# AD


**THE PHOTOGRAPHY MOVEMENT**
SOPHIE HERXHEIMER: POSTER AND INTERVIEW
**CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND ANTI-RACIST AGENCY**
UNLOCKING CULTURAL CAPITAL

The National Society
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# Editorial

Last year, I was both surprised and honoured to be asked by Scott Shillum and Steve Wallington, founders of The Photography Movement, to be a judge for their Show and Tell photographic competition (p. 02). An even greater surprise came when, during the third lockdown, the submissions arrived. I was blown away. Isolated; Trapped; Fear; Jumbled and Down were just a few of the words the young artists were using to describe their powerful photos taken during the height of the pandemic. My 15-year-old daughter helped with what was a close to impossible selection but, as we looked through each, she shared how many of the entries deeply resonated with her. At a time when many of our freedoms were removed, these courageous artists had, through words and images, brilliantly articulated the loss of their freedom and structure, as well as their hopes and fears for the future. They were speaking for us all but especially for young people who, on top of navigating childhood and teenage years, have experienced a high level of isolation and uncertainty. The *Show and Tell* exhibition is available online and is a great curriculum resource, helping us to better understand the healing power of photography, images and words.

Sophie Herxheimer also loves words! She's a great listener too. In her interview (p. 10), we learn how making books, puppets and 'dedicated listening' with her learning-disabled son helped his acquisition of language. She also describes how art, words and poetry have helped her to process feelings of loss, change and grief.

I also want to give a shout out to Jo Barber who explains (p. 06) how art, racial literacy and critical consciousness can give us agency and how we can use this agency for social and racial justice. Jo is also a member of NSEAD's Anti-racist Art Education Action Group, which will shortly be publishing new resources that will help every art educator to be actively anti-racist.

Finally, I want to dedicate this issue of *AD* to Dan Shillum (1966–2015), to my sister Rebecca Leach (1963–2000) and to so many people who, far too young, have lost their lives to the illness that is mental health. Please do visit the links to the organisations shared by Scott Shillum at the end of his article. And, in the weeks and months ahead, and as part of the process of recovery and revival, let's keep using both art and words to change lives.

**Sophie Leach**, Editor, *AD*
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**Cover image**
*Nathaniel*, from *Let's Talk*. Photography by Charlie Clift. Lettering by Kate Forrester

## Regulars



## Features



Please note: While every effort is made to check websites mentioned in *AD*, some may contain images unsuitable for young children. Please check any references prior to use in the classroom. Authors' views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the NSEAD. 
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# The Photography Movement

*Following the death of his twin brother Dan,* ***Scott Shillum****, together with best friend Steve Wallington, founded The Photography Movement, a not-for-profit organisation aimed at fostering a community where mental wellbeing could be discussed through the medium of photography. Scott describes how the movement's latest project has inspired secondary school pupils during lockdown*

**It was 10.15am, February 26th, 2015. I remember the moment with absolute clarity, although the detail of the conversation is a blur. I knew that Dan, my identical twin brother, best friend and business partner, was ill. He had been for a while. I also knew the illness from which he was suffering can often be terminal. At the time of the call I was in the open-plan office of Vismedia, the visual communications agency that we had founded together in 2000. The staff also knew Dan wasn't well, and after the voice on the phone broke the news to me, I replaced the receiver and addressed the team. 'I'm sorry to say that Dan took his life this morning. I'm going to be off for a little while and I know this will be a challenging time for you all.' Or words to that effect. It was brief and I was obviously in shock. I left the office, leaned against an outside wall and called a taxi to take me to his family home.**

Clinical depression is the predominant mental health condition worldwide. It is a terrible illness, excruciatingly painful and you feel dead inside. There's no escape from a crushing feeling of emptiness and worthlessness. You feel sub-human and genuinely think that everyone would be better off if you were no longer around. You often cannot function and, at its worst, suicidal ideation is ever-present. Both Dan and I had suffered from infrequent, mercifully short but often severe, bouts of it throughout our adult life. They had never manifested in parallel before but there had been some overlap during this particular period. However, I was through the worst of mine when that tragic day arrived and I continued to get better despite what had happened. I haven't had a bout since.

In the UK, a man takes his life every two hours and a woman does so every eight. Countless more attempt it. Men aged 45-49 have the highest rates of suicide – Dan was 49 when he took his life. Sadly, suicide rates among young people have been increasing and it is now at its highest on record for young females.[1] A recent Young Minds impact report cited nearly 3,500,000 visits to their website's Find Help pages in 2020, a 40 percent increase on the year before.[2]

Of course, depression is but one on a very long list of mental disorders and nobody will go throughout their entire life having not experienced poor mental health in one form or another. So far, so depressing, you might say, but I wanted to contextualise what follows next and I promise that the reading gets lighter from now on in.

The good news is that, in recent years, the stigma around mental illness has started to erode as people are now more at ease talking about it. The junior royals with their Heads Together campaign played a large part in reshaping the narrative and should be applauded for their openness on the topic. There are also some fantastic charities doing great work in their respective areas, and one that I connected with after Dan's demise was the male suicide prevention charity CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably). They have a dedicated helpline with highly-trained support staff available from 5pm to midnight, 365 days a year. Like many amazing charities, they are underfunded, so once I was through the fog of grief, I was determined to do my bit to help. This is where serendipity played its part.

