



**YINKA ILORI: POSTER AND INTERVIEW**  
DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM  
**INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESS**  
SCIENCE, ART AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

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## Editorial

It's *AD*'s birthday – we're 10 years old! When our first issue was published in January 2011, we were told, 'NSEAD's new magazine is really accessible; a brilliant balance of celebration, information and provocation'. The *AD* team took this feedback to heart and, 30 issues later, we continue to strive to achieve those qualities and characteristics. But, what else should we be aiming for and what have we learnt?

Over the last 10 years we have witnessed political, economic, social and educational upheaval, the brutal killing of George Floyd, whose death reignited the Black Lives Matter campaign, and a catastrophic global pandemic. Through these events we have seen clearly that the playing fields of social justice, health and education are not level. And, if nothing else, the year 2020 has acutely illustrated that, without actions and activism, nothing will change.

NSEAD believes art, craft and design education can make the world a better place. This issue of *AD* examines ways in which we, as individuals, schools and partner organisations, can take actions to shape the world and make it more equitable. This open access issue not only

celebrates best practice, but its authors individually and collectively show how our actions can both challenge and remove barriers that prevent participation and achievement in learning.

Many thanks to Yinka Illori and Fiona MacDonald for their fascinating 'In conversation' interview, as well as the Design Museum and Dulwich Picture Gallery for helping to make Yinka's wonderful poster possible. If you saw *The Colour Palace* in 2019 or *Happy Street* in West London, you'll have experienced the joy of Yinka's work and witnessed how art and design positively impacts on communities and the places in which we live.

Finally, a further thank you to all the authors in this and every previous issue of *AD* over the years – for your celebrations, provocations and actions, and for showing us how art, craft and design education can level the playing fields of learning and, in turn, enrich and shape the world.

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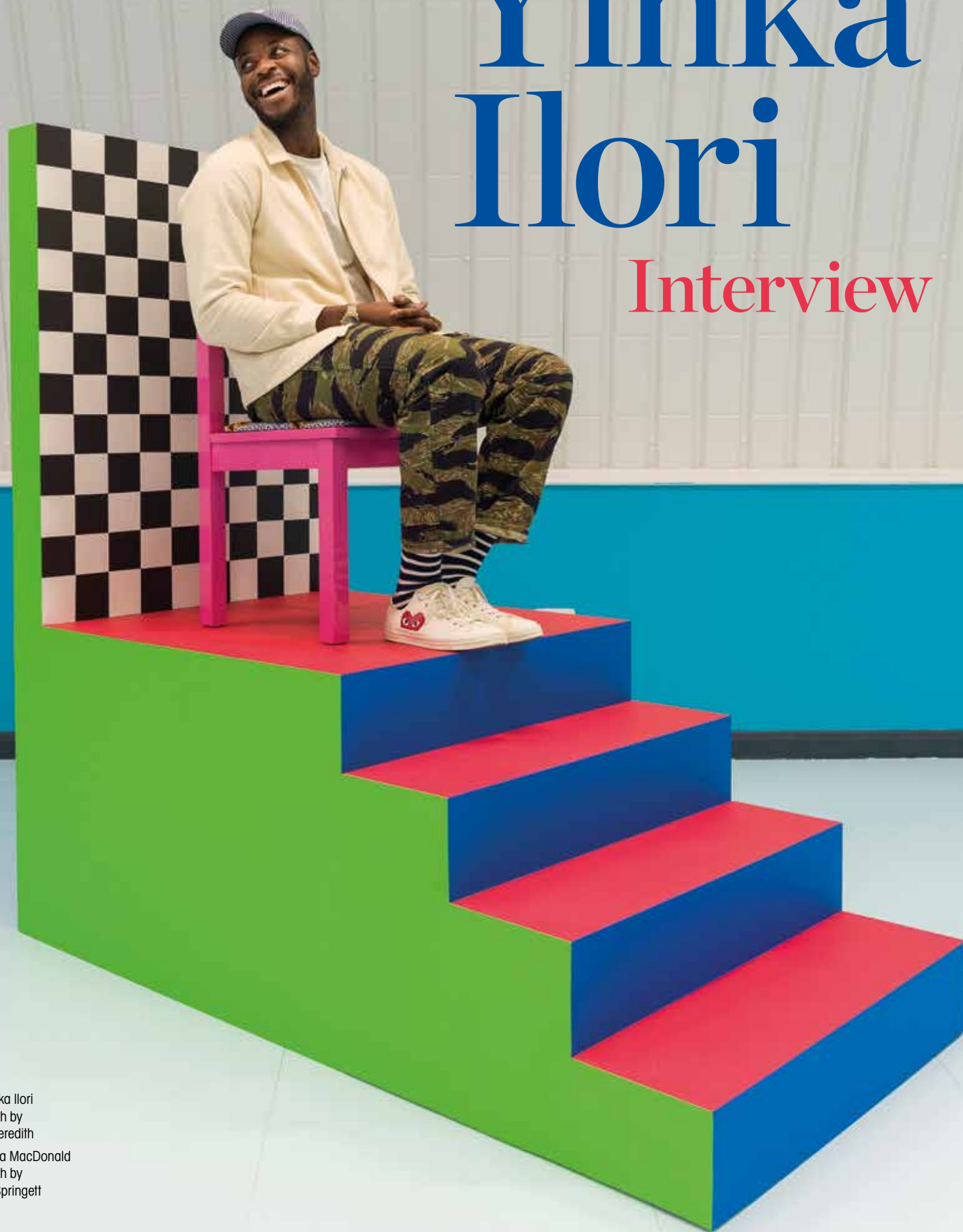
Yinka Illori, *Colour Palace*, 2019  
Courtesy of Dulwich Picture Gallery  
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# Yinka Ilori

## Interview



**Above** Yinka Ilori  
Photograph by  
Andrew Meredith

**Right** Fiona MacDonald  
Photograph by  
Matthew Springett

### Yinka Ilori, artist and designer, in conversation

*London-based, multidisciplinary artist and designer Yinka Ilori combines his Nigerian storytelling heritage and global themes with playful, colourful contemporary design, as seen in recent commissions The Colour Palace and Happy Street. Here, he discusses his work and the importance of design education for young people with Fiona MacDonald, head of learning at the Design Museum*



**Fiona MacDonald:** Can you tell us briefly about your background and how you came to do the work that you do now?

**Yinka Ilori:** I've always been interested in fine art and painting. That made me the odd one out in my family. As a child, I would dismantle things at home to try and find out how they functioned, then get into trouble for breaking it. It was because I was curious and I wanted to know how things worked. That is where my love of design started.

I went on to do a BTEC in Art and Design and then studied Furniture and Product Design at London Metropolitan University in East London. I graduated in 2009 and set up my own design studio soon after.

**Is there a particular response you hope for from viewers? Is there a way you want them to feel when they experience your work?**

One thing I always take inspiration from is my parents and how they wore colour, textiles and print. It was so bold. It was an extension of their culture and identity. I want to celebrate that in my work. For me, it's about being proud of my culture and heritage and proud of where I come from. I want people to understand the power of objects and how they can tell stories. I also want to educate people about the value of everyday objects and recycling. I want to move away from the idea that if something is broken, you throw it away. I'd like my work to raise questions about how we buy things and how we waste.

**'Being born in London, but also having Nigerian heritage, I grew up with two cultures and I found that furniture was a good way to start a conversation about stories and culture'**

**Has your work evolved over time or has it stayed consistent?**

I think what I want to say with my work has stayed quite consistent. I started by designing furniture and trying to give the audience an insight into my life and my cultural upbringing through that. Being born in London, but also having Nigerian heritage, I grew up with two cultures and I found that furniture was a good way to start a conversation about stories and culture.

I found that working with furniture in an exhibition space created an experience that was quite short-lived for people. When I went on to do bigger projects in public spaces such as *The Colour Palace* and *Happy Street*, I found these had a longer lasting impact on people's experiences. It allowed them to create memories that would stay with them for much longer. The stories have stayed the same, but the scale of the work has changed.

**What have been the best and most challenging aspects of scaling up, of moving from the gallery to the public realm?**

I started my studio 10 years ago and at that time it was just me. Going into the public realm, I started to work with engineers, architects, councils and surveyors. It was a different ball game and I was thrown in at the deep end. When I was just designing chairs in my studio, I didn't

have to get permission from anyone and there was no community engagement. Now, with the public work, I get to work with the community and that is something that I really love – understanding that, if my work is going to be in someone's area or estate, those people have to love it and it needs to give them a sense of belonging. Hosting workshops and speaking to young people and families, and understanding what they want to see in their spaces, is something I really enjoy.

**How have you found collaborating with architects and other designers?**

As I come from a furniture and product design background, my process is very different to that of an architect. I am used to making a model and then making the final chair that same day. The thing I didn't realise was the process and the time it takes to construct a building. When you see a nice house or block of flats, you don't realise the engineering, the materiality and the research that has gone into it. It takes years to construct a building! I've enjoyed it and I've learnt a lot that will hopefully equip me for future projects in public spaces.

**Do you have a highlight project?**

*Happy Street* at Thessaly Road railway bridge in South West London was probably my favourite recent project, mostly because of the public ▶

engagement I was involved in. I grew up in a council estate in London, so I could really see myself in the young kids that I worked with. I remember so much from the estate I grew up on and I wouldn't change a thing because it made me who I am. I do wish I had met artists and had public art round me when I was growing up though. Art is such a valuable tool for people's lives.

For *Happy Street*, we hosted workshops with families in the community hall. I loved that the young people were part of the process and part of the journey in creating the mural. I wanted to give them a sense of pride in where they lived, which is sometimes easy to lose in London – some spaces feel unloved and become derelict.

It was amazing to hear that some of those young people now want to be designers and artists. When I was young, design wasn't something we were told could be a job – it was always doctor or engineer. It was nice to speak to parents and let them know that you can make a career out of design. Everything around us is designed. Designers can and do change the world!

**‘Now, with the public work, I get to work with the community and that is something that I really love – understanding that, if my work is going to be in someone's area or estate, those people have to love it and it needs to give them a sense of belonging’**

#### How central is storytelling to your work?

Storytelling is the biggest part of my practice and colour comes second. Traditional Nigerian folklore was a big part of the storytelling in my house growing up. One example was, ‘No matter how long the neck of the giraffe, it still cannot tell the future.’ There are thousands of these parables. They are quite humorous at first, but if you read them more than once you get to a deeper meaning. They offer life lessons for how to be a better person. I didn't understand their significance as a child, but as an adult I reflected on them and used them in my work.

My work is also inspired by my upbringing. I like to tell stories about the people I grew up with. For example, I created a collection of chairs entitled *If Chairs Could Talk* in 2015. Each chair was based on a person I went to secondary school with; one was called Captain Hook, while another was called Flower Bomb.

I wanted to celebrate these people, who were perhaps considered unsuccessful in school, but who went on to be successful people in the public

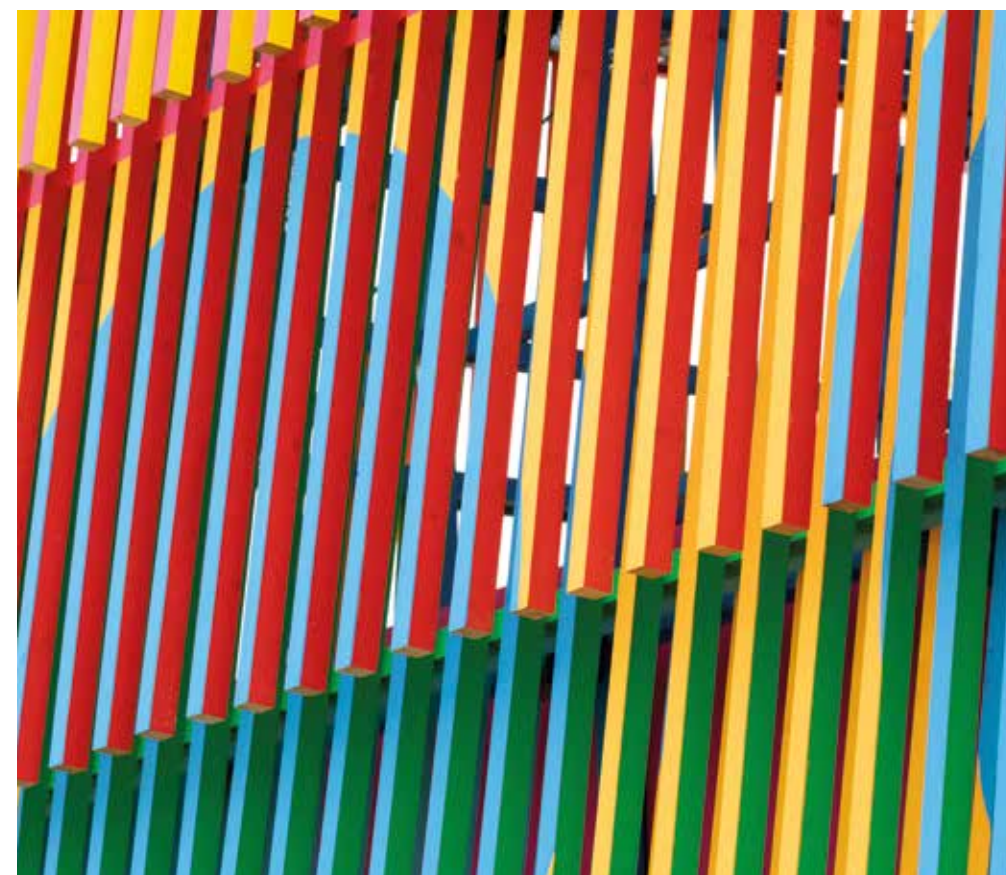
sphere. I never named them. I rarely tell people who the chair is about and that's the beauty of storytelling; you can create your own stories, you can read stories and you can share stories. Sometimes I like to share them, sometimes I like to keep it between me and the object. That's the wonderful thing about objects – they can hold memories, stories and secrets.

