

Art and Design



Art and design and the cross-curriculum dimensions

Introduction

Art and design has always focused on what can be described as two very broad major themes: first, an interpretation of self and the human form, and secondly a representation or reinterpretation of the world in which we live. These themes remain central both to the way young people engage with the processes of creating art, craft and design, and also to their response and interpretation of the works of artists, craftspeople and designers. The themes extend well beyond notions of pictorial and physical representation in the fine arts, to include the ways in which the applied arts, crafts and the whole breadth of design practice respond to the desires and needs of the individual, as well as addressing the major ideas and challenges that face communities and different cultures.

Making connections across the curriculum provides teachers with the opportunity to help young people engage intelligently and thoughtfully with wider sources, through the concepts and ideas being explored in other areas of their learning. Creativity in art and design has always been most successful when imaginative connections can be made, leading to original and innovative ideas. Teachers are familiar with the concept of learning in and through art, craft and design. They understand the need to balance experiential learning processes with critical and contextual thinking, and the difference in creative thinking stimulated by real and imagined worlds, or the consideration of contemporary practice compared with work from the past. Creativity can be fostered by helping students to establish original purpose and intention in their work, stimulating and rewarding curiosity and exploration by encouraging confidence and the willingness to take risks, building on intrinsic motivation and facilitating opportunities for choice and discovery. Issues-based work can stimulate meaningful, innovative, creative, cross-curricular work. Creativity is best achieved when the crass plundering of images is avoided and pupils engage with the major ideas and challenges that face individuals and society.

The following cross-curriculum dimensions provide opportunities for wider creative connections and collaboration.

Identity and cultural diversity

Many teachers of art and design would see identity and cultural diversity as key themes within their curriculum. However, this has largely been a theme applied in the context of fine art painting approaches and less frequently in relation to textiles, print and three-dimensional processes. It would be useful to see these themes applied more often within the applied arts, crafts and design. Opportunities for exploring social and cultural diversity through the study of the issues that shape our own lives, our communities, beliefs and the wider forces of globalisation should be relevant in all areas of art and design.

Teachers recognise the difficulty of understanding aboriginal art without studying contextual information about their culture, beliefs and history. Similarly, the making of masks is often contextualised by 'African' cultures, resulting in a pastiche that may appreciate and celebrate craft skills and use of materials and natural pigments, but achieve little in increasing young people's understanding of why some cultures make and use masks, and what purposes they serve. For example, when young people create their own masks, these should represent their own culture and purposes by creatively applying what has been gained through their study of other cultural, historical and ceremonial contexts, mask-making cultures and 'masking' activities.



Many teachers are very familiar with the visual representation of identity through the many conventions of portrait art, and how meaning can be communicated by exploring forms of expression, content, context, process and mood. We use forms of representation from both western and non-western cultures and from other times, but with the exception of photography we focus less on the issues within our own cultures and communities. For art, craft and design to be meaningful to young people, they need to have opportunities to understand and engage with their own lives and identities, so that they are better able to understand and contextualise the lives of others. To support this learning, teachers will need to utilise further contemporary, socially relevant and diverse visual and contextual resources. Through broader curricular links, teachers can enhance both the breadth and depth of the understanding of cultural identity, promote deeper and broader learning, and foster creative thinking which should engage, enlighten and motivate.

Project links with English, media studies, PE and the performing arts provide opportunities for engaging with views explored through texts, film, music, the theatre and sporting contexts, where teachers can encourage learners to understand the layers of influence that create pride in identity, what nationality means, principles of faith and family traditions. Curriculum links with the humanities, modern languages, RE, PSHE, and citizenship provide further opportunities for exploring cultural, social and religious diversity, through for example, the consideration of our assumptions about values and stereotype, bias and prejudice.

Healthy lifestyles

Artists have always reflected the society within which we live, by exploring the issues that impact on our lives and the moral and social implications of our lifestyles. Designers seek to address these concerns through their design work, whether employed in the media, reflecting or driving our aspirations and concerns, or by designing environments and products that address these issues and hopefully improve our lives.