'I am acutely aware that The Photography Movement may not exist without the tragedy of Dan taking his life six years ago. Personally, it has been a cathartic and rewarding journey and it feels good to be doing something that is tangibly making a difference'

**Top left** *Scott Shillum* from *Let's Talk.* Photography by Charlie Cliff. Lettering by Kate Forrester

**Left** *Bryony* from *Let's Talk.* Photography by Charlie Cliff. Lettering by Kate Forrester

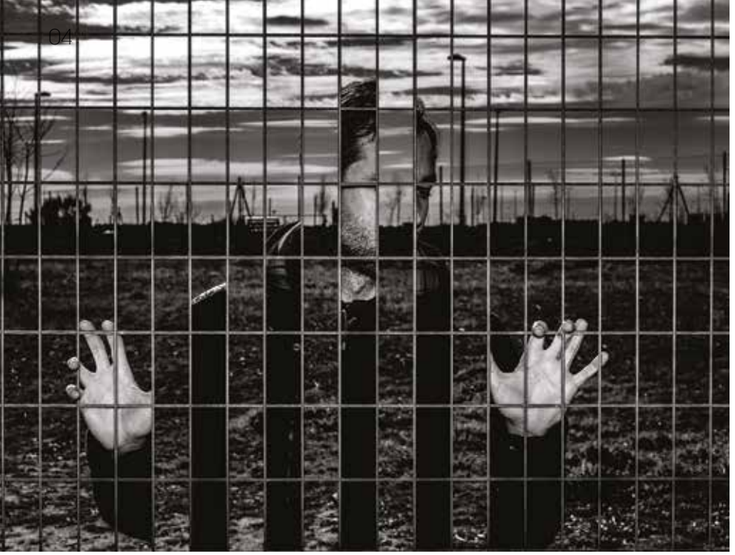
**Right (top)** *Gamers* by Dave Hughs from *CALM and Getty Images Exhibition*

**Right** *Freedom, Back at school with my friends,* by Bushra, aged 15, from *Show and Tell*

I am incredibly fortunate to have a wonderfully supportive family alongside some really close friends and work colleagues who carried me through those difficult months with an enormous Dan-shaped hole in them. One of my very best buddies, Steve Wallington, a friend of myself and Dan since our college days, took me for a beer one evening and I mentioned that I had connected with CALM and wanted to do something to raise money for them. On one thing I was certain – having been a rugby prop forward in my formative years, I'm not built for distance running, so that ruled out a marathon. However, Steve and I both have a shared love for photography. I had been a national newspaper picture editor throughout the 90s and the early Vismedia offering provided photographic services to corporate clients. In parallel, Steve worked as a senior creative director in ad agency land and had run his own creative agency for many years. In those combined 50 years of work-life, we collectively built up a fantastic network of top-flight reportage and advertising photographers, some of whom have become personal friends.

That very evening, over a beer or five, we came up with an idea to see if we could use our contacts and experience to host a photography exhibition on modern masculinity with prints being sold at auction and all money raised going to CALM.

Men are notoriously bad at talking about their problems, so the broader idea was to create a photography 'movement' which would help men have conversations around mental health and wellbeing through the medium. If we could raise money for CALM at the same time, then this would be a win-win. Six months later, in May 2017 and with the help of ▶



‘Men are notoriously bad at talking about their problems, so the broader idea was to create a photography ‘movement’ – one that would help men have conversations around mental health and wellbeing through the medium’

sponsorship from Lynx (a part of Unilever) and the free use of the Getty Images Gallery in Central London, we held a Photography Movement exhibition for two weeks featuring 80 incredible photographic interpretations of modern masculinity. The stellar list of contributors included photographic luminaries such as Rankin, Martin Parr, Nick Knight and Uli Weber. The exhibition was extensively covered in the national media and, on top of the awareness raised, we were able to present a cheque to CALM for over £20,000.

We quickly realised that photography was indeed an excellent conduit for conversation but we shouldn’t just be limited to men to be a genuine movement. In 2018, we broadened the scope and incepted The Photography Movement as a CIC (Community Interest Company). Since then we have held many more exhibitions and panel discussions that talk to all audiences. We also have a travelling exhibition of a beautiful project conceived by photographer Charlie Clift and lettering artist Kate Forrester. Titled *Let’s Talk*, the subjects’ innermost thoughts were painted on their faces and photographed. They were then displayed in several outdoor exhibitions. It was incredibly powerful, and both Steve and I took part.

Fast forward to 2020 and the dreaded lockdown when our lives changed forever. Unfortunately, the impact of the pandemic and the ongoing restrictions will inevitably result in an increase in poor mental health across the world, and the younger generation especially so. What could we do to play our part? After many lengthy brainstorming sessions via video chats, we hit on the idea of asking 11-18 years olds to express their feelings via a photo in a project that we have named *Show and Tell*. These days, most youngsters have access to a smartphone and therefore continually carry a very powerful camera around with them, regularly interacting with it, albeit with the said camera too often pointing towards their own faces!

We decided to create four video workshops to impart photography tips and tricks using just a smartphone. Once again, Rankin agreed to do one along with Daniel Regan, Francis Augusto and Emma Hardy. After watching the films, viewers are encouraged to practise their new skills and submit a photo to be part of our online *Show and Tell* exhibition titled *How are you feeling?*

We have created a school pack with an easy-to-follow ‘how-to’ guide, designed to fit seamlessly into school lessons. We have been lucky enough to have had Cisco Webex’s support for this project, giving us the ability to host live video feedback sessions for participating schools. Our broader ambition is to see conversations around health and wellbeing embedded into the broad curriculum. The Photography Movement’s aims and resources can help to achieve this, especially in and through art and design. Indeed, we have been genuinely blown away by the positive feedback we have received from several schools that have participated thus far.

Steve and I have been blessed to have had the backing of several individuals who have come together to make this and other The Photography Movement projects happen. Rebecca and Nicole from Constance agency are the shining lights in our journey and, of course, the amazingly talented network of professional photographers and sponsors who have supported us.