#### Your work is very colourful. How do you go about choosing a colour palette?

Colour comes quite naturally for me because it's something I grew up with. My palette often comes from what my parents wore. If I look at old family photographs, my work is often a carbon copy in terms of the colour of the clothes they were wearing in the 80s or 90s. I have this amazing painting of my grandmother who was obsessed with lilac, pink, orange, blue and green. My favourite colour is pink and orange, so you see that a lot of that in my work.

#### You were a judge for Beazley's Designs of the Year 2019. How did you find that experience?

I enjoy being a design judge, but I do find it hard judging design, especially saying whether something is good or bad. This comes from when I was studying at university and I was told that some of my designs were not good or not good enough. This is the same design that I'm still doing now. If I'd listened to those tutors, I wouldn't have got to where I am now. Design is definitely subjective.



**‘If I look at old family photographs, my work is often a carbon copy in terms of the colour of the clothes they were wearing in the 80s or 90s’**

#### Why did you choose to be the Design Ventura 2020 brief setter?

I wish I had had a programme like Design Ventura when I was younger. I'm here now, but the young people behind me are the future of the industry and the future of design. We need to nurture that young creative talent and encourage and support those young people. They have incredible ideas. I want them to know that they can make a career out of design and that they can be entrepreneurs.

#### The students taking part in Design Ventura are 13–16 years old. What subjects did you study at school and how has that influenced your journey to where you are now?

I studied Design & Technology, Fine Art, English and Geography (which I failed terribly). If you want to get into a creative field, I think Design Technology, Fine Art, English and Maths are all really useful subjects to study. I didn't like doing maths at school, but today I have to deal with lots of numbers in my work so it's quite important.

**Above and far left** Yinka Ilori, *Colour Palace*, 2019. Courtesy of Dulwich Picture Gallery. Photograph by Adam Scott

**Left** Design Ventura student workshop, 2019. Courtesy of the Design Museum. Photograph by Richard Heald



#### When you were a student, were there any teachers at school that particularly inspired or influenced you? What did they say? Or do?

There was one teacher, Mr Doherty. He was very strict with me in art class. He was always telling me to focus, but he really believed in me. I've gone back to visit him a couple of times at my old secondary school.

#### Is there anyone you would still consider to be a mentor or key influence in your adult life?

The architect Sir David Adjaye has been a good mentor to me. He's someone I look up to and go to for advice. He is an inspiration to a lot of people.

#### There is talk of a crisis in creative education. What would you say is the value of creative education for young people today?

I can only talk from my own experience. In my school, Design Technology and Fine Art were optional, but designers are a huge part of our world and society. Design can change the world and have a positive impact on people's lives and communities. I'm quite a shy person, but design has definitely given me confidence and helped me with my wellbeing. ▶



Last year's winning student design for Design Ventura is a tool for tackling creative block. What do you do if you find yourself suffering from creative block?

If I find myself stuck for ideas, I always go for a run. When I am running, I block out everything and just focus on my breathing and the destination. I've only been running since lockdown in 2020, so I'm no Mo Farrah.

Finally, do you have any advice for those artists and designers who are just starting out?

My advice for any young up and coming designer would be, trust the process and don't be greedy. There's no such thing as an overnight success. I was working in retail when I started out, trying to build up a collection of work and investing money into my business before I got any commissions. It takes sacrifice and it's not all glitz and glam, but it's definitely worth it. ■

#### Yinka Ilori

Recent public commissions include *The Colour Palace*, housed in the gardens of Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2019, and *Happy Street* at Thessaly Road railway bridge in the same year.  
[yinkailori.com](http://yinkailori.com)

#### Fiona MacDonald

Fiona is head of learning at the Design Museum in London. Outside the museum sector, she founded MATT+FIONA with architect Matthew Springett, an award-winning organisation that enables children and young people to design and build their own life-size spaces and places.  
[designmuseum.org](http://designmuseum.org)

**Design Ventura** is the Design Museum's national design and enterprise competition for schools, supported by Deutsche Bank as part of their global youth engagement programme Born to Be. Students aged 13–16 are invited to answer a live brief set by a leading designer. They are challenged to design a new product for the Design Museum Shop, with the winning product being made and sold, and the proceeds going to a charity of the students' choice.  
[ventura.designmuseum.org](http://ventura.designmuseum.org)

# Decolonising and diversifying the art curriculum

*The resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement has motivated schools, colleges and universities to examine the cultural diversity of their curricula and move towards the decolonisation of subjects. Dianne Minicucci, subject leader for photography and a teacher of art at Thomas Tallis school in London, asks how teachers of art, design, craft and photography can begin to diversify, decolonise and 'make the invisible visible'*

**Following the resurgence of the global Black Lives Matter movement during 2020, many schools, colleges and universities have begun to examine the cultural diversity of their curricula. At the time, I felt fortunate that our school were openly discussing the need for diversity and beginning the process of decolonisation. Our visual arts department began to participate in wider reading and research, collating a list of articles. We also had discussions with our students about the importance of using a diverse range of exemplar artists.**

Decolonisation was necessary for all of us. I am a black woman and I too had to decolonise my thoughts. I felt that I had been conditioned to accept the traditional canon of white, male, western artists as normal. It was uplifting and inspiring for me to unearth a wealth of black artists and photographers. I felt empowered by the work I had discovered during my research and keen to share my findings with the students so they too could be excited by it. ►

**Below** Zohra Opoku, *Cyperus Papyrus*, 2015. Screen print on hand washed paper. Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim



It is important for our students to know that they can engage with artists and photographers of all cultures. We recognised that the changes to our curriculum would be ongoing and that decolonisation would take time.

I teach photography and art at Thomas Tallis School, a large mixed comprehensive school in South East London. I began to read books about decolonisation, such as *Decolonising the Camera* by Mark Sealy, who writes, 'Decolonising the camera functions as a critical dialogue with colonial and imperial photographic histories, and the social and visual spaces they occupy.'

Sealy goes on to describe the relative absence of people of colour in the histories of art as 'cultural erasure' and says, 'A key aspect of decolonising the camera is not to allow photography's colonial past and its cultural legacies in the present to lie unchallenged and un-agitated, or to be simply left as the given norm within the history of the medium.'

Sealy is the director of Autograph ABP (formally the Association of Black Photographers), which has produced *The Missing Chapter: Black Chronicles*. This is an ongoing archive research programme which aims to popularise images of African, Caribbean and Asian people from the Victorian and early Edwardian periods.

Autograph has been exhibiting and archiving the work of a diverse group of photographers and artists since 1988. Their exhibitions explore issues of identity, representation and social justice. I have been visiting Autograph since the 1990s when it also housed the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva), another organisation dealing with identity and representation

for artists of colour, predominantly artists of the African and Asian diaspora. In November 2017, I saw the exhibition *In a Different Light*, which included the work of many black photographers from the UK. I felt empowered – I was reliving my own history through these images, which I then wanted to share with my students.

As teachers and educators, we must be aware of the organisations and institutions that exist to celebrate the cultural contribution made by black/PoC artists such as Autograph, Iniva, and 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning, and find new ways to collaborate with them in order to build a rich and varied curriculum.

All this begs the question of what can we do as teachers of art, design, craft and photography in order to diversify and decolonise our curricula. How do we make the invisible visible? How do we ensure that artists of colour are fully visible to our students so that they can never again be erased from culture?

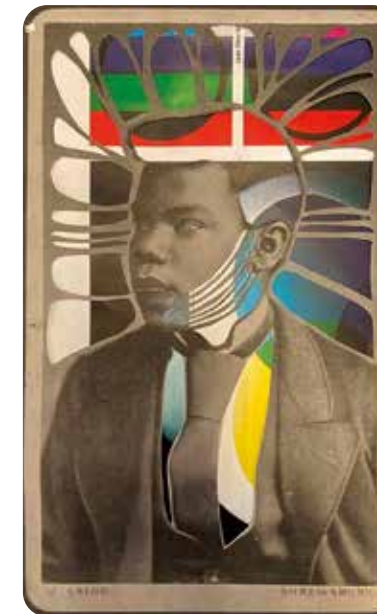
I believe we must, first and foremost, engage in deep research. Part of my own research involved discovering a range of contemporary black artists. What can I learn from them in order to design engaging schemes of work? My growing knowledge of their work helps me think about the relevance of art, craft and design for young people today so that they can understand the world and can change it for the better.

Social media, particularly Instagram, has been key in locating and promoting artists of colour, as well as organisations and galleries that are dedicated to exhibiting the work of Black, Asian and African artists. One example is

**Below left** Zohra Opoku, *Life Oak Tree*, 2015-16. Screen print on textile. Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim

**Below** Nnenna Okore, *Things that meet the eye*, 2017. Cheesecloth, jute string, dye and wire. Courtesy of Nnenna Okore

**Right** Students' work in response to using a diverse range of exemplar artists



## 'How do we ensure that artists of colour are fully visible to our students so that they can never again be erased from culture?'

the October Gallery in London, which exhibits work from international artists such as El Anatsui, Rachid Koraïchi, Romuald Hazoumè, Nnenna Okore and Aubrey Williams, and produces resources for educators. I have also invested time in reading the articles that my colleagues and I collated.

I then spoke to the writer and journalist Sean O'Hagan, who writes about photography for *The Guardian*. He was of the opinion that educators, curators and gallerists share a collective responsibility to ensure that work from a diverse range of artists is exhibited in museums and galleries. He also said that writers and critics have an individual responsibility to consider the work of a much more diverse range of artists and photographers. He commented that there is a glaring problem with the striking lack of diversity among the staff of the big art institutions, with one exception. Azu Nwagbogu is the founder and director of the African Artists' Foundation, an organisation based in Lagos that is dedicated to the promotion and development of contemporary African art.

There is a wealth of contemporary black artists at the moment and many have emerged from Africa's thriving art scene. One such artist is Zaneli Muholi, an activist whose work has reflected the lives and struggles of black lesbian and trans people in her native South Africa, first shown at Autograph in 2017.

Students from ethnically diverse communities have often been presented with negative images of themselves by the media. Teachers have a vital role to play in finding and sharing positive images of black creativity to offset this damaging legacy. How can we introduce images of and by black people so that they are viewed as culturally rich and visually engaging rather than negative in any form?

The late cultural historian Stuart Hall was an eminent writer on race and representation within visual culture,

specifically photography and film. In his essay *New Ethnicities*, 1988, he wrote, 'The struggle to come into representation was predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of representation of the black subject. There was a concern not simply with the absence or marginality of the black experience but with its simplification and its stereotypical character.'

This article, written over 30 years ago, highlights the issues of representation at that time. Sadly, not much has changed. How do we change the way in which white people profit from the creativity of black people without ever allowing them the status, visibility and complexity that they deserve?

If we think about the term 'decolonising the curriculum', it is about much more than that. It is about accepting that the art history we have been presented with has excluded artists of colour and that the negative images of black people are not the ones that we need to engage with. It is crucial that we delve into the archives and uncover what is there that has been unjustly overlooked or ignored. It is also about having uncomfortable conversations about privilege, addressing our preconceptions and promoting colleagues of colour in order to have a more diverse range of teachers.

We need to engage in unearthing the wealth of work by black artists and people of colour. And, in doing so, we have to think deeply about the kind of images that we use, ensuring that they are not negative or objectified images of the 'other'. Above all, it means making the invisible visible, reclaiming our past history and culture, and actively engaging with the turbulent present. ■

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**Dianne Minnicucci** is author of *visiblediversity.com*, a website dedicated to making diversity visible within the art/photography curriculum.



*Evolving from doctoral research, Joanna Neil, lecturer in Fine Art and PGCE/CertEd at University Centre at Blackburn College, looked at how digital technologies and autoethnography could be used to encourage students to take a more critical approach in their work and develop ways in which to make their reflective activity visible. Sharing the experiences of an undergraduate with disabilities, she presents the results*

# Making the invisible visible

**The focus of this article is on how digital technologies and autoethnography can be used for arts-based research and reflective practice. It shares the experiences of a second-year undergraduate with complex needs, who in 2020 was studying for a Fine Art degree at University Centre at Blackburn College, a higher education in further education institution validated by Lancaster University.**

This approach in the classroom evolved from doctoral research, which questioned how digital technologies can be used to make hidden aspects of arts practice (reflection and mistakes) more visible, and asked whether students become more independent and liberated by this process. Autoethnography is a process of looking at and writing (graphy) about the self (auto) in a cultural (ethnos) setting (Ellis and Bochner, 2000), and these accounts become a product or artefact of this process.

I began by observing and recording myself thinking about and making work, producing multiple audio pieces, video and blog posts as products of this process. Then, participants (undergraduate students) from across arts-based and design disciplines used this as a method for reflecting on their own practices and gave accounts of their experiences through unstructured interviews. One of the key findings was that digital autoethnography was a productive way to reflect, as it enabled ways to look at the familiar in unfamiliar ways by making habits, mistakes and usually unnoticed

decisions visible. Documentation of making could be revisited, further reflected on and led to new insights. The autoethnographic approach actively seeks a fresh perspective and assumes new knowledge will be discovered.