Young people engage with the media and design as consumers and develop their opinions and understanding principally through this experience. The art and design curriculum can provide opportunities to explore concepts of healthy lifestyles, principally in the context of issues that affect their lives, but also through consideration of social and moral dilemmas. These areas are already explored within PSHE, drama, citizenship, physical education, science and technology where issues of personal health relate to identity, healthy lifestyle, relationships, social responsibility and the world of work. By developing curriculum connections, art and design teachers will access a wealth of prior learning about these issues and be better able to explore with young people, broader contexts for healthy lifestyles, enabling them to design products and visual media with greater personal and social relevance.

Community participation

Developing active participation in the life of the school and community can be promoted through the opportunity to engage with real-life local projects and through opportunities for young people to create and exhibit their work. Community projects provide opportunities for the recognition of community participation through connections established by the school with local charities, community services and through school based initiatives such as volunteering, or for example, the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme. By developing curriculum connections with PSHE, pastoral and community based schemes, art and design teachers are able to provide additional opportunities for students to work within the broader community. This will help them learn how to collaborate on projects and to explore how their contribution to the community can make a difference.

By basing projects and learning in their community, young people are able to engage directly in relevant local issues and develop social responsibility, both through research and practical projects, such as creating works for specific spaces and communities. Practices can extend well beyond fine art approaches, for example to include applied craft and design opportunities as part of vocational courses or commissioned design solutions for the community and local businesses.

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Further opportunities exist for the creation of a community art gallery within a school, to develop collaboration with local artists or to profile the work of young people and engage the community in their achievements.

Enterprise

The definition of enterprise provides almost a full description of working practices in art and design. Artists, craftspeople and designers have to be enterprising to be successful. Without initiative and the drive to make things happen they will not succeed. Similarly, they are expected to create and implement new ideas and ways of doing things, handle uncertainty and respond positively to change both on a daily basis and as a part of their working life. Without a 'can-do' attitude they are not able to persevere, resolve difficulties and complete projects and commissions.

Art and design is also about commenting on and responding to the society and world in which we live, creating outcomes that inform and meet the needs of different types of consumers. In the past, much learning in art and design was solitary, with too few opportunities to work in a group and to collaborate creatively. The world of work teaches us that creative collaboration is a vital and necessary part of the creative process, developing the skills and contributions of different members of a team. This is true in most areas of the media and design arts and increasingly also in fine art where contemporary artists such as Antony Gormley, Damien Hirst, Doris Salcedo, Mark Wallinger and Louise Bourgeois rely on their collaborations with engineers, fabricators, scientists, photographers, publishers and designers to help them create, present and promote their work.

Global dimension and sustainable development

In many ways, art and design is a global subject and has always responded to the visual record of world events, recognising the importance of other times and cultures to inform the development of young people's creative style and wider perspective. Similarly, many artists, craftspeople and designers have been aware of the environmental impact of their work and the need for more sustainable use of the earth's resources through the products they create and the ideas they promote. For example, sculpture projects linked to design technology enable teachers to explore the fashion and textiles industry through recycled materials for a fashion show, or to use found and recycled materials to create welded and assembled sculpture exhibitions or to explore the design of products for fragile environments. Graphic design and broadcast media projects provide the perfect vehicle with which to model global media, global and corporate messages and the global market, linking with technology using web design, linking with English to develop messages and text, science and geography to identify and explore sustainable development issues and social contexts.

[\[Link to globalisation arts/ICT webpage\]](#)

Technology and the media

Artists and designers have always operated at the cutting edge of technology, pushing back the boundaries to explore what is possible by exploiting the characteristics of that technology in their desire to be original and innovative. Many of the new technologies are themselves visual or use visual interfaces to engage the user. Media output is huge and diverse in its range of applications, many of which are visual and uniquely defined by specific cultures and views of the world. Art and design should engage young people through their own use of new technologies to model creative practice and provide a context for critical thinking; helping them to become responsible global citizens and critical consumers of media, able to reflect on the relationship between reality and the world portrayed by the media. (www.nsead.org)

