley knife – quicker and cleaner cuts.



1.5 cm strips of corrugated cardboard

We used another rectangular piece of cardboard as the base of the sculpture. I asked the children to take a moment with the base in front of them, to think about what they are about to build. What does their house look like? How many stories does it have? How many windows? Does it have a front porch? How does the roof slant? Where on the cardboard base would the front of the house sit?

I asked the children to begin work by creating a plan of the front of their house, as if seeing the house from above. They then used the strips of card to plot out the shape of the front and sides of the house (not the back). PVA glue was used to attach the strips to the board, and to themselves.



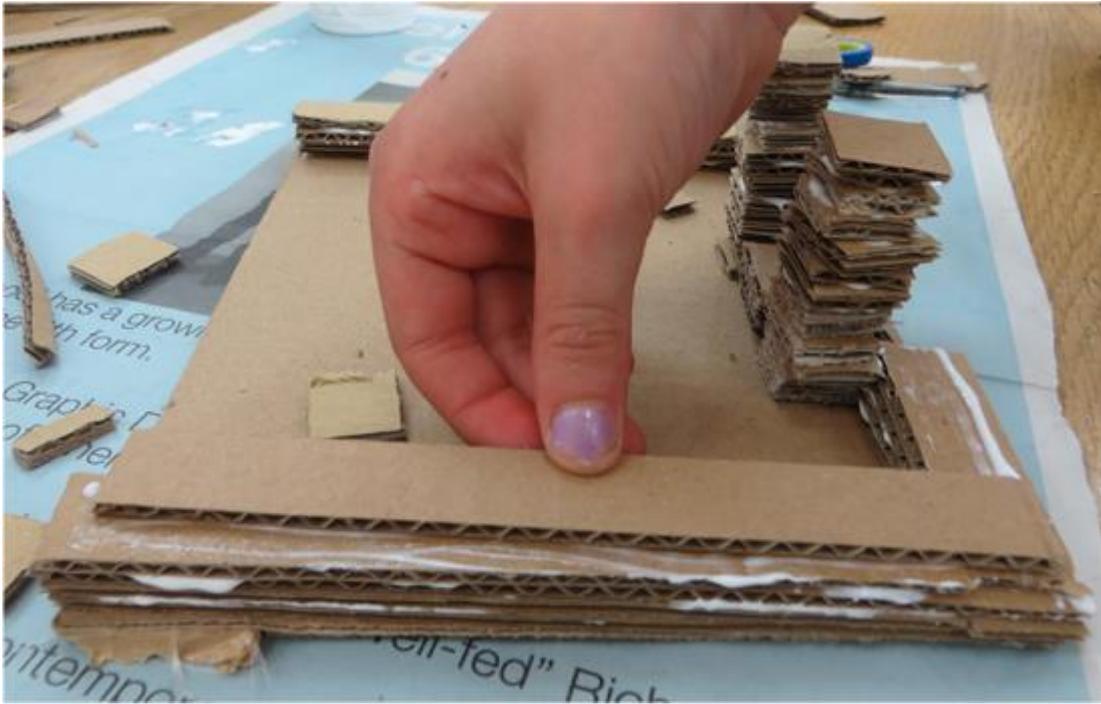
Planning out where the walls will sit within the base



Glueing down the strips

The children continued building up to the walls to create the front and side walls of the house. The cardboard strips were layered for strength and

glued in place. The children were asked to leave gaps for windows and doors, and to think structurally – making the walls and corners stronger by staggering joints.