Artist Emma Cocker (2013) succinctly expressed the creative potential of 'not knowing' when she wrote, 'Not knowing can be paralysing, prohibitive. It can usher in the feelings of anxiety and embarrassment, the debilitating sense of being at a loss or lost, unable to see a way out or forward...not knowing is an active space within practice, wherein an artist hopes for an encounter with something new or unfamiliar, unrecognisable or unknown.'

Centred around the premise of Cocker's 'tactics for not knowing', the level five module 'Experimental Research' asked second year students to employ strategies to help them become strangers to their practices and to find ways to become outsiders looking in to make the familiar *unfamiliar*. Students were asked to experiment with ways to observe and reflect on their work, encouraged to take a more critical approach and develop ways in which to make their reflective activity visible.

As an introduction to artistic practice as experimental research, the brief asked students to embrace digital autoethnography and other tactics for not knowing as a way to 'know'. While the initial research had indicated that there were benefits for all students to use autoethnographic approaches, participants with specific educational needs and disability seemed to find

E. Cocker (2013) *Tactics for not knowing: preparing for the unexpected* in R Fortnum and E. Fisher, Eds., *On not knowing: how artists think*, Black Dog Publishing

C. Ellis and A. Bochner (2000) *Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject* in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln Eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd Ed.), Sage Publications

J. Patel (2020) *Experimental Research: Tactics for Knowing and Not Knowing... Mark making using BSL* at [bit.ly/354bAmJ](https://bit.ly/354bAmJ)

unique ways to use digital autoethnography for their own purposes.

This short case study illuminates how Juvairiyya Patel, a student with highly complex needs and support, navigated the module brief and engaged with her own artistic research, practice and reflective practice. Juvairiyya is a painter on the BA (Hons) Fine Art programme, 23, deaf, a British Sign Language user and disabled. She requires a wheelchair, nurse and interpreter to be mobile and communicate with others. Using video to record herself making work, she was able to re-watch footage to aid reflection and discussion in the studio.



Juvairiyya in the studio 'signing as tools and material'

In her reflection on her blog, Juvairiyya explained her approach to the brief: 'I have difficulty writing, and my way of expressing myself and communicating is through my signing and my artwork. I thought of combining these aspects and having my signing be the paintbrush to my canvas. I wanted to sign the words in British Sign Language (BSL), as this is my language format and a part of my identity. I selected signs that are important to me and who I am.'

On choosing blue to work with, she discusses the symbolism and relevance of this in her work saying, 'This is representing the communication breakdown, as I do not understand English very well. The emotional connection to the colour blue is linked to growing up and the sense of being ill all of the time. The signs I used with the blue [paint] are signs such as "can't access" and "communication breakdown". This is where I feel the most. I have complicated emotions and I always associate blue with those feelings.'

Juvairiyya's second response to the brief was in response to drawing as research, being a passenger in the car and removing another sensory ability in the studio. She says, 'I used the idea of maps for something to paint as it adds to the idea of not knowing. I have never associated myself with a map before or drawn/painted one. I saw the roads and rivers possessing the waves and curves. I cannot drive myself and I want to be able



Signing with blue



Blind painting 'memory of a map'

**'While the initial research had indicated that there were benefits for all students to use autoethnographic approaches, participants with specific educational needs and disability seemed to find unique ways to use digital autoethnography for their own purposes'**



Synchronous communication in preparation for 'sign painting'



DaDaFest application submission

to do so, so this is my way of connecting myself to the fact.' Juvairiyya describes how she drew out the map of the journey 'to give myself a memory to start from whilst blindfolded'. Her account of what it felt like to make this work, rather than just describe, led to a more reflective account and the potential for more in-depth discussions about her relationship to the work she makes.

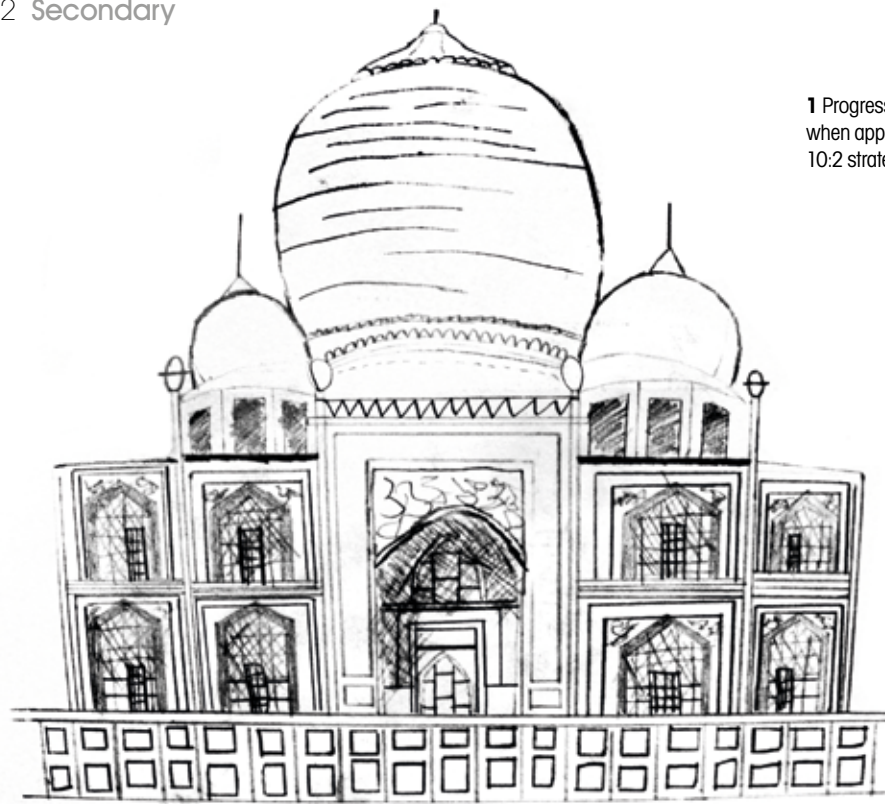
'It took me a little while to get my bearings after first being blindfolded, she explains. 'I slipped off of the paper somewhat. I could not feel the difference in contact between the paintbrush and paper, therefore I did not know when I was not on the page. However, I began to then acquire my whereabouts on the page better and gained control over my strokes, and they became more refined and slower. I relied on my memory to create this piece...I prefer my first experiment, using BSL to create art and its results. This is because I feel more of a connection to the process and to who I am. Being blindfolded is very different to who I am. I rely on my sight with every piece of artwork I have done, so this was a huge challenge for me; something very different and out of my comfort zone.'

The lockdown period due to Covid-19 led to further challenges for Juvairiyya to continue with her work and access support from tutors. An application for future funding was put into registered charity DaDaFest (Deaf Arts and Disability festival programme), instigated by programme leader Jamie Holman and made via Zoom with myself, interpreter Andrew Rimmer and Juvairiyya, who was supported behind the scenes by her lecturer Steven Baldwin.

Juvairiyya demonstrated her art for the application by using her hands as her paintbrush, thus symbolising cutting out the middleman/interpreter by applying her language directly to the canvas. Using a clear screen in front of the computer, Juvairiyya used signs that were important to her and her identity, such as her name, 'express', 'disability', and creating movement which allowed the paint to leave her hands and fingertips and connect with the canvas. These marks are her signs – they are her, translated directly.

The work fully embraces the intention and ethos of experimental research and enabled Juvairiyya to explore new territory with her practice and written reflection. Most importantly, as she enters the third and final year of her degree, she is working with increased independence and engagement with professional practice. Digital autoethnography has been a useful way to frame artistic research, enabling students to see themselves and their practice as worthwhile subjects of enquiry. It highlights the importance of venturing into situations where we do not know what to expect, and that these spaces are potentially rich and surprising. Digital autoethnography provided Juvairiyya with an approach where she could investigate and reflect on her work and identity as a disabled artist with independence and autonomy. Juvairiyya goes beyond telling us about the visual qualities of her work, what she did and how she did it, as we gain insight into how she connected emotionally to making it, how the work made her feel and what it means conceptually. ■

*Joanna.neil@blackburn.ac.uk*



1 Progress made when applying the 10:2 strategy

*Engaging boys in art and design has been an ongoing problem over the years and continues to fuel much research and analysis. Here, Amber Smith, a teacher of art, design and photography at Selston High School in Nottinghamshire, explains how she analysed teachers' unconscious gender bias and initiated successful strategies to bridge the gender gap*

If you are inspired to try out any of the strategies or approaches outlined, it would be great to hear your feedback: [ambermaysmith@hotmail.com](mailto:ambermaysmith@hotmail.com)  
 @shs\_gets\_creative

Undoubtedly, the strategy does make a difference to engagement and progress. In images 2 and 4, you can see significantly less drawing has been achieved without applying the 10:2 strategy than progress made in 10 minutes whilst applying the 10:2 strategy, as shown in images 1 and 3. I was now compelled to examine our strategy in greater depth to see the response across the genders. My assumption was that more boys than girls would choose to move around the room during the two-minute break, but as I counted over a wide range of variables, just as many girls as boys chose to move, supporting Roberts and Pinketts' findings.

The response from the student voice was also very gender balanced. Of the 50 students aged 11–13 who completed a questionnaire, 80 percent of boys and 82 percent of girls said that the 10:2 strategy helped them to concentrate. In keeping with Roberts and Pinketts' suggestion, it was reassuring to see that we were fostering an environment within our

then fed into the positive points system in operation across the school. As the effort board was established, I perceived a definite shift in attitude as the culture towards learning changed.

Having tried and tested strategies that showed success in engaging and motivating across all genders, I was left considering my own unconscious gender bias and how that reflected in my teaching. Furthermore, as a department of three female teachers, were we gender biased as a department?

I started to ask myself the following questions:

- Do I praise more girls than boys?
- Do I use girls' work as good examples more often than boys' work?
- Do I show gender balance in the praise section of whole-class feedback forms?
- Do I show gender balance in artist/photographer references?
- Do I show gender balance in the display of work?
- Do I accept a lower standard of classwork and homework from boys?

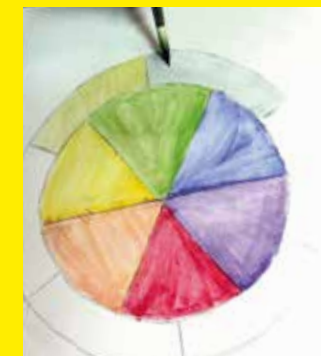
To explore unconscious gender bias further, we also trialed blind marking. Firstly, we filled out a focus sheet as we were marking, then guessed the gender of the student and analysed our assumptions. I'm ashamed to say I did make assumption about the scale of drawings and the neatness of the work. The process definitely shone a spotlight on my gender assumptions and made me appreciate the benefit of blind marking to eradicate any kind of bias or influence of target grades.

Having undergone the process of trialing and sharing strategies, and examining unconscious gender bias within my own teaching and that within my department, I realise that even though we, as teachers, have the best of intentions, it is not until you prioritise an issue that you can fully examine your approach and implement changes. Small changes can have a big impact on readdressing the gender balance within our classrooms. The impact of this on wider society will only become clear if we as practitioners continue to question our unconscious bias. ■

# Creating a gender inclusive classroom



2



3

2 Work made in 10 mins without applying the 10:2 strategy

3 Work made in 10 mins by the same student applying the 10:2 strategy

*'It became apparent that whilst the boys were more engaged in taking creative risks and exploring new materials or techniques, some girls would use distraction techniques, concentrating on presentation to hide their reluctance to break out of their comfort zone'*

**As I embarked on my lead practitioner accreditation qualification, I started asking myself some searching questions about potential research projects. Reflecting on my own teaching practice, I realised that, even though I have been teaching for 16 years, engaging and motivating boys remains one of the more challenging aspects of my job. I was, for example, issuing a lot more boys with detentions than girls.**

And so, my initial research into boys' engagement in education began. My first port of call was reading *Raising Boys' Achievement* by Gary Wilson. In summary, the points that resonated with me most were how many boys are physically not in a state of readiness to read or write when they start school. The traits that we praise and encourage are most often those exemplified by girls, such as neatness, compliance and listening. Consequently, boys can feel undervalued within education at an early age, which feeds into a negative spiral of low

confidence and disengagement. These are all points reinforced by Susan Coles, who evidences this developmental gap on NSEAD's course: 'Where have all the boys gone?'

However, it was whilst reading *Boys Don't Try, Rethinking Masculinity in Schools* by Mark Roberts and Matt Pinkett that gave me a broader insight. The debunking of previous approaches, which I'm sure many of us have used to engage boys in the past, made me scrutinise my attitude towards different genders in my classroom in a way that I ashamedly admit I hadn't done previously.

Roberts and Pinkett state that, whilst competition can engage the alpha males within the group, it leaves the majority of the class with a feeling of dejection and lowers levels of self-worth, especially with boys being particularly susceptible to peer pressure. Making learning relevant to boys' interests results in engagement, but not necessarily learning – it can also reinforce male stereotypes. Roberts and Pinkett argue that there is more of a

kinesthetic tendency amongst girls than boys, something which challenged my preconceptions.

The book also promotes holding the same expectations for both genders and subtly celebrating achievement. The one quote that triggered the most thought and initiated the next stage of my research was, 'One of the best ways to help out boys who want to work, but are cowed by the presence of peer expectations, is to create an environment where there is no alternative to hard work. With challenging groups in particular, providing a quiet, orderly environment for those who want to learn (including those who pretend otherwise) is the only way to do everyone a favour.'