I am acutely aware that The Photography Movement may not exist without the tragedy of Dan taking his life six years ago. Personally, it has been a cathartic and rewarding journey and it feels good to be doing something that is tangibly making a difference. The mission statement of The Photography Movement is Photography / Conversation / Wellbeing. It’s more important than ever that we look out for one another and, if by doing what we are doing, we can collectively spark more conversations that help improve mental health in some small way. That makes it all worthwhile and Dan would be very proud of what we have achieved. ■

[1] *Samaritans Suicide Statistics. Report*, 2019.
[2] *Young Minds Impact Report, 2019-20, Youngminds.org.uk*

**Above** *Replica* by Juan Francisco Gomez from *CALM and Getty Images Exhibition*

**Opposite page**

**1** *Fear.* Caitlyn
**2** *Isolated.* Joshua
**3** *Unemployable.* Fawziya
**4** *Trapped.* Ava
**5** *World flipped upside down.* Jessica
**6** *Suffering.* Iiana
**7** *Escaping to my world.* Willow
**8** *Alone.* HollieRose
**9** *Jumbled.* Max
**10** *Overwhelmed.* Anna
**11** *Free.* Bradley
**12** *Dismantled.* Armand
**13** *Sweet & sour.* Ort
**14** *Bored.* Anne
**15** *Sorrow.* Adnan

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*letstalkcampaign.co.uk*

**Our projects and organisations we’ve partnered**
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## Show and Tell Exhibition
## Judges’ choice


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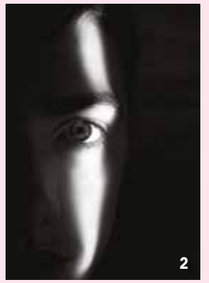
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# Art, critical consciousness and anti-racist agency

*'Business as usual' will not suffice for art educators if social and racial justice is to be achieved and unspoken norms, knowledge and assumptions within education are to be challenged.* ***Jo Barber****, assistant head of school at Aspire Alternative Provision in Buckinghamshire, and a member of the NSEAD Anti-racist Art Education Action Group, explains how art can give us agency in creative anti-racist praxis*

**As art educators, if we intend to be agents for social and racial justice, 'business as usual' schooling will not suffice. Art and design provides us with great opportunities for anti-racist practice, to challenge unspoken norms, knowledge and assumptions about culture, power and identities.**

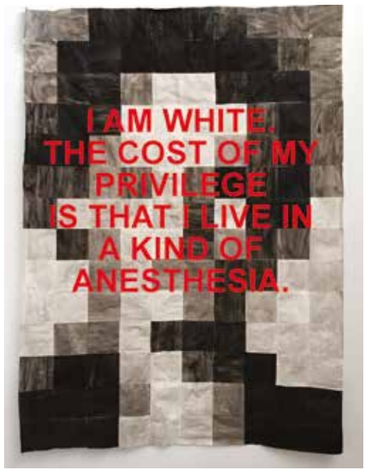
**Left** *XEbony G. Patterson. EP 18-16 ...when they grow up...* Beads, appliques, fabric, glitter, sequins, buttons, costume jewellery, trimming, rhinestones, plastic alphabet letters, birthday ribbons, pins and glue on hand-cut watercolour paper. Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago. © Ebony G. Patterson, 2016

**Right** *Cost of Privilege*, 2017, from *White Anti-racist Studies* series. Ink on paper. Courtesy of Peggy Diggs

Essentially, as art and design educators, we need to navigate ourselves away from unconsciously and unintentionally perpetuating racial inequalities. This involves being mindful of how our socialisation, gender, positionality and privilege affects implicit assumptions, as well as ensuring we don't unintentionally disempower and exclude diverse students. It also means exploring our racial identities, constructed perceptions of race and becoming cognisant of what has influenced our perceptions and practice.

As art and design reveals introspective aspects of ourselves, so too can it challenge our usual frame of references and provide us with rich visual sources to contextualise, explore, discuss and question taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs about race. Through using counter-narratives we can reflectively critique privilege and unconscious bias. By developing our receptiveness to different truths and experiences, we can demystify hidden meanings, making visible the often-invisible narratives and power structures. Acknowledging that assumptions are based upon socially inculcated messages, we can deconstruct stereotypical misconceptions and unlearn misrepresentations of racial identities. United with individual reflection, we can develop our critical consciousness and racial literacy. In so doing, we provide opportunities for our students to engage with different perspectives that may otherwise have been dismissed. Making art culturally relevant to the diversity of students' voices, we can develop students' cultural confidence for better educational outcomes.

In challenging misconceptions of racial identity, artist Peggy Diggs makes 'whiteness' visible. Diggs unveils hidden racial assumptions to encourage anti-racist agency. She engages observers through dialogue, interviews and overheard conversations around ideologies of 'whiteness' and leaves the spectator to question the problematics of the dominant ideological constructs of race. With *Cost of Privilege*, her pixelated portrait reveals no detail of personal identity, but is obscured and unseen, leaving a vague reflection of reality. This ambiguity with the bold texted message powerfully reminds the viewer of their obliviousness to 'white' privilege. ▶



Diggs further develops these predicaments with *Oblivious* from her *Being White* series. The white paper clothing with text from interviews form basic protective wear – like skins which are fragile yet simultaneously restrictive in quality. It serves as a reminder that socialisation forms a safety barrier, protecting the dominant 'white' ideology and stereotypical understandings of racial identity. Only through demystifying the hidden, implicit, socialised norms and unconscious biases can we begin to consciously see a different perspective and reframe constructs of race.

Firelei Báez challenges the arbitrary constructs of racial identity based upon the fluid categorisations of skin colour and hair texture. In her series *Can I Pass?*, Báez explores these measured identity markers as a psychological and personal journey through self-portraiture, influenced by 'Casta' paintings which originated in colonial Mexico during the 18th to 19th century. Historically, these paintings implied a hierarchy of social status according to skin colour – the lighter hues awarded the higher status. This is a concept which Báez interconnects with the 'paper bag test' of the USA, which qualified black Americans access to 'white' privileges if their skin tone matched or was lighter than a paper bag. Similarly, the hair test was a Dominican Republican measure whereby the more the hair flowed under a fan, the 'whiter' attributes a person possessed. Báez colour-matched her forearm and drew a silhouette of her hair for a day each month. Depending upon the daylight, phenomenologically tones and colour perception changed, making the test temporal. Metaphorically, this aligns with the fragility of the construct and hierarchy of race through markers such as skin hue.