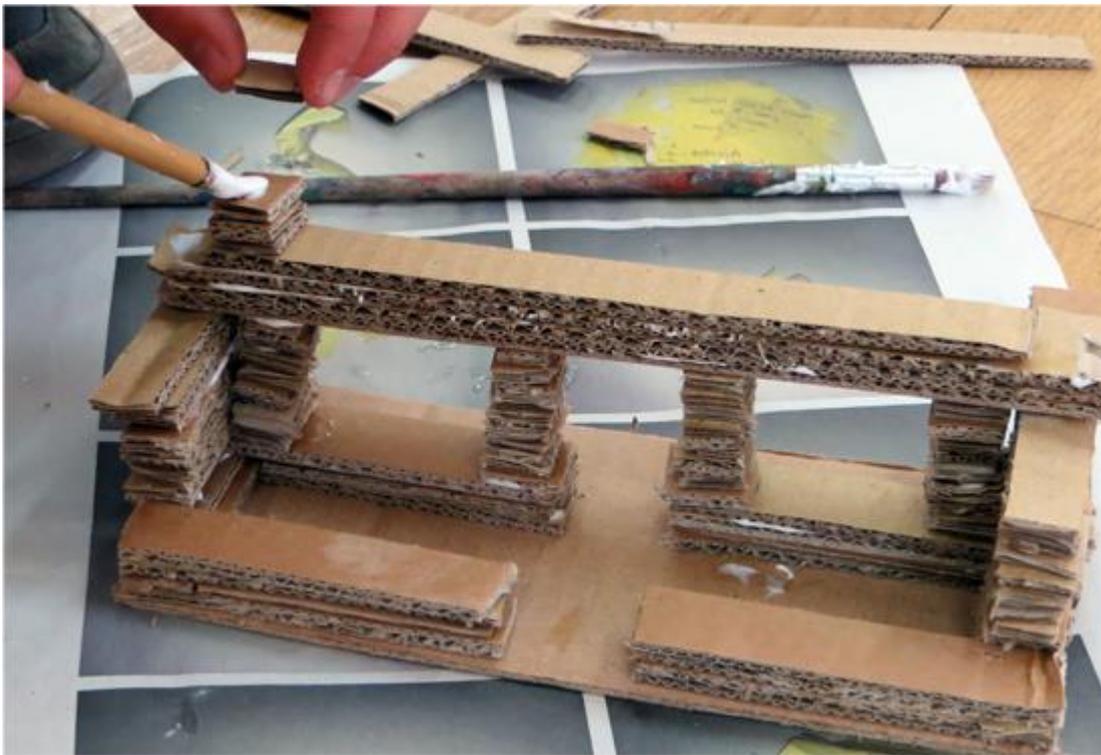
Building up the walls, staggering the cardboard strips for strength



