

What did the school want to achieve?

Many of the students across the school have been involved in making school films and their own personal videos. This was intended to be an opportunity for AS students to explore video and the moving image from a more abstract and experimental way and to seek cross-curricular links with music. It was important to contextualise the project in contemporary art practice and to show a historical perspective on video/film art. It was also intended to test an alternative on-line assessment strategy that could be more interactive and public.

How was learning organised to achieve these aims?

The project ran over three single periods and a double, which was used for the studio shoot. To contextualise the project a PowerPoint and You Tube presentation showed the photography of Man Ray, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and contemporary photographers Zafer Baran and Chris Parks, the animations of Len Lye and the water videos of Bill Viola. Their work was used to illustrate how light and colour could be abstracted with reflective and refractive materials. They also explored how music could motivate an editing rhythm creating a sequence of shots that could further abstract the movement of light. The class discussed how these effects could be created in-camera and in editing.

Over the following week the students were expected to collect and acquire suitable materials and resources to create a tabletop set up. Most students had the facility to shoot video on their mobile phones, others were provided with digital cameras and a Mini DV video camera in order to record their investigations. Lights were provided courtesy of the drama department. The students also had access to various art materials in the art cupboard. The shoot was a collaborative endeavour with students working in groups of twos and threes. This allowed them to work faster at problem solving and helped to spark off ideas.

Editing was to be done as an individual exercise but with peer tutoring to develop further already competent ICT skills and to build confidence with the desktop editing programmes such as iMovie. A week later the class reviewed rough cuts as work in progress. This was used to share experiences and to respond to peer comments regarding music, the sequences of images and pace.

Final assessment was done virtually on You Tube. The project work was uploaded on to a 'Channel' set up by one of the students. This allowed an open and interactive response from peers and the art teacher.

How successful was the project?

There was a disappointing lack of preparation for the shoot and the students relied heavily on the materials and resources that were provided in the art room. However, they did work very effectively at building their tabletop set ups and there was an atmosphere of creative excitement and fear as they navigated uncharted waters. In fact liquids and inks were a popular choice of media.

There was an initial timidity with framing and the use of the recording equipment. It took a quick demonstration to open their eyes to the drama of the micro detail, the different angles and the possible in-camera effects with shutter speeds. There were immediate results as they were able to review their recordings to make refinements and so develop other ideas. There was enough variety in the set ups to create different responses and observations to light and movement. These abstractions did challenge their preconceptions of how video could be used creatively.

At home on their own computers, and at school, they analysed their rushes and developed their individual ideas in the edits. However, the videos would have benefited from using an edited section of their chosen music rather than attempting to fill out four minutes with repetition. Sadly none of the students tried to write or adapt their own compositions.

Students were eager to show off and publish their videos and to receive on-line feedback. This could have been better supported with a statement explaining the creative response with a contextual reference.

While there are many media studies students employing similar assessment strategies, perhaps now innovative art and design students can begin to set the pace for the creative and artistic exploitation of technology and environments that they inhabit as 'digital natives'?

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