



Eltham Christmas Art Trail by Eltham Arts
"The Gingerbread Family Go Shopping in Eltham"



Connecting the community through arts

Eltham Arts Proposal for Eltham High Street Festive Art Trail

“The Gingerbread Family Go Shopping in Eltham”

A festive art trail for Eltham High Street titled “The Gingerbread Family Go Shopping in Eltham!”

A vibrant, sustainable, and community-led celebration of creativity. The trail will feature large-scale window displays and sculptures made from recycled and natural materials such as cardboard (collected from local businesses), coloured paper, tissue, raffia, willow, and cellophane, combined with lighting elements to create an uplifting and colourful atmosphere. This project aims to enhance the High Street during the festive season, encourage community participation, and support Eltham’s local identity through creativity and collaboration.

Artistic Concept & Cultural Inspiration

The installations will follow the story of the Gingerbread family shopping in Eltham on their way home, collecting decorations from around the world for their Gingerbread village!

This family-friendly trail will encourage visitors to explore the High Street, engage with local shops, and enjoy a festive, inclusive experience.

The art trail draws on both folklore and culinary history. According to English Heritage, the tradition of shaping gingerbread into figures dates back centuries in England, Queen Elizabeth I is said to have had her bakers create gingerbread likenesses of her guests as edible caricatures. In medieval England, “gingerbread” originally referred to a honey-sweetened paste (rather than the spice-laden confections of later centuries) and was transformed over time. As sugar and spices became more accessible, the art of gingerbread-making spread across Europe, evolving into decorated cookies, houses, and festive shapes, making it a perfect metaphor for craft, cultural exchange, and celebration.

In our project, the Gingerbread Man’s journey from English roots outward into India, Africa, and Europe mirrors the historical journey of gingerbread itself, from simple honey cakes in medieval England to a globally recognised festive tradition. Each window becomes a storytelling gesture in that evolution: from English folklore to cross-cultural decoration, celebrating the creative spirit shared across continents.

Reference: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/christmas/a-short-history-of-gingerbread/>



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Location	Theme	Description
Window 1	<i>The Gingerbread Family</i>	Gingerbread family welcoming visitors at one end of the High Street.
Window 2	<i>Stars of Asia</i>	Colourful, Asian-inspired stars in various shapes and sizes symbolising light and celebration.
Window 3	<i>European Traditions</i>	A collection of classic European-style tree decorations.
Window 4	<i>African Angels</i>	Angels made from African-inspired fabrics and illuminated with soft lighting.
Window 5	<i>Gingerbread Homecoming</i>	A Gingerbread house and Christmas tree installation completing the trail at the other end of the High Street.



The decorations in each window were created in collaboration with community members during open workshops, as well as with children from Haimo, Wyborne, and Deansfield Primary Schools and S-V Academy.

There are two festive art trails to enjoy!

1. Find the six decorated shop windows shown above
2. Look out for eight small gingerbread characters, each holding a letter.
3. Collect all the letters to complete the mystery words.
4. Bring your finished words to the library to claim your prize!

Businesses hosting Trail 1 – Beyond the fringe, Kutchen Haus, Bobs your uncle café, Greenwich & Bexley Hospice, Legends restaurant and Mr Simms sweet shop.

Businesses hosting Trail 2 – Mirto Bianco cafe, Fabolous tea room, Eltham library, Skybar, GPO, Normans Music Shop, Rusty bucket and Bob Hope theatre.