Making details – front porch



Thinking structurally



Building up walls and leaving gaps for windows and doors

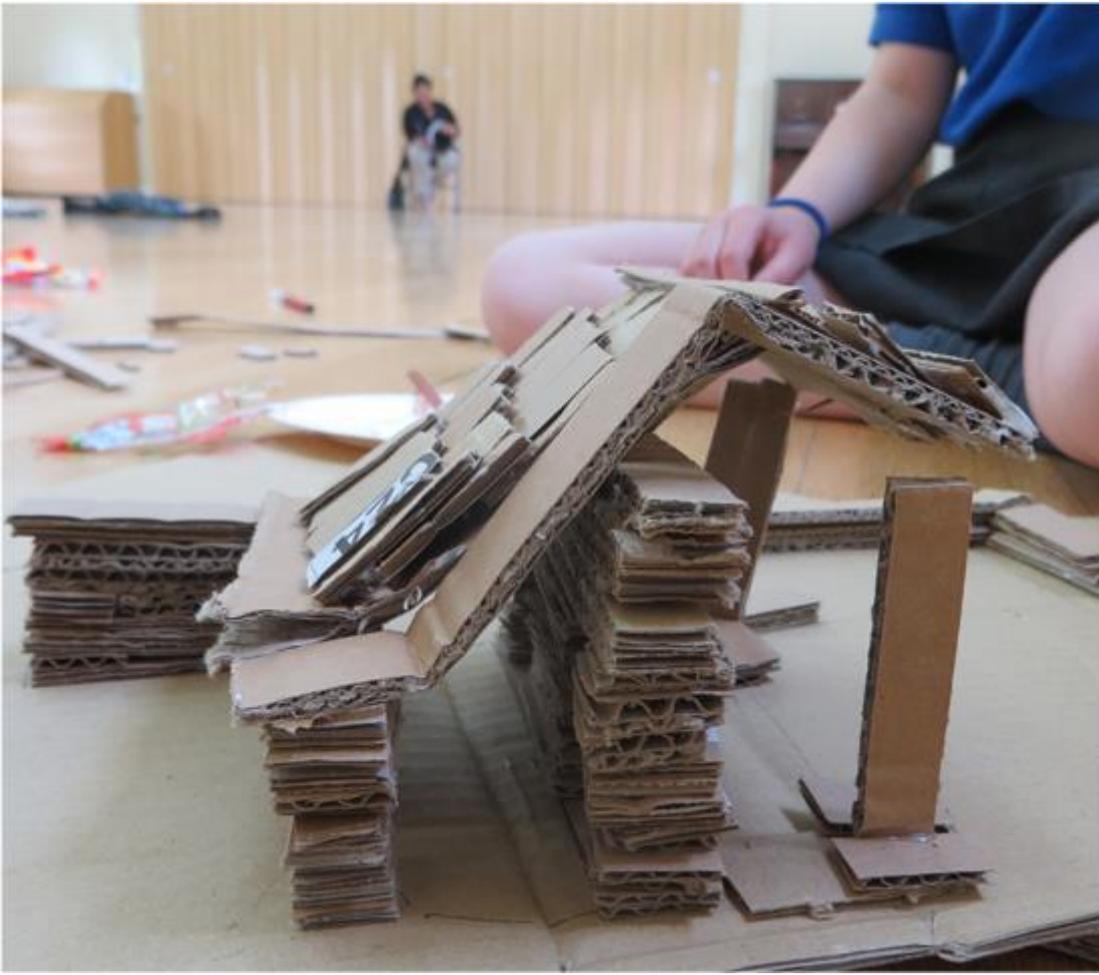


We built up only the front and side of the house, allowing the sculpture to be turned around to see inside

The children kept working until they felt the walls were high enough, and then started to make roofs out of single pieces of card, or constructed with cardboard roof tiles. Some children decided to attach the roof on only one side so they could flip it up to see inside.

Because they had only been building the front and side walls, the back of the house was left open. I invited the children to use this open space to give access to the inside of the house. I asked them: Would you like to add floors and stairs? Objects in your bedroom? Or just leave it open? I reminded them to enjoy the differences between the front and back of the sculpture – to give the viewer a surprise when they peered inside.