With this in mind, I initially examined strategies we were using within our department that already fed into this ethos. For some time now, we have been using a strategy that we have christened '10:2'. The basic premise is that students work in silence for 10 minutes whilst doing independent practical work and are then offered a two-minute break to move around the room and talk.

department where the expectation 'offered no alternative to hard work'. Whilst I didn't want to create a draconian environment, students' responses assured me that the approach was beneficial and productive. Student voice expressed that the calm environment was conducive to concentrated creativity.

Once I had ascertained that the 10:2 strategy was beneficial across the genders, I also started to look for strategies that would motivate and support learning. Again, a simple approach came in the form of an 'effort board'. Students' names were written on the board when they were showing effort to complete the task and then an asterisk was added if they engaged in the challenge activity.

This created a positive and motivating learning environment. It was important that the praise was public, specific, memorable and meaningful, and that the criteria for going on the effort board had value, high expectations, was consistent and not used to manage behaviour. The effort board

- Do I turn a 'blind eye' to girls talking because they are quieter and less disruptive than boys?
- Do I encourage girls to take risks in their learning to build self-esteem?

To examine these questions within my own teaching and the department, we started to do learning walks in order to tally up our interactions with male and female students, whilst counting the use of positive and negative language. The findings showed that we had more interaction with boys than girls, but that they were often interactions to refocus attention. It became apparent that whilst the boys were more engaged in taking creative risks and exploring new materials or techniques, some girls would use distraction techniques, concentrating on presentation to hide their reluctance to break out of their comfort zone. The focus and findings from the learning walks has brought this issue to the forefront as we explore ways to build up resilience and self-esteem across the genders.

4 Progress made by the same student (See fig 1) without applying the 10:2 strategy





**Michele Gregson:** NSEAD strives to be an organisation that brings art, craft and design educators together, to share thinking and practice, to debate and lead innovation in our subject, and to be both learned and learning; expansive and collaborative are our core values. In your first editorial of *The International Journal of Art and Design Education* (iJADE), you shared your hope for the publication to be more inclusive in the research and practice that we profile and share. Can you tell me more about why you believe that is important for art and design education?

**Dr Deborah Riding:** When I had to write my first editorial as principal editor, I looked back at an interview that my predecessor, Professor Jeff Adams, had undertaken when he took over the role. The interview was with John Swift, another former editor of the journal. It's a decade since that interview was done. What struck me was how relevant it still was and also how some hopes and ambitions for change remain unrealised. Reflecting on his steering of the journal in the 1990s, John describes where the focus was: 'When we first took over, it was to give academic rigour and voice to the members of NSEAD, rather than a broader commercial aspect; one felt as if one was writing for the membership of NSEAD.'

Before membership afforded online access to both *AD Magazine* and *iJADE*, members opted for which publication they wanted to receive. I always thought this not only presented a tough decision, but failed to recognise the importance of sharing and developing practice in art and design education in all forms to all who share an interest and passion for the subject.

During John's tenure there was an ambition for a more diverse and inclusive contribution, but

John acknowledged that, although some balance was achieved as far as gender went, in terms of multicultural perspectives, there was still work to do. As Jeff shared in the interview, this was in 2011 and is still largely the case. Although the introduction of an international focus in 2003 has meant that we now receive papers from a wider range of countries, they are still predominantly situated within Western practices and paradigms, both in terms of artistic and creative cultural production and education. Creative practice thrives by experiencing and

**'I'd like to see us as an editorial team really explore what we think of as research, new knowledge and rigour, and welcome and support those who may be intimidated by or want to challenge those associated paradigms'**

articulating new experiences and embracing interdisciplinarity, different perspectives and world views. It's important that we search for those new experiences ourselves as educators, researchers, writers and collaborators. *iJADE* presents an ideal platform to support this.

**iJADE has a strong and international academic community in art and design education, but who else might the journal connect with?**

Despite having made great strides forward, much art and design research still has some way to go to be accepted by academic circles. Research can elevate and profile practice, and provide us with scope to reflect, celebrate, experiment and share, as well as advocate and influence. It is important

that we are supporting and sharing emergent practice and methods associated with developing practice-based fields.

It is difficult to accommodate some of this research in a journal form, but I'm keen that we explore this. I remember a wonderful performance delivered by Pilar Pérez Camarero and Raúl Díaz-Obregón Cruzado at our conference in Liverpool in 2013. It was an amazing experience to be part of the audience for this paper, which was voted by delegates as one that they wished to see in the conference

edition of the journal. It was a challenge for the authors and for Jeff to find a way to include it, but it provided a provocative addition to the issue. In 2019, we had a whole issue dedicated to arts-based education research and it is important that we continue to find ways to provide a platform for contributions that are sometimes a challenge to accommodate within conventional academic publications.

It would be great to be connecting with colleagues from art and design education in its broadest sense – those working and researching with cultural venues, youth sectors, and arts and health contexts, for example. There are many places where art, design and pedagogy overlap, and I would like us to reach out further to encourage contributions from those fields also.

# Inclusivity and access

*In conversation with general Secretary of NSEAD Michele Gregson, Dr Deborah Riding, Tate Liverpool programme manager of schools and families, and principal editor of iJADE, discusses inclusivity and access in research and practice, and the 'not knowing' paradigm*



**In your work in gallery education you have championed a 'not-knowing' paradigm where the co-construction of knowledge between learning participants, community groups and gallery staff is valued and positively embraced. Academic publishing is entering a space of uncertainty as journals move towards more open access and sharing of research. What might we see if iJADE were to embrace a 'not-knowing' paradigm?**

Open access presents a number of opportunities and challenges for *iJADE* as an arts-focused academic journal. Important to our navigation of this changing landscape is consideration of how to best serve a range of contributors and readers and ensure that the journal is as accessible for both as possible.

There are parallels with the institutional authority of the gallery or museum that I've engaged with in my own research and that of an academic journal. When I developed the idea of a 'not-knowing paradigm', it was to challenge the conventional position of authority and the hierarchies of knowledge stemmed from that. I have worked in gallery education for a long time and came into the practice in the late 90's when the development of co-constructive methodologies were being widely adopted. However, I and many others experienced an uncertainty on behalf of the groups we were working with about how much the new ideas and knowledge generated about the artworks on display were valued within the institution. That niggle became the impetus for my own PhD.

39.3

## The International Journal of Art & Design Education



**Far left** *iJADE*, Vol. 39, No.3  
**Left** Hybrid Spaces online conference is to be held in 2021

What attracts me to research is the passion and the urge to investigate and explore. That journey can be undertaken in many ways, but often has to conform to specific conventions to be publishable in an academic journal. As I've already mentioned, this can be restrictive for practice-based research but also sets up an environment where, once again, contributors have to step into a particular way of speaking about their research for it to be valued, much like the situation in galleries and museums. I'd like to see us as an editorial team really explore what we think of as research, new knowledge and rigour, and welcome and support those who may be intimidated by or want to challenge those associated paradigms.

**NSEAD represents art education professionals from all sectors and from all phases across the UK and internationally. However, we know that there are voices that we don't hear, and people and places that we don't reach. As our patron Dr Janina Ramirez said recently, 'You have to see it to be it'. You have spoken about the challenge of visibility – or invisibility of artworks and artists missing from art history and the alienating experiences of many visitors to gallery spaces. Are issues of voice and visibility a challenge for iJADE, and what might a more inclusive journal look like?**

I think we have to start at the heart of the journal. We are currently looking at the make-up of our editorial team and the pool of reviewers who support us. Since we set up our annual

conference we have used that to provide a platform for early career researchers and other colleagues across the sectors you mention. We have provided training in academic writing and used the conference edition to profile new and emerging research, supporting those completely new to academic publication in many instances. Our conference has had to move to an online version this year, as have many. For some, this may make participation more difficult I know, but for others this may be a more feasible way to get involved. I'd encourage all of your readers to get involved in the conference, which will take place 26–28 March this year.

*iJADE* is approaching its 40th year in 2022. In that time, we have built up a much valued and loyal academic community. But we have a duty as an international journal operating in 2021 to ensure that we are reaching out further beyond the familiar friends, colleagues and existing community we operate in. We should be reflecting diversity in all senses of the word in terms of authors, reviewers, editors, and research and practice. I'm really excited about the opportunities the journal has going forward and to involving NSEAD members in this next phase. ■

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<sup>1</sup>Adams, J. & Swift, J. (2011) *The ebb and flow of art and design education: A dialogue with John Swift* to commemorate thirty years of *iJADE*, Vol. 30, No.1, pp. 2-5

# Labelling matters

*Questioning how we speak about, interpret and view objects and their associated cultures was key to the Pitt Rivers Museum's Labelling Matters project, which sought to identify problematic language and look at how language is used to exclude. Here, Marenka Thompson-Odlum, research associate at the museum, explains*

## Let's begin with a mistake...

**The museum is crowded as two Oxford Spires Academy (OSA) students are stood in front of a Gabonese wooden door carved with a figure holding a machete and displaying signs of scarification. As they lean into the microphone, they begin to describe the door and immediately refer to the carved figure as 'he'. Their male characterisation is incorrect – the museum database reveals that the figure is female. Their error is understandable as the figure is androgynous and we have been conditioned to associate 'weaponry' with masculinity. Also, the label simply reads 'figure'. Their error remains a part of the podcasts, a reminder of the purpose of the project; to question how we speak about, interpret and view objects and their associated cultures.**

In April 2019, the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford started the Labelling Matters project aimed at investigating the use of language within the museum, identifying problematic language and looking at how language is used to exclude. Labelling Matters also sought to find innovative ways to subvert traditional labelling by re-imagining the definition of a 'label', while also using the historic labels as a decolonial teaching tool. The project was conceived in the hopes of making the museum a more inclusive place where a multitude of voices could be heard.

The process of decoloniality often suffers from a lack of praxis; the theory itself has been well-established, but the cross-over into practical measures often seems unclear and daunting. Decoloniality is the process and practice of dismantling and subverting coloniality. Coloniality is the invisible structure that upholds the physical process of colonisation, such as social constructions, racialisations, hierarchies and gendered economic systems, all created with Eurocentrism and patriarchy at the centre. I wanted this project to establish an initial decolonial methodological framework that could be utilised by teachers, students and the museum's general audience. The framework utilises and simplifies Anibal Quijano's concept of the 'colonial matrix of power' and implores visitors to look at museum labels with the following questions in mind:

- Who is represented?
- Who has the power to represent?
- Who is seen?
- Who has the power to see?

In these four questions I am asking the viewer to think of who has the power to produce knowledge, to impose culture and create classifications. In a nutshell, it prompts the viewer to question the notion of 'expertise'.

The Labelling Matters podcast series with Oxford Spires Academy was created to do just that; question the 'expertise' behind the museum's labels and ask why some knowledge is deemed more important than others, and specifically why youth are seen as less important or not expert within cultural spaces.

In July 2019, I secured funding from the TORCH Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund in order to professionally produce the podcasts. The school and media partnerships were all thoughtfully selected. As a state school in the Oxford City limits, OSA is one of the most diverse schools in the area, so it was key to highlight the pluriversality of that perspective, as well as the youthful aspect. As a knowledge exchange project, diversity is embraced and not viewed as a hindrance or roadblock. Most importantly, the students of OSA had a strong and enthusiastic advocate in the form of Dr Jackie Watson, head of sixth form, who recognised the project's potential for developing students' skills around critical thinking, object research, public speaking and creating a sustainable future.

To enhance the development of practical skills, I was adamant that the podcast be professionally produced, building in workshops led by the owner of Chrome Media, Catriona



**Left top** Using historic labelling as a decolonial teaching tool

**Left bottom** Labelling Matters podcast cohort. Left to right: Max Baldock, Pamela Gomes, Teoni Siani-Dash, Linnet Drury, Amber Frizzell, Celeste Dewshi, Abigail Tucker, Aamani Kahn. Front: Marenka Thompson-Odlum, Catriona Oliphant

**Below** Oxford Spires Academy students create their podcast at the Pitt Rivers Museum

Oliphant, who coached the students through the pitching, scripting and recording.

The podcast cohort consisted of eight Year 12 students (16–17 years old), ran from November 2019 to March 2020 and consisted of five workshops centred around my decolonial framework, object research and podcast production. All the workshops took place at the museum, during which the students investigated it from different perspectives, chose objects or concepts important to them, researched those objects using the museum's Balfour Library and crafted their podcasts. Their podcasts illustrate how our discussions resonated deeply with each student as they teased out bigger issues of representation, cultural appropriation, colonialism and language.

Amber Frizzell connected with her New Zealand ancestry, and confronted the complex stories of cultural appropriation of Maori symbolism and contemporary New Zealander identity by re-examining the hei tiki pendant. Linnet Drury's journey through Japanese noh masks drove home one of the key issues I believe a lot of museums face – an absence of visitors. Linnet stated in her blogpost that, 'Before they were just artefacts and now, they are a person's story.' Amaani Khan's poem is a great example of

how museums can inspire. She said, 'The project prompted me to look more at history and how it relates to me and my identity, and it has made me see the museum as being more interesting as a result.' Amaani, as a British-Pakistani teenager, was able to connect and write about Indian iron anklets because of the stories told by her mother about nazar or the evil eye. Her poem thus comes from a place that is multi-generational and imbued with the voices of many women that came before her. Meanwhile, Pamela Gomes ran headfirst into the issue of repatriation while researching a Hawaiian feathered god head.

The two students who had accidentally misidentified the figure on the Gabonese door, Teoni Siani-Dash and Abigail Tucker, ended their podcast with this sentiment about the negative language used to describe the practice of scarification: 'We can't have one culture label another culture's beauty when we all have different ideas of beauty.'