'As art reveals introspective aspects of ourselves, so too can it challenge our usual frame of references and provide us with rich visual sources to contextualise, explore, discuss and question taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs about race'

Whilst Báez confronts historical and sociological context, Jamaican visual artist Ebony Patterson challenges cultural imagery and media narratives. Her exhibition series *When they grow up* opposes racial misrepresentation of black American children. These photographic portraits are set in exuberant, bold, joyful colours with glitter, beads and familiar childhood toys. Patterson conjures a celebratory feel, reclaiming childhood innocence and visibility through expressions and wording such as 'worthy'. These innocent black children are memorialised; juxtaposed against a surface riddled with bullet-like holes. Patterson addresses the systemic brutality black children face, such as 12-year-old Tamir Rice, whose name appears on toy brick as a tragic reminder of how a toy gun in the hands of a black child is misinterpreted, resulting in being shot by police. The artist contests the hegemonic stereotypes of 'black' identities being associated with loss of innocence and guilt.

Similarly, the photographer and street artist JR challenges stereotypes of young black males with his *Portraits of a Generation, Ladj Ly*. JR armed a black youth with a video camera, provoking the viewer and playing as though the camera is a gun. He has assumed the hegemonic stereotype of being deviant and hyper-masculine. We see an individual acting a part, aware of the stereotypical assumptions and media representation, and confronting the viewer to question beyond their initial interpretation of a young black man holding a gun. The split-second misinterpretation deserves further interrogation, opening questions around implicit assumptions and the representation of racial identity. With this, JR questions the construction of black youth as problematic; the systemic categorising of beliefs and cultural behaviours.

American artist Kehinde Wiley offers a different perspective to JR with his *New Republic* paintings. Wiley empowers 'black' individuals whom historically had been omitted from cultural narratives. His male models are posed to replicate and replace royalty or ancient mythological characters from imperial Western tradition. They wear contemporary urban clothing, their own cultural capital rather than suits normally associated with power and privilege. Instead of creating stereotypical images of homogenised, hyper-masculine males, he gives his models individuality, solitude, gentleness and grace. He raises the status of these men, their unavoidable presence and personhood through realism and monumentality, and reclaims a new position for black men in the history of representation and politics of racial identity.

These are but a few examples of artists that we, as educators, can utilise to critique histories, reframe and challenge implicit racialised assumptions. Through our resolute openness, development of our critical consciousness and racial literacy, art can give us agency in creative anti-racist praxis. ■

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**Above left** *Ebony G. Patterson. EP16 ...they were just boys...(...when they grow up...)*, at Studio Museum. Beads, appliques, fabric, glitter, ribbons, and adhesive on digital print on hand-cut matte photo paper, with hand-embellished plastic toy guns. Photo by Adam Reich. Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago. © Ebony G. Patterson, 2016

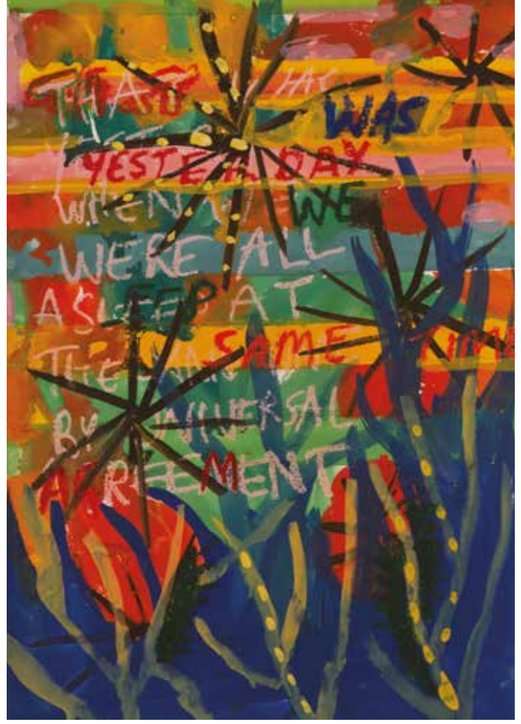
**Left** *1a. Oblivious*, 2019, from *Being white* series. Paper, thread, watercolour. Courtesy of Peggy Diggs

**Above** *Portrait of a Generation, Hold-up, Ladj Ly* by JR, Les Bosquets, Montfermeil, 2004. Courtesy of JR

# In conversation

# Sophie Herxheimer

*In conversation with deputy general secretary of NSEAD* ***Sophie Leach****, award-winning writer, artist and poet* ***Sophie Herxheimer*** *reveals the inspirations behind her many artistic and literary projects, and discusses how family and heritage have influenced her work*




**Sophie Leach:** Can you share a bit about your background and how your family and heritage has influenced your work?

**Sophie Herxheimer:** I'm in a continuum of quite a colourful background and foreground. I grew up in South London, not far from where I live now. My mother, Susan Collier, was a textile designer and, together with her sister Sarah Campbell, created some of the most iconic printed textiles of the late twentieth century. My dad was a pharmacologist. He came to London aged 12 with his sister and parents in 1938, after escaping Nazi Germany.

Both my parents were Jewish and, whilst that was never mentioned, there was a cultural flavour to my childhood that felt more continental than English. My parents separated when my sister and I were kids. Our mum lived in a bohemian world of chatter and clutter and fury and laughter; pattern and paint raised us. Both parents were subversives in many ways and certainly unconventional. They were both incredible grafters and absorbed in the ways they could add their particular vision to this world. Colour, in nature and in art, was my mother's abiding interest and I am so grateful that I am similarly thrilled by it – I know my Scarlet Lake from my Alizarin Crimson and my Swallowtail from my Brimstone.

Language fascinated my dad. He spoke at least five languages and was a compulsive and terrible punner in all of them. My poetry, with its games and experiments, is strongly related to this obsession in him, though he was not in the slightest lyric in temperament but a committed rationalist. Nobody in my family suffered fools gladly and it was a hard place in which to be a directionless fool, which is something I have certainly been on and off over the years. Being ignored can make one resourceful and in the era when I grew up it could make one quite a keen reader, artist and writer. My kids have also shaped me, which is what I mean by foreground.