I also asked them to try to recognise the point in the process when a line was crossed: – they started out by making a structure based upon their knowledge of their own house, but during the making process, the house will of course take on its own character, and suddenly become a *sculpture*. At this point they can start responding to the object they are creating, and leave their own house somewhat behind. I wanted the children to recognise this stage and to be aware of when they shift from making a model, to creating their own sculpture. The point at which they really take ownership of their work is to be celebrated!



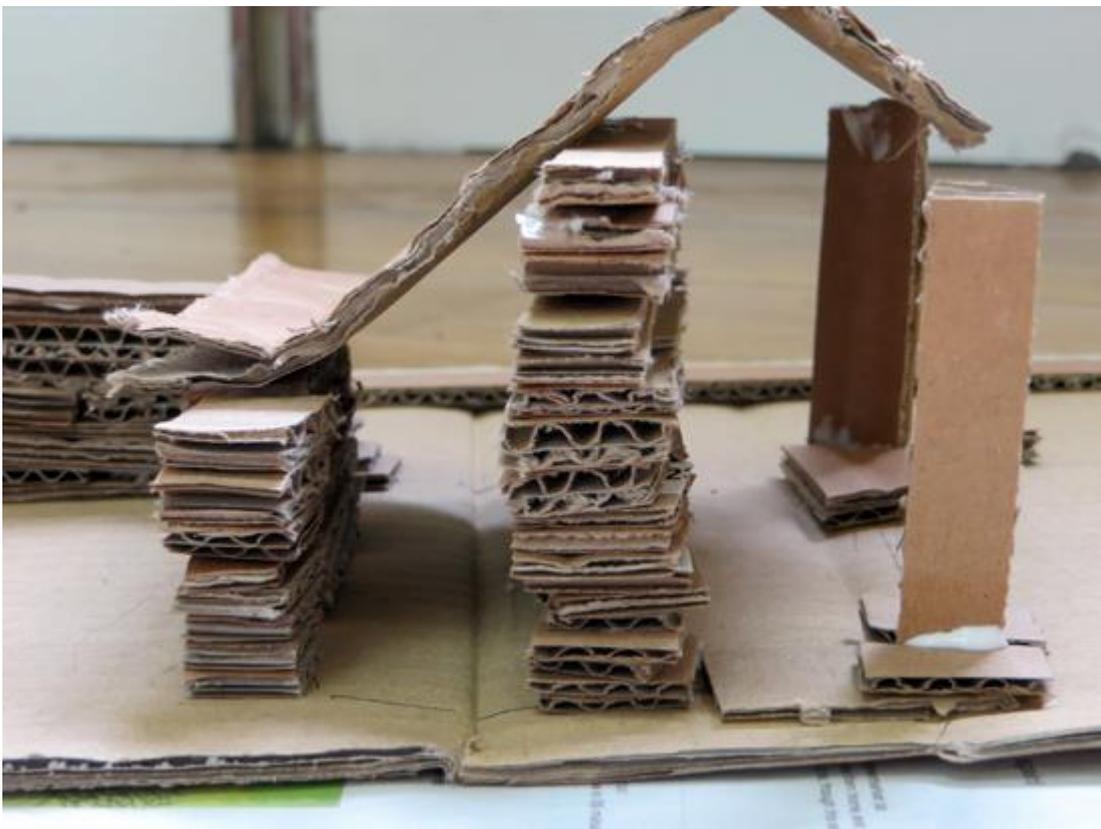
Veranda and side view of bungalow construction