The podcasts are all works in progress, with some taking the personal route, some involving deep historical dives and others asking a question. No matter the finished product, these students have all proven that they have things to say and that they can be impactful. ■

**'Their podcasts illustrate how our discussions resonated deeply with each student as they teased out bigger issues of representation, cultural appropriation, colonialism and language'**

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# Science, art and cultural capital

*Despite being seen as two separate cultures, science and art share similar barriers to participation from certain areas of society, which can be understood through the notion of cultural and science capital. Toby Parkin, head of learning and audience engagement at Turner Contemporary in Margate, explains*

**JMW Turner was captivated by the natural world and technology. He was rooted in scientific theories and approached his work with curiosity and the desire to experiment. Like many romantic-era artists, he was fascinated by science and the natural world, believing that art could be an agent for change in a similar way to science – both being tools for questioning and understanding the world.**

A century later, the chemist CP Snow famously spoke about ‘two cultures’ when referring to science and the arts, and lamented the great cultural divide that can separate these two great areas of human intellectual activity. Snow argued that practitioners within science and art should build bridges between the disciplines in order to further the progress of human knowledge and to benefit society.

As a scientist and keen art enthusiast, I’ve been fortunate enough to be in the position to research what these bridges might look like in practice. I’ve realised that the barriers that prevent participation with science and the arts are actually very similar. Both can be understood through the notion of capital, in particular cultural and science capital.



**Holy Trinity** – ‘Art Inspiring Change’, child leadership project at Turner Contemporary

Although I now work at Turner Contemporary in Margate, I initially trained as a scientist and then worked for many years at the Science Museum in London. Here, I came across the concept of science capital through the Enterprising Science project. This project was a partnership between the Science Museum, King’s College London and University College London. The idea of science capital was developed by Professor Louise Archer and colleagues at Kings College London. It is a conceptual tool used to capture an individual’s science-related resources and dispositions. Science capital was developed as a way to understand why these science-related resources, attitudes and aspirations led some children to pursue science, while others did not.

Research<sup>1</sup> with 36,00 11–15 year olds showed that only five per cent of young people had high science capital. Those students were more likely to be male and socially advantaged. At the other end of the scale, 27 per cent had low science capital. They felt science wasn’t for them – these students were more likely to be female and socially disadvantaged. The research also revealed that students studying science post-16 fell into the same gender, ethnic and social groups as 20 years ago. What was really useful to me as a science education practitioner was understanding what influenced a person’s science capital. The influences were split into eight dimensions and ranged from whether a person knew anyone working in science and whether they consumed any science-related media to whether they had knowledge about the transferability of science. The dimensions could be summarised by the following questions in relation to science: What you know? Who you know? What you do? How you think?<sup>2</sup>

Another finding suggested that influences in the home and the out of school environment were just as important as what happened in the classroom when shaping whether someone felt science was for them. It also showed that engagement with science was linked to identity. The research findings meant that education practitioners, such as I, could design projects with young people that took into account the eight dimensions. For example, we linked students with working scientists who could act as appropriate role models and ensure that parents were fully engaged alongside their children.

The ultimate aim was to support all students to engage with, understand and appreciate science in their lives. This didn’t need to result in them becoming a working scientist as an adult, but the hope was that they would value how science affects their lives no matter what careers they went on to. What underpinned the approach was equity and social justice. The idea that all young people should have equal access to opportunity and the barriers that prevent participation should be identified and removed. Science capital shifted my focus as a practitioner onto valuing the interests and identities of under-served young people and challenging the elitism that has resulted in science traditionally not being accessible to everyone.

So how does science capital link with the arts? And, more importantly, arts education? For that answer we need to look at the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who coined the term ‘cultural capital’ in the 1970s. It is from this work that the notion of science capital was formed. Bourdieu intended cultural capital to be a means of explaining how power was transferred throughout society. He saw cultural capital as ‘familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society’. These ideas

have implications for education today as the term ‘cultural capital’ was added to Ofsted’s new Education Inspection Framework in 2019. It received a mixed response. Some practitioners linked Ofsted’s interest in cultural capital with the government’s commitment to social mobility and concern to ‘close the gap’ in education between children from disadvantaged and advantaged backgrounds. However, for others in education, it has caused confusion over how the term is defined, measured and assessed.

There has been much debate within academia over what is symbolic of cultural capital in today’s society and whether cultural capital can or can’t be acquired. The debate has also centred around how cultural capital is transferred to students via their family background and how that, in turn, is translated to the school environment. The result is that cultural capital is still a vague and imprecise concept in the context of education, rather than a workable tool for schools and other practitioners to support inclusion. I’ve used my experience working with science capital to try and bridge this gap since working within the arts sector.

In 2019, I joined Turner Contemporary in Margate, an art gallery situated in one of the most deprived wards in the country. What I observe is that the barriers to participation in the arts and science are very similar. Both are historically elite fields that have favoured the privileged.

But, importantly, both have practitioners who are committed to widening participation, giving agency and a voice to the under-served and applying a social justice perspective to their work. Turner Contemporary, for instance, has led a series of innovative projects around child-leadership where local children are given decision-making power and agency and are placed at the heart of arts-led community regeneration. These projects have given children a depth of engagement with arts and culture that is not normally available.

Art Inspiring Change, a child-led arts project that ran from 2015–17 at Turner Contemporary, worked with 70 primary-aged students, their parents and carers. Public art interventions and local events were led by the children, who selected the artists to work with, wrote job descriptions and ran interviews. Children became more confident, more resilient and more visible to their community through the project. They reported that their engagement with art was deepened, supported by their parents, teachers and community. If you were to view this project through the lens of science capital, replacing science with art, it was building on all of the eight dimensions. It was innovative and equitable practice, a different way to represent and experience art that focused on changing and levelling the field rather than a reversing a perceived

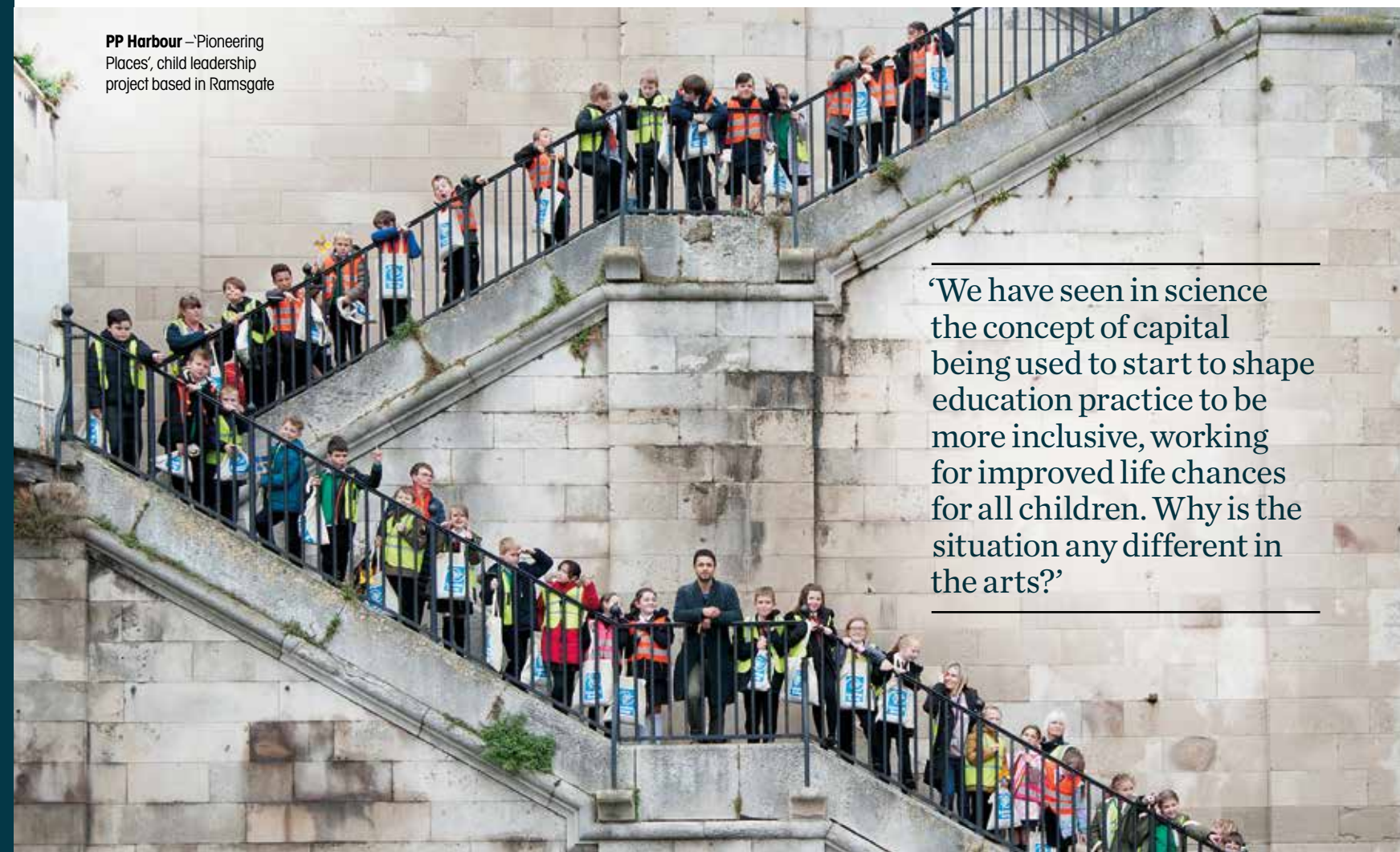
deficit in a young person. By the end of the project, a lot of the families felt they belonged in an art gallery, a feeling they didn’t have at the start.

It is our sincere hope that the positive effects of this engagement will stay with those young people throughout their lives. However, whilst the children who participate develop a range of skills and attributes that can be observed, what is lacking is a practical tool to define and measure the change in their perception of and engagement with the arts.

It could be argued that, in many ways, our education system broadens the divide between art and science and entrenches inbuilt elitism. The divide manifests as one of identity and belonging or ‘science (or art) isn’t for me’. What underpins this issue are the opportunities that are afforded to young people at home and at school. We have seen in science the concept of capital being used to start to shape education practice to be more inclusive, working for improved life chances for all children. Why is the situation any different in the arts? Can we overcome the current barriers and disagreements to shape the concept of cultural capital into a tool that can be used to broaden participation with the arts? ■

<sup>1</sup> [ucl.ac.uk/toe/departments-and-centres/departments/education-practice-and-society/science-capital-research/enterprising-science](https://ucl.ac.uk/toe/departments-and-centres/departments/education-practice-and-society/science-capital-research/enterprising-science)

<sup>2</sup> [youtube.com/watch?v=A0t70bwPD6Y](https://youtube.com/watch?v=A0t70bwPD6Y)



**PP Harbour** – ‘Pioneering Places’, child leadership project based in Ramsgate

**‘We have seen in science the concept of capital being used to start to shape education practice to be more inclusive, working for improved life chances for all children. Why is the situation any different in the arts?’**

# Opening up opportunities

– gaining experience and skills for pupils with visual impairment

*As a PhD researcher in the Faculty of Arts, Professional and Social Studies at Liverpool John Moores University, Harriet Dunn explores PGCE secondary art and design trainees' experiences of facilitating an art education project for pupils with visual impairment (VI) at a specialist school in the northwest of England. She shares the learning and outcomes gained by trainee teachers*

**In the academic year 2017/18, an art project took place at a specialist school for visual impairment (VI). The project was first shared in AD Magazine<sup>1</sup> by Sinead Dowdall and Charlotte Ball, students attending the PGCE in Art and Design, and came about as a result of a conversation between the PGCE tutor at Liverpool Hope University and Dr John Patterson, the headteacher at a specialist school for VI who invited trainees to facilitate a session for his pupils. My PhD research involves an examination of the project, based upon the focus group and the perspectives offered by the trainees.**

The purpose of this opportunity was to provide a group project that could enhance trainees' knowledge and experience. Sinead, Charlotte and the PGCE cohort as a whole described how they felt less secure in their capability to develop appropriate learning opportunities for pupils with VI. It was anticipated that trainees would become better prepared to meet a broader range of pupils' needs in their subsequent teaching practice placements, but also within

their future careers. The PGCE tutor knew that working with pupils with VI would be a challenge and something trainees would initially be nervous about doing. Mainstream teaching practice placements would not necessarily provide trainees with the most appropriate advice and guidance in working with pupils with VI.

Prior to facilitating the art education project, PGCE trainees' initial understanding and training in special educational needs and disability (SEND) took the form of a workshop provided by the Disability Studies head of department at Liverpool Hope University. To generate insights into the relationship between art education and special educational needs, there were opportunities for discussion and group work among PGCE trainees, who were encouraged to explore how these ideas might further their own teaching practice. The Carter Review of ITT (2015) indicated that this perspective is not generally offered to PGCE trainees, since time constraints on PGCE courses often mean there is little opportunity to address SEND issues. In addition, the review noted that there is much variability across Initial Teacher Training programmes in what is covered on SEND. However, there is an expectation that trainees should gain experience of and become better prepared in providing appropriate support to pupils with SEND.

Trainees were also required to participate in a VI awareness training session organised by the VI rehabilitation centre linked to the school. This provided a way of gaining experience of the appropriate sighted guiding techniques when working with pupils with VI. A key aspect of this training involved wearing simulation glasses, which aimed to imitate common eye conditions.



