

UAL X UBAE Workshop

A partnership aimed at empowering students from the global majority in higher education

Author: Jason Forrest, Student Partnership Manager for Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon (CCW) at UAL, and Council member at NSEAD from January 2026



L to R: Rose Sinclair MBE, Dr Kevin Dalton Johnson, Canon Marlene Wylie, Esther Adesigbin

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As we approach 2026, the field of arts education in higher education (HE) encounters significant challenges that necessitate urgent consideration. The financial pressures currently impacting the HE sector have led to course closures, a reduction in studio resources, and considerable job losses within creative arts and design departments. These circumstances raise pertinent questions regarding the long-term viability of these critical disciplines, which are essential for fostering creativity and stimulating innovation in our society. Also, the existing market-driven funding models and an excessive focus on graduate salaries have systematically marginalised arts subjects, thereby undermining their substantial contributions to both the creative economy and the social fabric.

Concurrently, rapid advancements in digital technologies and artificial intelligence are transforming the landscape of the creative industries and the educational methodologies employed within them. Authentic storytelling is becoming an effective strategy to build credibility in an age of misinformation and skepticism. The question is who is conveying those cultural narratives outside of Eurocentric pedagogy? Although these technological innovations provide remarkable opportunities for creative exploration and enhance employability, they also introduce significant challenges. Key issues that require attention include equitable access to resources, the urgent necessity for comprehensive staff training, in addition to the concerns regarding intellectual property, and the need to address implicit biases in skill development for both students and staff. The 2024 Freeland Foundation Visualise Report emphasises the imperative for action to support academic professionals and to establish pathways for the upcoming Generation Alpha students who will enter higher education by 2028. Research consistently indicates that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and underrepresented groups encounter barriers that impede their access to and progression through creative HE pathways, adversely affecting their outcomes in the creative industries.

In my capacity as the Student Partner Manager for Camberwell, Chelsea, and Wimbledon Colleges (CCW) at the University of the Arts London (UAL), I have actively led initiatives focused on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) to tackle these pressing issues in alignment with UAL's commitment to the principles of Climate, Racial, and Social Justice (CRSJ). Collaborations with external professional learning communities, such as The National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD), facilitate meaningful change and advocate for the importance of art and design disciplines. As a member of the self-organised network United Black Art Educator (UBAE), I secured internal funding to pilot a one-day workshop at our Chelsea college on 11th November 2025. Involving five NSEAD members from the UBAE network, who conducted thirty-minute tutorial discussions aimed at enhancing student employability. The five members from UBAE involved in this initiative are as follows:

- **Esther Adesigbin:** Education Manager at The October Gallery
- **Dr Kevin Dalton Johnson:** Artist and Curator
- **Canon Marlene Wylie:** Past President, F&GP and NSEAD Council member, and art and design education consultant
- **Rose Sinclair MBE:** Reader in Design Education at Goldsmiths, University of London
- **Winifred Ahupa:** UAL Designer and Alumni of MA Global Collaborative Design

Central to the workshop was its emphasis on collective knowledge production. Rather than adopting hierarchical teaching models, the facilitators employed approaches rooted in Black radical educational traditions, privileging shared experience, storytelling, and discussion. Where participants were encouraged to explore their own identities, cultural references, and discuss their creative processes. My Observation of seeing these UBAE members engaging with students, in this context reinforced the value of learning spaces that validate personal narratives as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Throughout the workshop, dominant Eurocentric frameworks within art and design education were critically examined. Discussions with educators and students alike exposed how curricula can marginalised Black artistic histories and contemporary practices. By centring Black artists, educators, and cultural workers, the workshop reframed art education as a site of resistance and transformation rather than exclusion. The student workshop reinforced this shift, as students demonstrated how alternative narratives and visual languages can emerge when institutional constraints are loosened.

A further strength of the workshop was its focus on care, wellbeing, and sustainability in educational practice. Specifically acknowledging the emotional labour experienced by Black students and educators within predominantly white institutions. Creating a supportive, affirming environment allowed participants to engage critically without fear, fostering trust and openness. This ethos was evident in the student workshop, where care was embedded into facilitation through active listening, flexibility, and respect for individual boundaries.

One student commented:

'The UBAE workshop hosted by Jason Forrest was an extraordinary opportunity that connected me with a seasoned community of Black artists and educators. I gained profound insights and professional advice from Esther Adesigbin, Kevin Dalton Johnson, Rose Sinclair MBE, Marlene Wylie, and Winifred Ahupa regarding the

expansion of my practice and the refinement of my critical thinking. I would welcome the recurrence of this workshop, as it would provide significant benefits for Afro-Caribbean students engaging in one-on-one tutorials with mentors who share similar backgrounds.'

In reflecting on the UBAE Workshop, I recognise its profound impact on my understanding of art education as an ethical and practice. The integration of the student workshop reinforced the importance of embedding inclusive, community-centred pedagogies into both teaching and curriculum design and employability. The experience has strengthened my commitment to advocating for art education spaces that centre Black knowledge systems, prioritise student voice, and support transformative learning through creative practice. By proactively addressing these disparities, we can elevate the development and experiences of students and staff, enriching the art and design educational landscape. This not only enhances our community but also lightens the load for global majority staff who navigate these challenges beyond their contractual commitments, paving the way for a brighter, more equitable future for prospective students from within the margins.



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