Detail



The corrugated cardboard, placed on its side, creates a wonderful sculptural building material



Detail



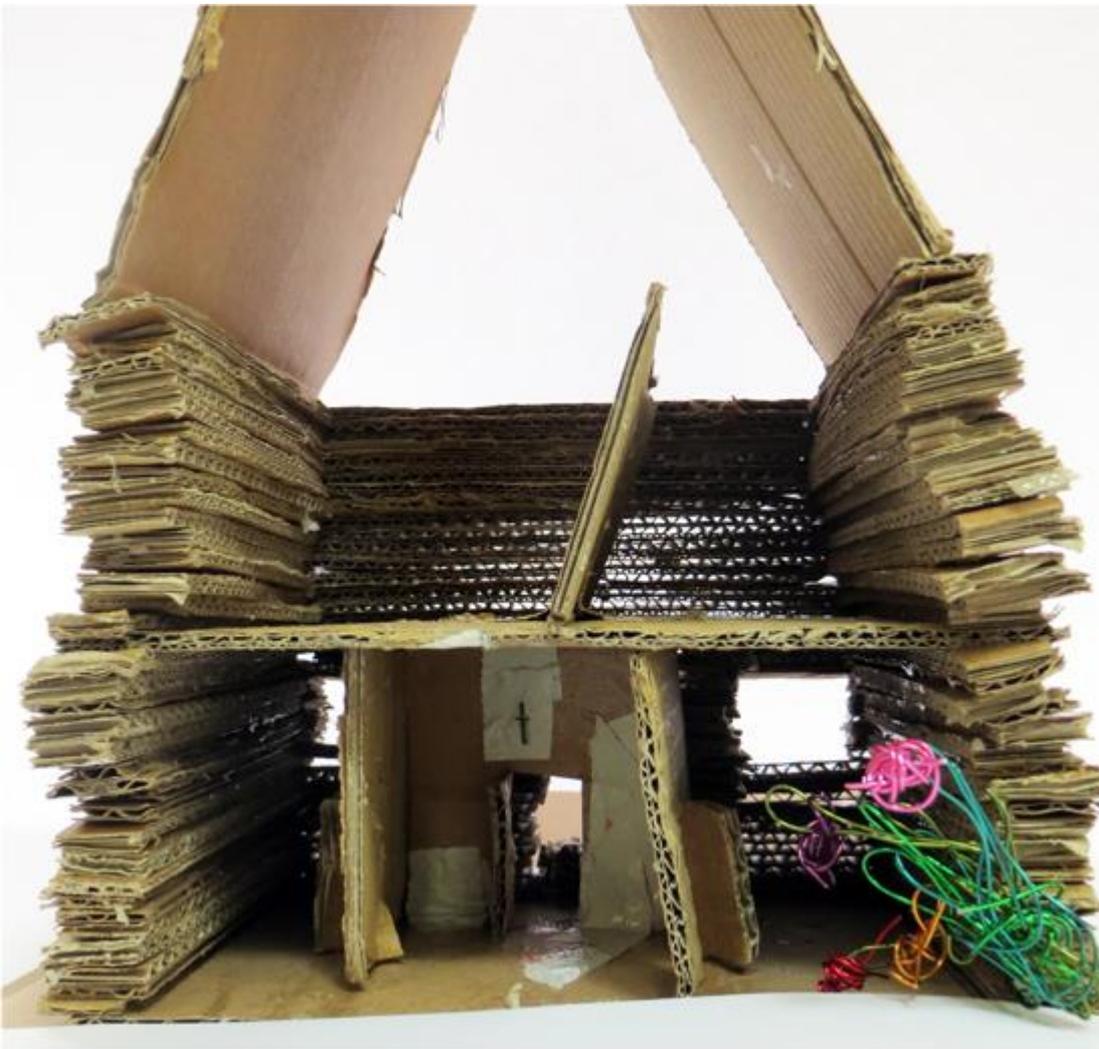
Looking in



Inside a house



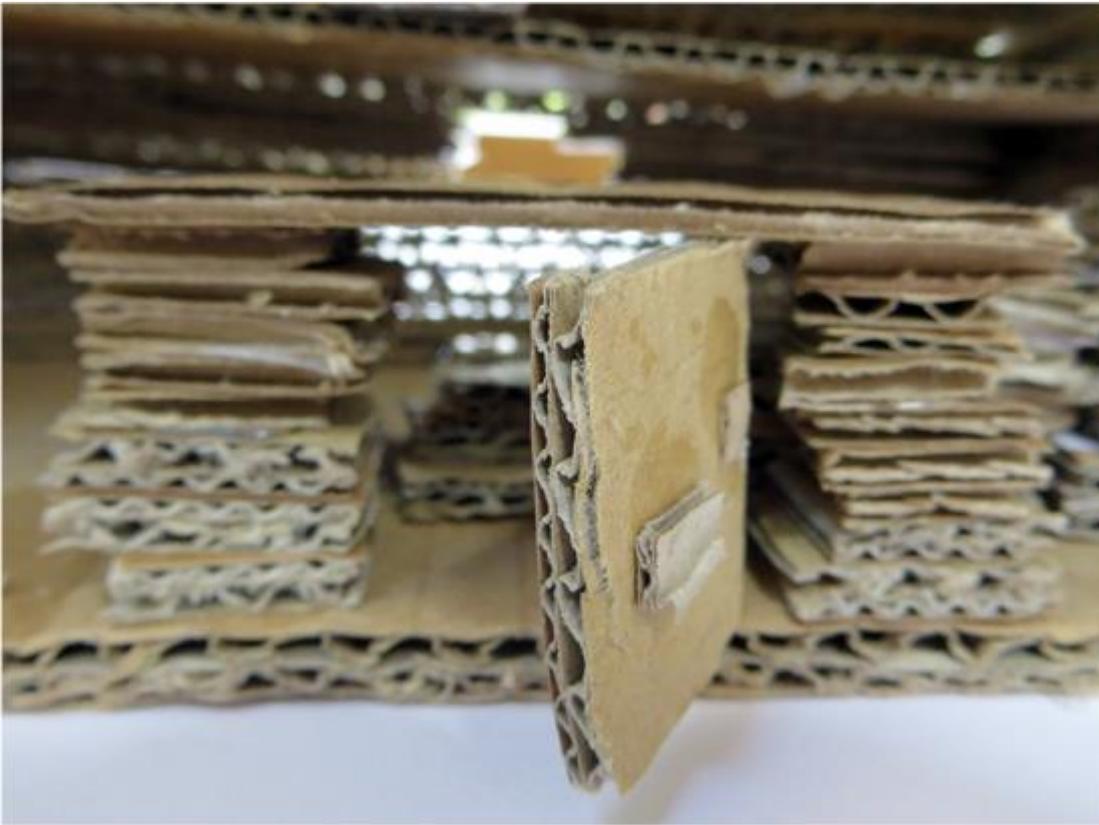
Front and side of house (seen from back)



Inside, with added autobiographical detail



Inside, with bedroom cutaway and downstairs rooms



Door

When we were finished we made a quick street along the floor, and the children got down to the level of their sculptures and peered in!



Peering in