**‘Mainstream teaching practice placements would not necessarily provide trainees with the most appropriate advice and guidance in working with pupils with VI’**

Following the project, I undertook a focus group with thirteen PGCE trainees – two male and 11 female. This was scheduled for a day when trainees were attending a university-based session. It was commented that the VI awareness training session provided an overview in which trainees could gain experience, albeit ‘superficial experience’, but noted that VI awareness training could not provide a genuine, lived experience. Despite this, trainees highlighted the ways they would put the skills learnt into practice. In essence, this enhanced trainees' knowledge and they were able to develop greater empathy and understanding of the pupils' perspectives.

The principles of universal design for learning (UDL) were used to underpin trainees' planning for the art education project to ensure it was accessible to all pupils. The art education project involved a small group of secondary pupils with VI. Trainees were required to expand upon a project already started by the school in relation to World War II.

Discussion took place between trainees regarding the ability levels of pupils and the different materials they may be able to work with. As trainees were unsure of pupils' capabilities, it was decided that the project must include an element of sculpture, thus providing what Sinead and Charlotte describe as a ‘fully sensory, tactile experience’. Modroc parachutes would incorporate a new material for pupils to work with. In addition to making and painting parachutes, pupils were given the opportunity to write keywords and poems in response to a soundscape based on the war. Many pupils were keen to share their poems with the group, which were hung from the parachutes in the form of an installation.

As trainees began to reflect upon their experiences at the end of the art education project, they explained that they were more comfortable about developing working relationships with pupils with VI. In turn, this meant trainees were able to ascertain how pupils' needs could be met, thus helping them make progress with their education. Trainees also commented that this opportunity enabled them to think differently about working with pupils and that they now had greater expectations in terms of learning outcomes for pupils with VI and/or other needs. Importantly, trainees have been able to think about planning learning experiences from different educational approaches. This opportunity has enabled trainees to learn new skills, bringing a fresh perspective to the dominant practices inherent within education. ■

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<sup>1</sup>S. Dowdall and C. Ball (2019) *Becoming Inclusive Teachers* in AD Magazine: NSEAD (2019), Issue 24

**1** A pupil types their poem based on the soundscape of war, using a Perkins Braille

**2** Applying Modroc to the balloons – the first stage of creating the parachutes

**3** Painting the Modroc parachutes with colours the pupils associate with the war



# Public art in art education

*Last year, the role of public art in our lives was questioned in new and unprecedented ways. Anna Robb, lecturer in education at the University of Dundee, explores the value of public art in our lives and asks how teachers and art educators can respond through critical dialogue with pupils*

**On Sunday 7 June 2020, in Bristol, the statue of Edward Colston was pulled down by a group of protesters and dumped in the docks. Edward Colston was a wealthy 17th-century merchant who made his money through the slave trade and went on to make significant financial contributions to the city of Bristol during his lifetime. It was his connection with the slave trade that led to**

**the removal of the statue, a fact that has caused much debate in the city, with many arguing that a man such as Colston should not be commemorated in light of the systemic and institutional racism present in the world today.**

The media were awash with images, reports and articles for weeks afterwards, as this action triggered a wave of protests against other commemorative statues sited across the country. Set against the global Black Lives Matter protests, the act of pulling down a public sculpture in a British city caused an outpouring of opinion as people tried to grapple what this act meant. It threw into question the role of public art in our lives today, particularly commemorative art. As an art historian and lecturer in initial teacher education, I was left contemplating how I as a primary teacher would have engaged with the issue in the classroom, aware that my pupils would have seen the images and maybe discussed it with parents. It also made me consider the role of

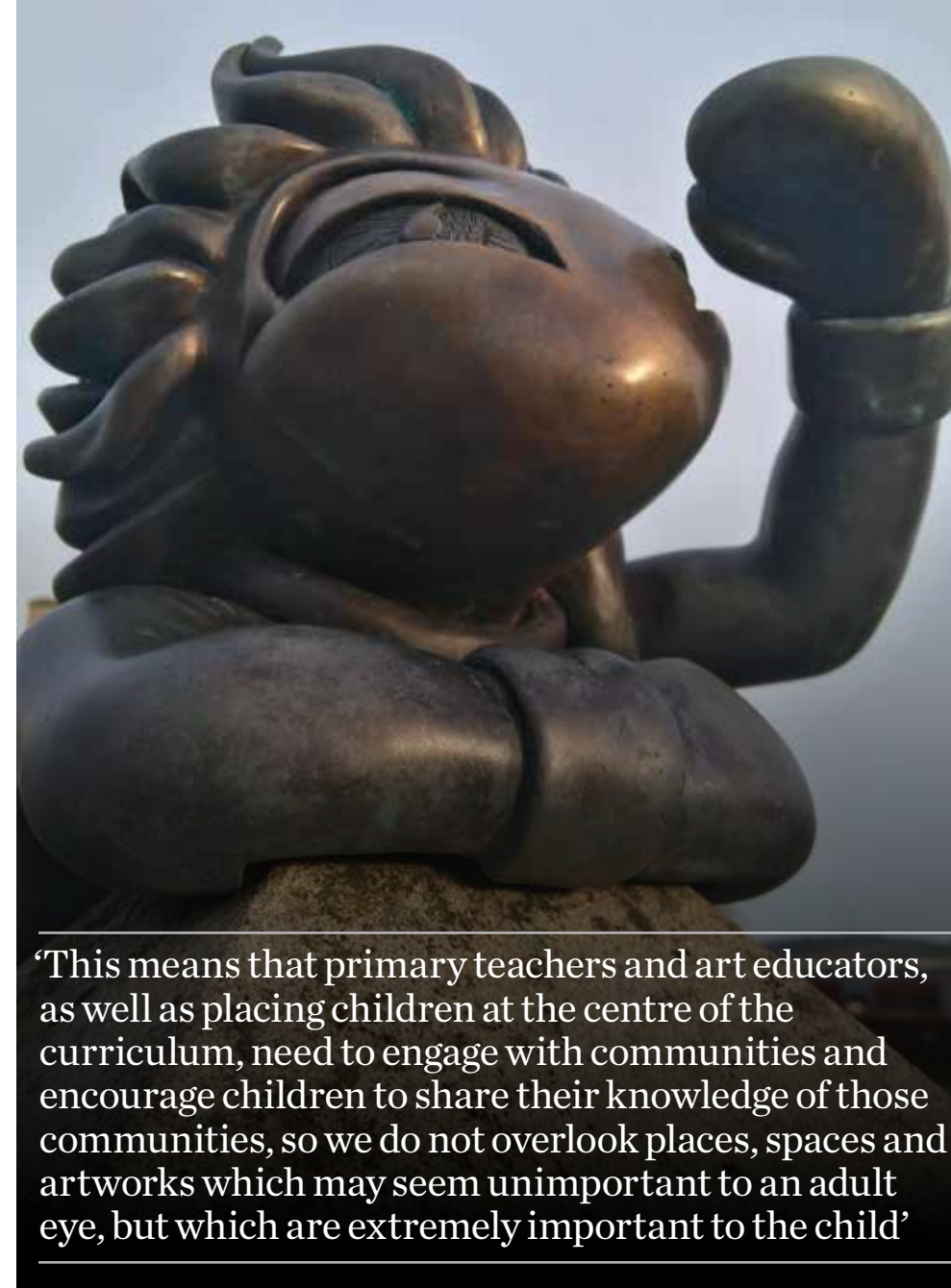
public art in the art curriculum and how teachers could be exploring this with pupils in the future.

In my own work with children aged between 6 and 11, and exploring their visual art experiences in and out of the classroom, public art became an unexpected theme to emerge in the images that they shared and the discussions that took place. Photo-elicitation activities, where children are given cameras and asked to take photos of their world and then share these with adults, offered a fascinating insight of what they were seeing and selecting as examples of visual art.

The children shared photos of murals and public sculptures in their local community that I had been completely unaware of. Attached to these were narratives and explanations, some providing the background to the art itself, as in who created the art and why it was created. Some focused on personal anecdotes, such as examples of art that were passed on the journey to school or sculptures which became the focus of play. The children each demonstrated a form of attachment to the art work.

Street art also emerged as a genre that was a feature of their lives, particularly older children aged 10–11. Examples were shared with children taking on the role of expert as they explained where the examples were located, how they were created and why they were created. They were also keen to explain the difference between street art and graffiti. Essentially, the children became civic guides to their communities as they communicated a sense of ownership for these examples.

Public art trails, where a number of blank, sculptural forms are sponsored, decorated by local artists and placed around a city for people to



**'This means that primary teachers and art educators, as well as placing children at the centre of the curriculum, need to engage with communities and encourage children to share their knowledge of those communities, so we do not overlook places, spaces and artworks which may seem unimportant to an adult eye, but which are extremely important to the child'**

'collect' in the form of digital photographs and through digital apps, also featured in the discussions. In these cases, stories regarding the completion of the trail and the people that they met while taking part were the main focus of discussions. Children also enjoyed describing their favourite sculptures. Interestingly, however, unlike the street art examples, they were unable to tell me anything about the artists behind the sculptures or the designs themselves. It seemed that the important factor was the sociability of taking part and the sense of community that arose as a result.

Public and street art are genres of art which serve an important function in the lives of children; they create a sense of place and belonging. Additionally, they are highly accessible as it is possible to engage with them without requiring the confidence to step over the threshold of a gallery space or engage with the implicit conditions that these spaces hold. It is, therefore, possible to engage with public and/or street art in any way that you wish. However, there is scope for

misunderstanding and misinterpretation, often due to a lack of awareness of the context within which the art was created. For some public art examples, there will be few repercussions from this, while for others, such as the Colston statue, the ramifications are more serious.

Critical literacy skills are essential tools for both children and adults in a world saturated with visual images. By exploring examples of visual art, children learn an alternative vocabulary which they can employ to communicate with others, and this is why the viewing of artwork made by others is so important. Through art history we also learn about the world, its past and the present, as well as the other people, communities and societies we share this space with. Public art provides an avenue for these aspects to come together, while also being accessible, meaningful and relevant to the lives of children. Engagement with public art as part of the primary art history curriculum is, therefore, essential. This means that primary teachers and art educators, as well as placing



**From left to right**  
*Minesweeper*, 1944, William Lamb  
*The Kelpies*, 2014, Andy Scott  
*Master of the Universe*, 1989, Eduardo Paolozzi  
*Taxi of balloons*, 2013, Rogue One  
*Lemmings*, 2013, Alison Conway  
*The Howl*, 2018, Tim Sutcliffe (Gromit)

children at the centre of the curriculum, need to engage with communities and encourage children to share their knowledge of those communities, so we do not overlook places, spaces and artworks which may seem unimportant to an adult eye, but which are extremely important to the child.

Art should be accessible to everyone. In an age where we rely more and more on digital reproductions, and the costs involved to take children on trips to galleries are ever increasing, we need to draw on the visual art that is on our doorstep. Public and street art provide avenues into this world that moves beyond what we see, opening up discussions about why it has been placed where it has, who created it and why, in addition to opening up meaningful and relevant interdisciplinary links. In the case of the Colston statue, it also means that, as teachers, we have opportunities to confront complex issues that affect our children's' everyday lives. ■

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# Celebrating Body Positivity

Art advisor *Linda Copeland*, and *Elaine Little*, head of Visual Arts at Blackpool Sixth Form College, set out to mark International Women's Day 2020 by celebrating female body positivity and tackling the issue of menstruation. *Linda* explains how the project came about

As we approached lockdown and the ever-increased danger of sharing art materials, we prepared to run our last workshop at Blackpool Sixth Form College, which was to celebrate International Women's Day 2020. Apprehensive and armed with bacterial wipes and sanitiser, the aim was to offer a creative experience to year 9 students from across Blackpool's secondary schools, inviting them in to celebrate female body positivity.

The inspiration for our workshop came from a chance meeting during an art conference I attended in London. A sanitary pad happened to be lying on the floor next to me, whereupon Dr Raita Stein, a lecturer from University of Pretoria in South Africa, tapped my shoulder and alerted me to it. The pad didn't actually belong to me as I had had a hysterectomy 10 years before, and the memory of periods had eroded in my mind, something I hadn't been aware of until that moment. On reflection, my interest in the project was motivated by this re-engagement with sanitary products and the menstruation cycle.

Dr Stein then asked me if I could think of a way of celebrating the menstrual cycle, possibly using sculpture. She explained that her female students often suffered 'period poverty' in South Africa and that it was common for girls to stay at home during menstruation due to the cost of sanitary protection and the stigma.

After this meeting, I contacted Blackpool Sixth Form College and developed an enrichment workshop where students could

explore and manufacture reusable sanitary wear from recycled cloth.

In order to expand the concept further, head of Visual Arts Elaine Little and art technician Melody Evans set up a creative workshop for International Woman's Day 2020, inviting students to use drawing as a means to engage with the concept. Initially, we explained the varying, often negative, perception of periods for girls and women around the world, then asked participants to draw onto a sanitary pad. This followed a demonstration of how to transfer images using carbon paper onto the sanitary pads, as well as mark making using inks, fine liner and Sharpies.

Following the decoration of the pads, we decided to turn that isolated process into a collaborative celebration and set a challenge to upcycle a prom dress using the decorated sanitary products. The stereotypical perception of the prom dress was challenged as students manipulated the pads into ambiguous structural forms, taking it in turns to adorn the dress. The creative process challenged social attitudes, using art to change student's perceptions of their own bodies.

For students, the first hurdle was actually the opening of the pad in public in front of peers – normally the plastic coating and sticky label would be removed in the private solitude of a toilet cubical. Participants silently looked at peers for reassurance as they opened their pads in public. However, the students engaged with the concept quicker than we had imagined, with some quickly requesting control over imagery in order to introduce powerful typography and words over the usual floral images.