> 'Our mum lived in a bohemian world of chatter and clutter, and fury and laughter – pattern and paint raised us'

Your poems are artful and your artworks are often inspired by fairy tales, storytelling and conversations. How has such a flourishing relationship between words and images come about?

I always loved books and print and, of course, I still do. Books are an escape and in them words and pictures can behave in similar or parallel ways. Books contain parades of images, images and ideas to pile up in one's mind, page after page, making impossible things real, making time stand still or fly. I was always thrilled with old books like Andrew Lang's fairy tale anthologies, where you had to thirst for a picture and when it appeared it would have a line lifted from the text underneath. Fairy tales are an endless source material and open to any amount of interpretation, like collective dreams. I love their creaky world of cardboard, gold and glass. There is a lot of down-to-earth horror and absurdity in them, where people are slain, then put back together – phew! The peasant gets the last laugh on the king or a girl vanquishes evil with the advice of a doll.

The project of listening and collecting peoples' true stories live in ink has evolved gradually through many projects and residencies. I've become skilled as a listener, largely thanks to my kids. My son has learning difficulties and autism and it took the most dedicated listening to help him acquire ▶

**Opposite** Sophie Herxheimer in the Peleh Residency Studio, Berkeley, California. Photo by Geoffrey Biddle

**Above left** *River of impossible relationships* (collage, ink, gouache), 2020

**Above right** *Cactus family*, 2020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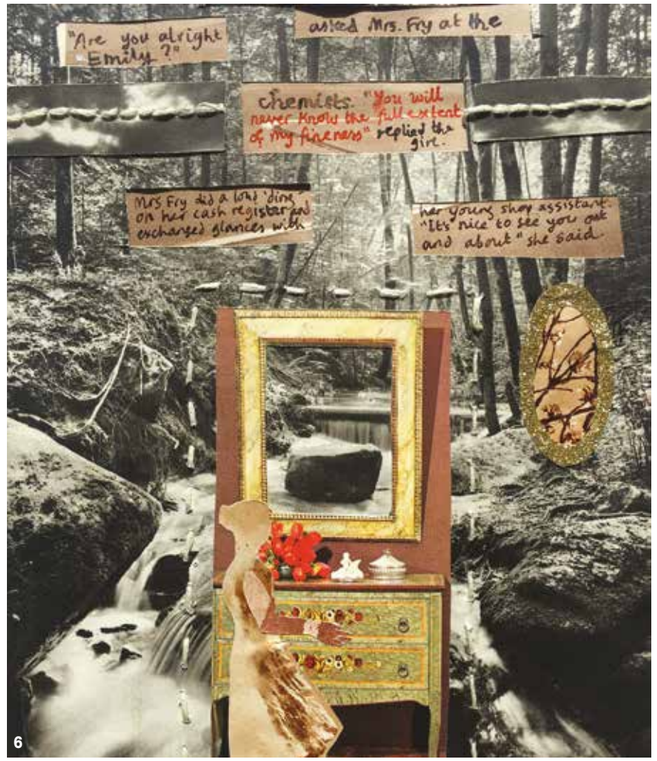


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language. We also often made little books together when he was growing up, trying to draw and piece together words for what was happening. We made puppets that could help explain things in their small (unthreatening) voices. The fact that I grew up drawing every day means that I'm very quick at it. The combination of being able to picture stories and draw fast, together with the practice of listening, meant that I could trust myself to collaborate with strangers in the depiction of their real experiences.

The more I did this, the keener my ear became for the particular words they'd choose, and the harder I'd listen for the images revealed within their streams of narrative. These were often metaphors for who they really were or are – a silver knife found on a beach, a rose blooming strong from the nourishment of slaughterhouse blood next door, a mountain of brownies! This threw me further into poetry, which I've always loved as well. I used poetry workshops to mend the inarticulate gaps that had nibbled through me like the rancid moths of 'what's all this' from art school. I found that writing and reading poems was also the only way I could process the feelings around my son's disabilities, my mother's cancer and death, loss, change, grief and all the usual difficult human stuff.

**You teach in both the Poetry School and Royal Drawing School in London? Do you use any of the same teaching approaches for each subject?**

Yes. I try to create an atmosphere in which play and experiment are tools to unlock/unblock the imagination. I use quite simple and loose exercises to get people writing poems and making books. Observation and listening are the obvious ways in – so are formal constraints. I love collage as a path to visual art making. It can be used to make both poems and wordless pieces and allows for the use of colour and texture which can literally add layers of meaning. It's also a superb foil to 'going wrong' – the throwaway nature of it, the cyclic nature of it. Round and round we go, making things out of rubbish. Art and poetry are all about transformation after all. I emphasise an approach in which mistakes are the stepping-stones and perfection is not the goal. I'm all for making a space for uncertainty and negative capability. Ideas bloom in wasteland and gaps.

**At a time when students, educators, schools and universities are increasingly judged on examinations and 'performance', what a joy it is to hear 'uncertainty' described as a quality, a space where ideas bloom. For a young person, or a learner who might be fearful of these gaps and the uncertainty of the blank page, what advice would you give them?**

My advice to learners might be similar regardless of the stage they are at. We are all beginners again at the dawn of every day. There is never anything wrong with what we do if we can allow ourselves to be led by a desire to discover, play or respond. We should respect the materials too, letting ourselves be led by materials towards ideas rather than trying to have ideas alone with a blank page. I think trying to please others or second-guess what they want is an unfortunate trap and can create blocks to the creative process.

Confidence in one's innate imagination can be built by using materials, constraints and observation. This helps take the burden of responsibility and ego from the budding maker, so that they can lean into and become absorbed by a process of responding rather than trying to create an outcome. There must be room made for flexibility, spontaneity and patience with one's own uselessness and inadequacy.