Young people are engaged with new technologies and quick to grasp their potential for entertainment, information, communication and socialising. This is generally through the use of personal devices such as multi-function phones or MP3 players, enhanced through skills gained by game playing or communications developed via social networking websites. The art and design curriculum is changing. The older technologies of print, photography, film and animation for example, are being updated and



extended, making them fully accessible within the classroom without the need for heavy or expensive equipment. Alongside this, new art-forms are emerging, bringing installation-art into classrooms along with virtual art forms and the integration of personal devices into the web and wireless networks. The art and design curriculum needs to respond to and reflect these developments, not just through the image based technologies in fine art, graphics and design related contexts, but also by embracing the opportunities offered in multimedia applications and the converging broadcast technologies of film, animation, web and game design. Learning in these areas of experience can be best achieved through projects that link with areas of the curriculum where these technologies are also applied in real contexts.

Opportunities are most obvious within the arts, connecting music and performance technologies with film and animation, and for collaboration within dance and theatre. There are similar opportunities in English, the humanities, MFL, PSHE and citizenship, linking the study and impact of multimedia and broadcast technologies on other cultures and communities. This also provides an opportunity to design a comic, a graphic novel, or use graphics media and web resources to address a cultural context, purpose or just to entertain.

Further curriculum opportunities are available through connections with mathematics to explore pattern, time-based media and game design. Presentation skills and visual literacy provide opportunities to present information pictorially or in graphical form linked to science, sports and health based contexts, with the potential to expand these skills and techniques across all areas of learning using multi-media presentation tools, game, web and broadcast media. This will help to prepare young people for their life as members of an international, digitally literate society providing worldwide opportunities for employment and using technology as an international language.

Creativity and critical thinking

Being creative is both an intuitive and complex process integrating creative and critical thinking within the physical process of making art, craft and design. In planning for creativity teachers organise the learning conditions necessary to enable young people to think and respond creatively. These conditions include opportunities to use their imagination and explore possibilities as they generate and make connections between ideas. In art and design, this describes a playful and investigative or experimental process, learning by making and responding creatively and having the confidence to take risks. This is not an entirely practical process, and involves critical thinking to guide the creating and designing, the development of creative ideas, refining and modifying; leading to the development of outcomes of value that relate to relevant contexts and real audiences, and have purpose.

The conditions for creativity also require the resources to support this form of learning, whether they are charcoal and paper, paint and canvas or a virtual image. Teachers can set the context for creativity by developing the confidence of young people to help them take risks with their learning and provide the correct level of challenge to develop both their technical and thinking skills. This challenge may require careful higher order questioning or coaching approaches to lead the young person in the development of, for example, their painting skills.

The creative process is therefore a balance of thinking and acting creatively, it involves taking risks in order to progress and produce original outcomes. Critical thinking is a key element in this process because it also involves evaluating the thinking process – the reasoning that informed our actions and the factors considered in making a decision. The following two quotations explore similar approaches to defining critical thinking.

‘Broadly speaking, critical thinking is concerned with reason, intellectual honesty, and open-mindedness, as opposed to emotionalism, intellectual laziness, and closed-mindedness.’¹

Victor. P. Maiorana suggests that ‘The purpose of critical thinking is, therefore, to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. Since all three areas involve the asking of questions, we can say that critical thinking is the questioning or inquiry we engage in when we seek to understand, evaluate, or resolve.’²

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In art, critical thinking is not therefore just the action of looking at and responding to a work of art, but the application of this learning to the creative process of designing and making art, craft and design. By developing opportunities to work with creative individuals and explore thinking in and through other subjects, we broaden the perspective of the learner. Alongside their study of artists, craftspeople and designers, they encounter other forms of creative work including, for example, theory, literature, music, cultural information, inventions and discoveries. Similarly, their creativity will benefit from broader study, particularly if it can transcend subject barriers and engage in the ideas shared by subjects. These are the spaces where the creativity occurs, through the connections made between different ideas.

References:

- 1 American educationalist Daniel J Kurland.
- 2 *Critical Thinking across the Curriculum: Building the Analytical Classroom*. Victor P. Maiorana.



Department for Children,
Schools and Families
Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority
National College for
School Leadership
Secondary National Strategy
Specialist Schools and
Academies Trust
Youth Sport Trust



National
Curriculum

Working in partnership to support
delivery of the new National Curriculum
Part of the 14–19 education and skills programme