'... the students engaged with the concept quicker than we had imagined, with some quickly requesting control over imagery in order to introduce powerful typography and explore the strength of words over the usual floral images'

#### Top to bottom

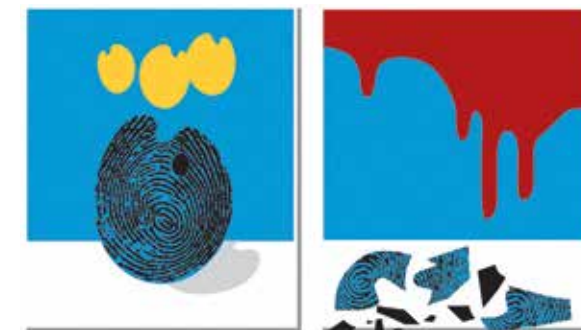
The last normal art workshop on International Women's Day March 7th 2020  
Secondary school pupils decorate pads at the workshop  
The prom dress, currently displayed to promote the Red Box scheme in Blackpool Sixth Form College

The workshop consisted of four groups of year 9 students spending 45 minutes decorating pads and attaching them to the upcycled prom dress placed on a manikin at the front of the studio. Elaine said it was a pleasure to watch the students become confident during the workshop. By the end of the session, they were laughing, relaxed and sharing personal stories, as well as stretching the concept to introduce ideas such as additional adornment and period parties – which, without lockdown, could have been a reality.

The workshop was a creative success on a number of levels as it educated the students about upcycling and environmental damage, as well as offering an awareness about the experience of menstruation in other countries such as South Africa. Furthermore, the creative process challenged social attitudes and creativity was used as a vessel for self-awareness. On feedback sheets, students said they enjoyed the challenge, felt able to talk more openly about menstruation, and were ready to return to their own schools to share the concept and creative dialogue around the subject.

What next? Could sanitary products be redesigned into fashion accessories with the same amount of importance as the new craze for designer face masks? Or, on a lighter note, could this project spark ideas for creative online practice during future lockdowns when sketchpads are limited in availability?

A template worksheet is available. Please email me directly at [copelandlilly@aol.com](mailto:copelandlilly@aol.com)



## Artists use (and abuse) traditions

As part of his continuing series *Threshold* concepts for art, *Chris Francis* offers his observations on Covid-secure school skirmishes and asks where's best to draw the line

**I just stopped a fight in the playground. Admittedly, it was under the new Covid-secure, school-skirmish guidelines – socially distanced, no mask-pulling, crowds of only six or less. But still, once I'd dispersed a couple of Year 7s muffling 'Fight, Fight, Fight!' into their elbows, I took the opportunity to flex some senior leadership muscle. Walkie-talkie in one hand, pasta-bake in the other (fusilli, vegetarian, extra cheese), I stepped into the fray.**

It turned out to be the art teachers, again. 'Enough!' I exclaimed to the two miscreants. 'It's time to draw a line.' I hadn't realised that line drawing was the issue. A quick-march to the office ensued, where tradition dictates that written statements are obtained 'to establish context and perspective'.

Mr Dewrer, long-established head of Art (RA Summer Exhibition, 1982) took immediate offence. 'Context is immaterial!' he pointedly replied, his words aimed at his youthful foe Miss Emit (BA Performance Art; *Inflatable Penis #3*, Boscombe Community Arts Fair, 2019).

'Pah. Your perspective is so narrow,' she riposted. 'It's pointless.'

A change of tact was clearly required. Thankfully, I'm not adverse to a spot of creative thinking myself.

'Given the circumstances', I began, voice full of reason, mouth full of pasta, 'let's break with tradition. Rather than written statements, draw me a picture. Use art, however you deem it, and visualise your contentions.'

Admittedly, their reactions, like the pasta, were less than lukewarm. But with afternoon lessons (and appraisals) looming, agreement was inevitable. I left them to respond.

You have to hand it to old Dewrer. Upon my return he'd produced a remarkable pencil study – 'like a photograph' some might say – of his shoe. More specifically, an old boot, wise and worn, and shaped with character, knowledge and history. The picture whispered beyond statement. I was filled with new-found respect. I observed him carefully as he sat before me, still distanced. He simply observed back, older than I'd ever noticed. More weary – shoeless. Miss Emit was nowhere to be seen.

It was then that she appeared, slowly rising up beyond the window, Mr. Dewrer's old boot gaffer-taped to her head, restricting her movements, pressing her down. She was repeatedly chanting something or other, but what with the face mask, the copious tape and the glass between us, I couldn't make out her words.

[artpedagogy.com](http://artpedagogy.com)

After contacting a local enterprise in need of artist input, **Steve Sharp**, head of art and design at Pegasus Academy in Dudley, was able to provide students with a real-life working experience, which illustrated how industry and art can work together. He explains how

**Providing students with real life art and design experiences in education can be tricky. There are often many barriers which prevent this from happening, and coupled with the pressure teacher face from exams, lesson observations and marking, it is understandable that it might not be top priority. Crucially, what we have to ask ourselves is, do we want to teach the skills for students to just pass exams, or teach the skills needed to be authentic artists/designers who are able to fully function in employment and post 16 provision?**

Over the last few years, with the help of our careers officer, our department has focused on providing the opportunity for collaborative live projects with local businesses, companies and creative professionals to allow students to fully understand how the skills taught in the classroom relate directly to industry and the world of work. Our work has helped to highlight the importance of not only the physical artwork itself but also so-called 'soft skills' which are increasingly requested as desirable traits in new employees. During this article I will share our successes, but also what we have learnt along the way to inspire you to develop your own projects in the future.

Recently, we have been working on a collaborative project with Hundred House Coffee, an award-winning coffee roastery based in Shropshire. Owners Anabelle de Gersigny and Matthew Wade both have backgrounds in art and donate a percentage of their profits to support community art initiatives under the title Art & Industry. Working with school and colleges is an extension of this ethos and offers the opportunity for students to understand the relationship

between art and its application within industry and business. The project was fairly simple; create a logo based on a coffee producing nation (this year's country was Ethiopia) and the most original design would be used and printed on the bags of coffee. Students began by researching Ethiopia and then created a series of basic sketches which they formed into a final design. The design was digitalised using Adobe Illustrator, after which the students had the freedom to explore how they could apply their designs to posters, packaging, t-shirts and a business card using both hand and digital means.

Throughout the project, Anabelle was on hand from the initial project introduction to leading follow-up feedback sessions. Her advice to the students was always constructive, insightful and client centred. The students enjoyed the project immensely and I was truly surprised with the quality and variety of work from essentially quite a tight brief. Listening to student feedback, using a different sensory experience to introduce the project, i.e. smelling the coffee beans at different stages and the flavour notes, was something

**'Crucially, what we have to ask ourselves is, do we want to teach the skills for students to just pass exams, or teach the skills needed to be authentic artists/designers who are able to fully function in employment and post 16 provision?'**

which they felt helped them to develop new and unexpected outcomes. This is definitely something I want to utilise more in future projects.

Working with Hundred House Coffee has enabled our students to see how art and design is an integral part of industry and business. It affects, in different ways, the products we consume and interact with and is essential for how we view and understand the world around us. Ensuring that students are aware of the economic value of art and design can also remove the myth that there are limited career opportunities in the creative industries. Working on 'live' projects where students gain valuable real-life experiences, working with real clients, with real needs and real-time constraints has unquestionably had a positive impact on our students. Students now see art and design as a real career option and, as a result, we have seen a year-on-year increase in the number opting for these courses at GCSE and at college. So, what have we learnt and how can it help you to develop your own live projects in the future?

★ One of the things that stopped me for several years working on 'live' projects was that most of them would be one-off. The time and effort spent developing new resources and generally organising the project was unsustainable. So, I suggest working on projects which can be delivered over several years with maybe a slight twist each year to keep it fresh.

★ Engage the support of your careers officer who can help with making initial contact with companies, as well as emailing and general administration (the stuff which generally take the most time).

★ Don't expect your students to be super confident when talking to visitors. To be honest, this was something which I completely overlooked. After reminding our students for several weeks that at some point they would have to stand up and share their ideas and work with the client, on the day some students froze and didn't want to speak. Nowadays, I prepare students for this by building up their confidence before the actual pitch to the client.

★ Most businesses and companies are willing to support you in any way they can. This could range from donating materials, a short talk to students or facilitating a whole project. So, contact local businesses which you think may be suitable and see what they can offer.

★ A lot of staff in your school will know people who work in the creative industries. Conduct a staff survey to identify who they know and if they would be willing to donate some time.

★ Most of the time the people we work with are donating their time for free. To show our appreciation, we often post details about the people and projects we are working with on in our social media feeds. We are also in the process of developing a directory of people and businesses we are working with on our Academy website. ■



#### Images

Student designs for the Hundred House Coffee company

# Education through coffee, creativity and business



If you are interested in hearing more about the project, please contact [ssharp@pegusacademy.org.uk](mailto:ssharp@pegusacademy.org.uk) or if you are interested in working with Hundred House Coffee on a similar project, contact Anabelle or Matt [info@hundredhousecoffee.com](mailto:info@hundredhousecoffee.com)

1 David Gilliver,  
*Barrier to a barrier*, 2020  
2,3 David Gilliver,  
*Your move, Ronal*, 2020  
4 David Gilliver, *And  
breathe...*, 2020  
5 David Gilliver,  
*Self portrait*, 2020

Professional artist and photographer **David Gilliver** uses dioramas to convey his work and provide a commentary on a range of pertinent subjects, such as his most recent series *Pandemic*. Here, he describes the process

# Big ideas and little people



**For over 20 years now, I have been obsessed with the notion of using dioramas to convey my ideas and thoughts as an artist. Because the work is figurative in nature and, therefore, visually engaging, the figurines can be used to powerful effect when providing a commentary on all kinds of subjects.**

The ideas for my macro photography series are normally formed in one of two ways. Sometimes I will look at an object and think to myself, 'That would make a great prop to base a scene on with the Little People', and I will then source figurines that interact well with it. Or, I will buy a set of figurines that I like the look of and then spend some time thinking about what objects would interact well with them in a scene.

During my time at art school, I was introduced to the genius work of David Levinthal (a master of figurine photography), which helped give my work more direction and impetus.

My Little People work can sometimes feel a little like a one-liner joke, whereby I am just having fun and creating a scene that is more amusing than it is meaningful. But I do also attempt to inject serious messages into a lot of my work, which is more evident in the series of photographs I have created

that are inspired by world events such as Brexit, the devastating effects of plastic pollution and my most recent series *Pandemic*. I have been working on my *Pandemic* series since the start of lockdown and have incorporated objects within the work that have become iconic overnight, such as bottles of hand gel and face masks. My intention through making this work is not to trivialise matters, but instead to hopefully provide a creative commentary that we can all relate to and perhaps lighten the mood slightly, which is sorely needed during times like these.

The best thing about this type of photography is that you don't need much space to make the work because the sets are so tiny. I just use the back area of my studio where I have a small table and good light from a window. The miniature dioramas, therefore, make for an ideal subject matter at a time where our outdoor freedoms are being restricted.

Camera gear essentials for making this kind of work include a DSLR camera (or equivalent), a macro lens (e.g. 100mm) and a tripod (optional). It is then simply a case of buying some figurines off the Internet and using your imagination to create the miniature worlds. I buy my 'HO scale' figures from eBay or Amazon.

A helpful tip for this kind of work is to remember that the Little People are definitely the star of the show, but if you don't give due consideration to the surrounding scene in which you are placing them, your subject matter and the final shot will lack direction and impact. The most successful images I have made tend to be the ones where the Little People are at their most convincing. The resulting photograph is only clever if the overall scene is believable, even if just for a split second. Note: How the figurines interact with whatever else is in the scene is crucial. Momentarily suspending disbelief is key to the works' success and how it is perceived by those who view it.

Therefore, deciding on what objects to use in your scenes and the scene constructs themselves (e.g. backdrops, foreground, added objects) are all important factors.

Face masks are things that we have all had to get used to wearing recently, so using them in my latest series of work was an easy decision. I will never be able to look at a generic disposable blue face mask again without imagining a little swimming pool. I hope some of these images help others to think creatively about the worrying, bizarre and surreal times we are currently living through. ■

'My intention through making this work is not to trivialise matters, but instead to hopefully provide a creative commentary that we can all relate to and perhaps lighten the mood slightly – sorely needed during times like these'

2



3



4



David Gilliver graduated from the Fine Art Photography (BA Hons) course at the Glasgow School of Art in 2001 and has been working hard to establish himself as a respected professional photographer and artist ever since. He specialises in macro photography (the Little People) and long-exposure photography (the art of 'light painting'). David teaches regular Light Painting Photography workshops in schools across Scotland and has also written two interactive eBooks which are aimed at helping teachers and pupils learn more about these innovative and creative photography techniques. The eBooks are available to purchase on David's website, where information packs for the workshops can also be requested: [davidgilliver.com](http://davidgilliver.com)



# Moving the gallery experience online

When the National Gallery closed its doors in March 2020, a traditionally busy summer of school enrichment activities was inevitably shut down. As a result, **Caroline Smith**, programmer for schools and teachers, decided to move the collection from Trafalgar Square into classrooms and homes nationwide

**On 18 March 2020, the National Gallery closed its doors, unsure when it would reopen. Traditionally, summer is a busy time as school timetables open up for enrichment activities, year 6s (ages 10–11) come to London to mark the end of primary school and longer-term projects mature. This year would be very different. It seemed wrong to cancel everything, especially when many were rediscovering the importance of the arts and creativity. From virtual school classrooms to online workshops, learning went digital, but how much of a gallery experience could move online?**

We prioritised finishing existing projects, running scheduled placements for trainee teachers and the remaining CPD session for the Take One Picture programme. It was empowering (and something of a relief) to discover how much could be achieved online with imagination, creative problem solving and a willingness to risk something not working as intended. Although it was still mediated through a screen, participants appreciated being part of a live event, as well as being able to discuss and contribute. The learning from these events and the continued uncertainty about school visits encouraged us to seize the opportunity and test ideas for teaching the regular programme online.