If one is writing a poem, it helps to imagine a reader, even if that reader is just a different part of oneself. I separate myself into different aspects and get the constituent parts to look at each other's work. I ask myself ridiculous questions like, 'what would you do if this was YOUR painting?' (when it IS my painting!). The reader part of myself has read a lot of poems and knows the pitfalls of abstract knowns, cliché or editorialising. If she too is given a coffee and respect, she can sometimes be quite a good editor to the poet part of me. I also think it is a great help for an artist to have even just a couple of friends, peers or allies who they trust. My main aim in making work is to make something alive. My main question as I look at my work or someone else's, whether it's a sculpture or a painting or a papercut or a poem, is 'is it alive?' For something as dead as a piece of paper to emit energy, there sometimes needs to be a mistake in it, a trace of the workings or something unbidden. Works which 'add up' may leave nothing for the reader or looker to find or supply for themselves. Looking at something that one can understand

**'I used poetry workshops to mend the inarticulate gaps that had nibbled through me like the rancid moths of 'what's all this' from art school'**

can be momentarily satisfying but mystery is a more effective hook for the long game.

**You collaborate extensively and have an ongoing project of collecting stories with people, live with ink? Can you describe the process of exchange and co-creation?**

It's true that the story collecting relies on collaboration and sharing stories in real time. It also has a performative aspect to it. People love to watch the drawing appear in front of their very eyes. The performing of poetry is something I love to do. My mother's mother was an actress and that is something I grew up with too, a shamelessness and lack of inhibition about getting up and using my voice. People always called me a show off and I'm trying to own it. I mean, obviously I get nervous and worry that I have nothing to add or that I'm going on a lot (and look, I'm doing it now) but historically there have just been too many centuries of trying to get women to sit down and shut up. Speaking and listening are both essential tools, ▶

**1** *You're an artist now,* from Index, a series of collage poems published by zimZalla

**2** Kitchen sink papercut, from *Velkom to Inklandt; poems in my grandmother's Inklisch*

**3** A painted memoir in progress from *Oh My Painted Days*

**4** *Yellow Flowers Multiply at a Greater Rate even than Viral Droplets* (gouache, ink, oil pastel, collage), 2020

**5** Work in progress at the Peleh Residency Studio, Berkeley. Photo by Geoffrey Biddle

**6** Collage poem about Emily Dickinson from the book *Your Candle Accompanies the Sun*



> 'My main question as I look at my work or someone else's, whether it's a sculpture or a painting or a papercut or a poem, is 'is it alive?"

for you, for me and for that bright blackbird in the tree, and what is more wonderful than being seen and heard?

I've had many excellent opportunities to collaborate. I have learned a great deal about story from Sally Pomme Clayton, who is a storyteller, writer and friend. We've made four books together so far and are going to be working on one about goddesses for the History Press next year.

In the context of story and theatre, I've also made work with and for The Unicorn Theatre, which pleased me no end as I'd gone to shows there as a child. And recently I've been working with Marina Warner on her memoir *Inventory of a Life Mislaid: An Unreliable Memoir*, which came out in March 2021. I'm also proud to say that I'm getting involved with the organisation she set up to support refugees in Palermo called Stories in Transit, which offers story-telling workshops in the UK and in Palermo, bringing young migrant students together with artists, writers and musicians.

I co-taught a course on William Blake at The Poetry School with poet Chris McCabe and we were commissioned to make a book in response to Blake, for small press Hercules Editions.

**Top** *Welcome to the Land of Mistakes and Ideas* (collage, gouache and ink on paper), 2020
**Above** Stories collected live in ink

We wrote poems and made collages and *The Practical Visionary* appeared in 2018.

All the residencies and projects I have undertaken have involved collaboration. After lonely times trying to get somewhere on my own with painting, at art college and after, I have found it a relief to get to know people with whom ideas and work can be shared, discussed and expanded upon. I think I needed this too because having a child with disabilities was immensely isolating, difficult and also extremely full time.

Having said this, during my most recent residency in California, I found total solitude to be transformative and deepening as it gave me a much-needed time to go inside myself and make work that I had no knowledge of, no project guidelines for and no real parameters. It was like falling off a cliff and landing amongst perfumed flowers. I painted and explored colour in a way that I never have before and surprised myself with some new ways and depths of writing.

Connections with others include those with readers and viewers of the work, as well as the admired or remembered dead (mum! Emily Dickinson! Basquiat! Goncharova!). Collaborations ultimately keep the work and the doing of it alive.

**And finally; ink or paint? Which comes with you on your desert island?**

I imagine I'll be able to make inks on my desert island, possibly paint as well. I'll just keep hoping that there are pigments in the plants and stones, and binders in tree resin or other naturally occurring glues. It will be full-on experimentation. So, the answer is perhaps a limitless supply of paper and notebooks which I feel might be more of a faff to construct! ■

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# Vincent's treasures

*Following its renovation, Van Gogh House in Brixton, South London, has become a rich resource for cross-curricular learning opportunities, particularly for* ***Lucy Hall****, arts leader at nearby Reay Primary school.* ***Lucy*** *and* ***Janet Currier****, special projects manager, describe the ongoing collaboration between the school and Van Gogh House*

**Van Gogh House, Brixton, is on the same road as Reay Primary school, where I have worked for many years. I've walked past it often and been fascinated by the house with the blue plaque where Vincent Van Gogh once lived. I watched with avid interest as the house was bought and renovated, and visited as soon as it became open to the public.**

I was therefore thrilled to learn, on contacting the house to see if they'd be interested in making links with Reay, that they were keen to begin developing an educational programme. It was exciting to meet with Janet Currier, special projects manager, and Livia Wang, creative director, to learn more. The building has been sensitively renovated and is now a beautiful, contemporary space which still maintains an authentic sense of times past. ▶

**Top** Van Gogh house. Photography by Tom Parsons, © Van Gogh House
**Right** Inside 87 Hackford Road

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During the renovation, many objects and artefacts were discovered, and both Janet and Livia tell engaging stories of their previous residents, such as James Wigmore, a young boy who lived in the house from 1858-61. Under the floorboards of what was to become Vincent's room just over a decade later, James left a treasure trove of items including hand painted playing cards, tin toys and pages of handwriting practice with rousing sayings such as 'Embrace every opportunity of acquiring knowledge'. Clearly, Van Gogh house was a rich resource for a wide range of cross-curricular learning opportunities just waiting to be utilised.

