



Thames To Tama

4000 Southend-on-Sea school pupils take part in Thames to Tama, a creative project with artist Lee Baker inspired by the 16th Century travels of Will Adams

In association with SET (Southend Education Trust), arts organisation Metal, unveil plans for their most ambitious project in the Southend borough to date. This will involve 22 schools and colleges from across the Southend Borough, with over 4000 pupils taking part.

This art project was inspired by the journey of the legendary William Adams, who set sail from the Thames Gateway in 1598 and became the first Briton to set foot in Japan. His entry into Japanese waters was via the River Tama, a Japanese gateway river not dissimilar in importance for trade as the Thames. To depict this journey artist Lee Baker has created five huge wall-size, line-drawn images based upon both ancient and modern Japanese graphics, paintings, and maps.

Each line drawing has been divided into A4 size tiles. The idea is to give each of the participating 4000 school pupils a sheet of A4 paper. Upon this they will create a portrait of a fellow pupil using a designated colour and combine drawing and collage. Each portrait will then be positioned in its place in one of the five huge line drawn artworks.

An exhibition and celebration of this artwork will take place throughout March 2011.

This project is a cross curriculum school project taking place on a mammoth scale. Links to the curriculum include geography, literature – in the form of James Clavell's novel 'Shogun', art and design, and ecology – the melting of the North East Passage.

A smaller scale project of this kind was completed in Liverpool in 2006. 100 pupils from the St Francis of Assisi Academy completed portraits that became part of a line drawing of Stephenson's Rocket. This artwork is still on display in the school.