There is considerable benefit to recorded content, especially as it can be accessed when most convenient. It has proved invaluable in maintaining access to our Take One Picture exhibition, with many schools still unable to

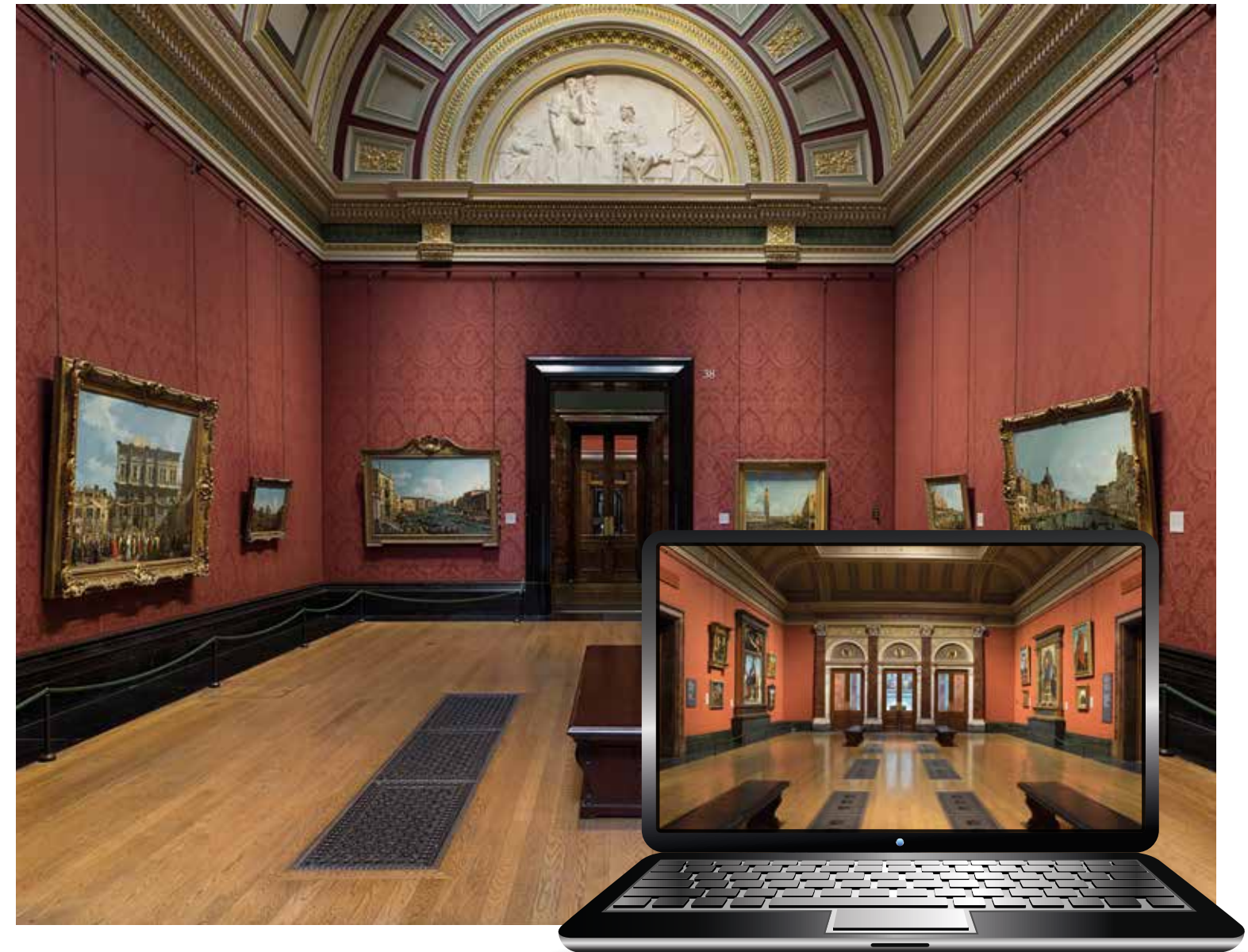


visit. It can't, however, replicate the stimulus of learning with others, bouncing around ideas, asking questions and collaborating to find answers. So, when some students (key worker, looked after children and other year groups) returned to school, we were able to pilot 'live' sessions and experiment with ideas for teaching our main school programme. For the autumn term, all our sessions were online.

As opportunities to travel remained limited and young people's learning environments potentially narrowed, it seemed even more important to 'escape' the classroom. During our live sessions we used photographs to lead students on a 'walk' from Trafalgar Square, up the steps into the gallery and around the space, focusing on sounds and textures, as well as sight. Using these visual prompts, we encouraged students to imagine and hear footsteps, to look up at the ornate ceilings and notice the light making patterns on the floor. We couldn't replicate the vastness of the space, but we could imagine our journey through it and our

arrival at a particular painting. Seeing it in situ gave context and scale. Students are often keen to show and talk about their own artworks, and an unexpected outcome of our 'live' session was being invited 'into' classrooms to see their own spaces. Gallery educators found teaching online more tiring, the need for 'presence' and variety of voice greater, but commented on how fantastic it was to connect with students again.

Exploring paintings together has always been at the centre of the schools' programme, as we use investigative conversations to unpack a painting and prompt connections and further enquiry. While there are obvious subject links, paintings can also provide a safe distance and historical perspective for discussions on the world today and our place in it. These conversations felt particularly timely when students might be more anxious than usual and where creativity, critical thinking and complex problem solving seemed even more important for thriving in an uncertain future.



How might this approach work in the future and how could we use the opportunity to try new ways of working online? Introducing a painting through a detail only or a soundscape is not possible in the gallery, but a great way of firing imagination or generating questions from the group to direct the session. Setting an initial brief or question for discussion, and using quick drawing games for looking or striking poses, helps maintain momentum and concentration. The opportunity to compare paintings side by side, to reference other works or sources, adds a helpful dimension. With a clear brief and straightforward materials agreed with the school in advance, there are opportunities for practical artist-led sessions. We haven't made egg tempera online yet but there are plans!

What have we learnt? That the principles of good teaching remain the same online as elsewhere. The importance of clear objectives, pace, opportunities for interaction and for young people to be active in their own learning are key. Creating a dynamic

**'Students are often keen to show and talk about their own artworks, and an unexpected outcome of our 'live' session was being invited 'into' the classrooms to see their own spaces'**

but supportive learning atmosphere is more difficult virtually, but it is possible. Collaboration with class teachers, regardless of year group, is vital for helping interaction, feedback and keeping the sessions flowing.

Virtual visits are different. The vastness of the gallery, the sense of being part of a large community and the 'wow' factor of standing in front of a painting 'in the flesh' are difficult to reproduce. Equally, there are advantages, such as the ability to

see in close-up and to access works not on display, too small for a group or in rooms too busy to linger. There is greater freedom to meet individual needs and encourage greater collaboration with teachers and input from students. Also, schools too far away to visit their national collection can have access to facilitated workshops.

Looking at art is not a once-and-for-all experience, so an online session is useful as part of a mix of interactions which, for many, is a helpful starting point. It has allowed us to maintain – in some cases widen – access to the collection and has challenged us to think differently. As one student only half an hour away posted, 'I've never been, but now I want to go.' We might count that a success! ■

[nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools](https://nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools)



# Raising digital literacy



*Ted Fox Joyce, head of visual arts at Langley Park School for Girls in Beckenham, discusses the importance of raising digital literacy skills within the department and building a sustainable programme of development, whilst addressing the concepts of the 'sacred' and the 'profane' within arts education*

**In issue 24 of AD (spring 2019), I wrote an article entitled *Action research and digital technologies in teaching and learning*. The article centred on my journey through a programme of action research and the important role that this plays in developing pedagogic practice. This follow-up article explains how, over the last year, I have continued using action research in order to develop a programme of study at key stage 3 (ages 11–14). My aim is to enable all our early secondary students to access elements of new digital technologies in a visual arts context.**

Through action research it has become evident how new digital technologies have impacted, not only on my approach to teaching and learning, but more importantly on the growth and sustainability of the visual arts department. Our use of digital technologies, both hardware and software, is due to increased staff interest and knowledge, the affordability of Adobe Creative Cloud (CC) products and that student hunger for and engagement with digital tools which has grown exponentially. More and more of our

students are opting for GCSE Photography and our uptake at A Level and BTEC is growing – in September 2019 we took on board a new BTEC course in Creative Digital Media.

I first became interested in action research in December of 2013 when Anders Marner and Hans Ortegren published an educational inquiry called *Four approaches to implementing digital media in art education*. The four approaches were:

1. Resistance to digitalisation of the subject of art
2. The addition of digital art
3. The embedding of digital art
4. Digital media as dominant

The article resonated. I had worked through a period of 'resistance to digitalisation'. When I first started leading the department some 14 years ago, the hardware was sparse and the software was expensive. Additionally, staff were either unable to use the facilities due to a lack of knowledge and experience, or due to a lack of provision, time and accessibility. At that time, digital art seemed a step too far and any resistance was compounded by what John Peter describes as the 'sacred' and 'profane'<sup>1</sup>. In their text, Marner and Ortegren

discuss, in depth, the 'sacred' and 'profane', the former being seen as having greater significance within a traditional subject paradigm, while the latter is seen as expendable or marginal. They write, 'Drawing and painting are seen as the sacred. Digital media are becoming marginalised, of less value and interest and thus seen as the profane.'

I have often been involved in such discussions about the 'sacred' and the 'profane' in visual arts, and I have heard concerns about how the 'profane' (in this case digitisation) is attempting to take over the 'sacred' (the traditional, more hands-on techniques and processes). It is an interesting position to take and one that underlines the innate opposition to, and fear of, change that many of us hold. However, if our pedagogic practice is bound to the 'sacred' and we neglect to embrace the 'profane', might we then, as educationalists, be bound to our time, our experiences and histories? Might we be unable to reflect and diversify, with a tendency to regurgitate what we already know at the expense of what we could learn and teach in a progressive and more versatile form of education? I would argue that the 'sacred' and the 'profane' are actually bound together in a symbiotic relationship; the 'sacred' being the established building blocks on which to develop, but which can only develop through reflection, challenge and change, i.e., the 'profane'.

Through my previous action research, I had reflected on how digital art was growing and developing within our visual arts department. However, it was still being used as an add-on in some of our subject areas and was not fully embedded – what Marner and Ortegren discussed as 'the addition of digital art'. What we wanted to see was an embedding of digital art in our department, not at the expense of tradition, but as another tool for students to explore and utilise.

To embed digital practices, we needed to bring about a change in our approach and delivery. We, therefore, set about working on a new rotation of three subjects at key stage 3 – Fine Art, Textiles and Creative Digital Media. We decided to first focus our new programme of delivery on year 7 (ages 11–12) only. All 240 students would study a term of all three areas in a rotation through an academic year. In this way we were able to offer our students a sound experience of all key areas,

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and help to build and develop knowledge and experience through three consecutive years of study from year 7 to 9 (ages 11–14).

In Creative Digital Media, our term of work focussed on key aspects of Adobe CC software. All students were taught how to use Adobe Spark as a digital sketchbook and via this were able to document their work and progress, and share it via social media etc. In addition, all students were taught the fundamentals of Adobe Photoshop in terms of layering and blending images to develop intricate composite visuals based on aspects of the formal elements, which is still used at the heart of our delivery across all three subject areas.

Setting up the new rotation came with its own logistical problems and required careful planning and buy-in from all staff, students, leadership and parents. In addition, there were teething issues with setting up student accounts and ensuring

all of the digital hardware and software worked correctly and smoothly.

Unfortunately, in March 2020, Covid-19 and school closure meant that we had to temporarily abandon the work that we had been developing over the first two terms. However, feedback from students was very positive, especially from those who struggled with more traditional approaches to visual arts. Many students felt liberated and able to express themselves creatively through the new digital tools. What was most interesting was the students' innate ability to take on and assimilate the digital tools with ease, and use them just as another tool in their creative development, thus the boundary between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' seemed less distinguishable, less problematic and less defined.

In September 2020, we returned to school and navigated our way around the new systems

imposed by the impact of Covid-19. At the time of writing, our department are planning to continue with our key stage 3 rotation of subjects in both years 7 and 8. In Creative Digital Media, year 8 students (ages 12–13) will embark on a collaborative digital filmmaking course which centres on research work into our environment and the impact of plastic waste on our seas and oceans. Students will continue to use Adobe Spark, as they did in the previous year, in order to develop a digital sketchbook of their work and experiences. They will also learn aspects of digital composition and film editing techniques using Adobe Rush.

Staff will be keeping a close eye on progress, reflecting on and altering projects to ensure that our students get the best possible experiences, whilst developing their digital literacy skills to express their individual and collective creative journeys.

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<sup>1</sup> *The sacred and the profane: subject sub-culture, pedagogical practice and teachers' perceptions of the classroom uses of ICT*. Educational Review 57(4), November

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