Our initial meetings comprised of exciting brainstorming sessions in which many possibilities for educational projects were considered. We decided on an initial pilot workshop; an all-day session with a mixed age group of year 6 (ages 10-11) and year 1 (ages 5-6) pupils, beginning with a tour of the house. The children were captivated by stories of past residents and were thrilled to explore the house and its unusual art works and objects. A highlight was getting to lift the floorboard where James hid his 'time capsule'.

Later, we returned to school where the children made their own contemporary time capsules while using techniques from the Victorian times. This included writing contemporary sayings using ink dipping pens, painting and writing postcards for children of the future, and making toys and games from paper and clay. Soon after we ran a teacher's evening with a tour of the house and a colour mixing workshop, taking inspiration from artist Kate Bright and her beautiful paintings that were exhibited at the time. The teachers were also lucky enough to enjoy a talk by the artist herself. This was an invaluable opportunity for staff to relax and reflect in a very special setting, and led to much discussion about the importance of teaching creatively and the sharing of ideas for cross-curricular lessons linked to the history of the house.

We felt that the pilot had been a real success and were keen to expand the programme further, developing our range of workshops and reaching out to more schools and the wider community. It was fantastic to have Lucy Swanson, manager of the Oval Learning Cluster (OLC), to help. OLC brings local school communities together to achieve wider opportunities

> 'The children were captivated by stories of past residents and were thrilled to explore the house and its unusual art works and objects'

for pupils and families. Lucy has been key to our partnership from the outset and her extensive knowledge of fund raising and writing bids has been crucial in developing our programme, now called 'Vincent's Treasures'.

We received our Lottery funding for the programme in September, which will enable Janet and I to commit more time and resources to the project. Despite the ever-changing Covid-19 situation, we've carried out two further workshops at Reay with years 5 and 6 (ages 9-11), incorporating activities as diverse as button making, reciting and writing poetry, and reading and creating maps. Sadly, we have not been able to take these pupils to visit the house but Janet has still taken them there through her captivating stories of its history. We were also able to develop a 'Learning Area' on the Van Gogh House website, full of ideas to do at home or in the classroom.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the project has been a great success and I'm sure it will continue to flourish. For me personally, it has been a real privilege to spend so much time in this wonderful place and to work alongside such creative and capable people. Working together, we have got this project up and running. Long may it continue. ■

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**1** Inset workshop with teachers of Reay Primary School with artist Kate Bright

**2** Objects found under the floorboards at 87 Hackford Road

**3** Livia Wang chats with year 1 and year 6 pupils at Van Gogh House

**4** Creating artwork in response to Keat's poem to Autumn and Van Gogh's paintings

**5** Ceramic buttons made during a year 5 workshop

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## Janet Currier,
## special projects manager

When Van Gogh House opened to the public in June 2019, we wanted it to be a focus for learning and research, and to support living artists to make work. Part of that mission was to provide learning opportunities for local school children and families, especially those who might find it difficult to access arts and heritage due to economic hardship and social exclusion. Our big advantage was Van Gogh 's story. He's an artist that people from all walks of life can connect to. We knew that it would be easy to engage children in that story – if only we had the resources and expertise.

There were many challenges. We are a small organisation, with the equivalent of one paid worker and a very dedicated creative director. We are a private organisation so attracting money from the public sector or charity is also difficult. So we were very lucky that Lucy Hall from Reay Primary and Lucy Swanson from Oval Learning Cluster approached us wanting to develop education work with us. Both have a wealth of experience in creating imaginative and engaging projects, and have connections with families, teachers and heads that were essential to get the project going. The project would never have been possible without the legal framework of OLC, which has meant we could raise funds.

Van Gogh House is small and fragile, which makes the format of school visits a challenge. But we've learned that the idea of the house and Vincent Van Gogh can, in themselves, be a starting point, wherever the school is located. Working through Covid-19 has, in any case, dashed any hope of children visiting. The upside has been that we have devised presentations that give a short, illustrated overview of the house, Vincent's Story and then an introduction into the themes of each workshop. Even if the children can't physically come to the house, they know all about it by the end of the session.

Lucy and I created a learning programme called 'Vincent's Treasures' and are building of a network of art specialist teachers. We've learned that our exhibition programme at VGH can have real relevance to teachers and enrich their professional development. The space away from school means that the insets have an away-day feel. Teachers get the chance to do something creative that perhaps isn't always on offer in inset sessions, which is also good for the artists. It brings them to a new audience and lets them see the application of their work.

The project has also been wonderful in enabling us to test out and develop new teaching materials, including some lasting downloadable resources that anyone can use in a classroom or at home. As an organisation we have learned a lot from Lucy and OLC. Each of us has a different expertise that has brought added value, not just in creating more arts-based learning opportunities for children and families, but by creating a lasting legacy by building infrastructure between teachers and schools. ■

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# Unlocking cultural capital

***Sarah Phillips**, chair of the NSEAD Special Interest Group for Cultural Capital and head of History of Art at Godalming College, argues that cultural capital can not only encourage teachers and pupils to find their own voice and sense of belonging but can offer a way to bring communities together*

**'Cultural Capital' was a term first coined by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in 1977 to describe the education, understanding and skills acquired by an individual, which are used to achieve economic advantage or social mobility. Bourdieu used the term to explore and explain the variations in performance and achievement of children in the French education system. In 2019, Ofsted added the phrase to their list of required achievements by schools, defining it as 'the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life'.**

Ofsted's new requirement for cultural capital is an interesting one. The idealist in me would like to see it as an implicit acknowledgement that we do, in fact, need 'things' (not in the materialistic sense) that show value over price. After decades of hollowing out our education communities under the charge of market competition and relentless data chasing, cultural capital can offer a way to bring our communities together. When the focus shifts from 'owning' to 'sharing', cultural capital can encourage each of us (teachers and students) to find our own voice and sense of belonging. Never has this been so important and never has art and design been more important.

Today, our understanding of what cultural capital is needs to be fluid and to suit our individual schools and cohorts. It must include ideas and inspiration from local, global and specific sources (across colour, creed, class and gender), as well as those traditionally covered in canonical studies. This means that we need to make sure that the phrase does not get turned into yet another box-ticking list which implies that everyone is (or will be) motivated by the same cultural capital.

In *Morality: Restoring the Common Good in Divided Times*, philosopher and theologian Jonathan Sacks writes of the need to rebalance our communities away from the 'I' and towards the 'we'. Perhaps more than any other departments in our schools, Art and Design offers an exciting way to do this. In Music and Drama, the individual is less than the whole, while in Art and Design, the individual is always different – restlessly seeking out new ideas, new solutions and techniques. There's no rote learning here, just a genuine education in those vital life lessons that sharing and working together means being part of a bigger whole rather than dominating a tiny, lonely puddle. At its best, cultural capital offers a way to find that hugely important sense of belonging. Since the pandemic we have acknowledged our need to be social and realised that creativity and imagination are just as important as grades in our humanity (and humility).

In 2019, NSEAD formed a Special Interest Group (SIG) for cultural capital. Its remit was to look at the term 'cultural capital' and particularly to explore the myriad of ways it is addressed by art educators, with the intention of offering ideas (and confidence) to all. Several members of the SIG had already worked on this topic as part of the Leeds University Cultural Capital Thinktank. That early initiative sought to define the term and break down the ways it could be linked to work in a range of education settings.

> 'Jonathan Sacks writes of the need to rebalance our communities away from the 'I' and towards the 'we"

Our Special Interest Group invited art educators to share ideas about what cultural capital looked like – or might look like – in their school or community. Across the UK and beyond, teachers have shared their conviction that cultural capital is important – and different – in all environments but that these ideas can and should be shared to motivate us all.

In Norwich, Amy Lee, art teacher and head of creative faculty at Hewett Academy, saw the potential of strong visual work inside her school to build community and increase access to cultural capital for all. Her ideas encapsulate our Thinktank's definition that cultural capital can both nurture inclusive communities and provide the curiosity and confidence to make connections from school to the wider world. She has been given the go-ahead to re-introduce both GCSE Photography and Graphics to her department. Quotes, from a diverse range of artists and thinkers, now fill her faculty's corridors (fig. 4), ensuring that this kind of cultural capital provocation does not become monotone or singular.

NSEAD itself is sharing a series of short films, all responding to a call out by the SIG to illustrate the myriad of ways cultural capital is, or could be, embedded in a breadth of educational establishments. These include:

**Colin Davis'** film *Curriculum Mapping* looks at how curriculum maps can reflect students' whole learning across their time at a Gloucestershire secondary school. Colin argues big picture thinking goes beyond the artificial limits of key stages, but recognises the need for multiple inspirations from cultures that were local, national and global.

**Shiva Zarabadi** in *Exploring fluidity of identity* (fig. 2) argues that cultural capital is profoundly affected by our understanding of relationships. She worked with groups of British Bangladeshi Muslim year 12 (ages 16-17) schoolgirls in North London to create photo diaries of moments, places and ideas that were important to them and could be used to explain their cultural heritage to others in a way that valued the exchange of experience rather than competing on a fixed cultural capital ladder. Shiva explains that the context of this study was affected by the participants' personal experience of the Prevent policy in school which led them to feel threatened by increased surveillance and restricted freedom of speech. The opportunities offered by a creative focus on Cultural Capital provide a legitimate way to explore and share the importance of family, religion and ritual.

**Kate Fellows** in *Cultural Capital and the Leeds Curriculum* argues that arts and cultures should be seen as a golden thread woven throughout the curriculum to bring a sense of pleasure and belonging. To this end, the resources offered by *mylearning.org* will be useful to many.

**Laura Drinkwater's** film, *Social and cultural capital*, examines how cross-curricular cultural learning and subject expertise have been used by her school to develop learner confidence.

**Sue Gibbons** in *Using a school trip to develop cultural capital* (fig. 1) shares her own experience of taking year 10 (ages 14-15) students from Malmesbury to the Kara Walker exhibition in the Tate Turbine Hall. She tackles the need to overcome the widespread fear of getting it wrong (for teachers), while her video explores ways of provoking a spirit of discovery in students and making their learning effective.

**Sandra Vacciana** in *Nurturing Cultural Capital with Partnership for Young London* speaks about the work of the charity, Partnership for Young London, and looks at the importance of understanding intersectionality in a school setting as a way to reduce inequality. She draws on the inspiration of Maya Angelou for building a sense of student responsibility and ability, and looks at the ways cultural capital can be used to boost both self-esteem and resilience.

**Anne-Louise Quinton** in *A Cultural Capital Sketchbook* participated in the Brooklyn Library Sketchbook Project, showing the wealth of cultural capital that comes from sharing. Her work emphasises the participation and belonging aspects of this concept, as well as demonstrating effectively how a cultural capital school project can span the whole curriculum and departments.

**Rebecca Glover** in *New Woodlands Cultural Capital: Art's Cool* talks to two of her 16-year-old students at the SEMH school in South East London about how their art experiences have enhanced their learning, their pleasure and their understanding of each other.

**Clare Stanhope's** *Conversation around Cultural Capital and Art* (fig.3) explores her ongoing journey through the world of art education and cultural capital. From the fundamental right of every individual child to explore their creativity, Clare looks at the knowledge, new challenges and gaps in the 'art adventure', in addition to the difference that cultural capital makes to our lives, industry and economy.

Thank you to every art educator for their films and case studies submitted. We hope that the conversations around cultural capital continue. ■

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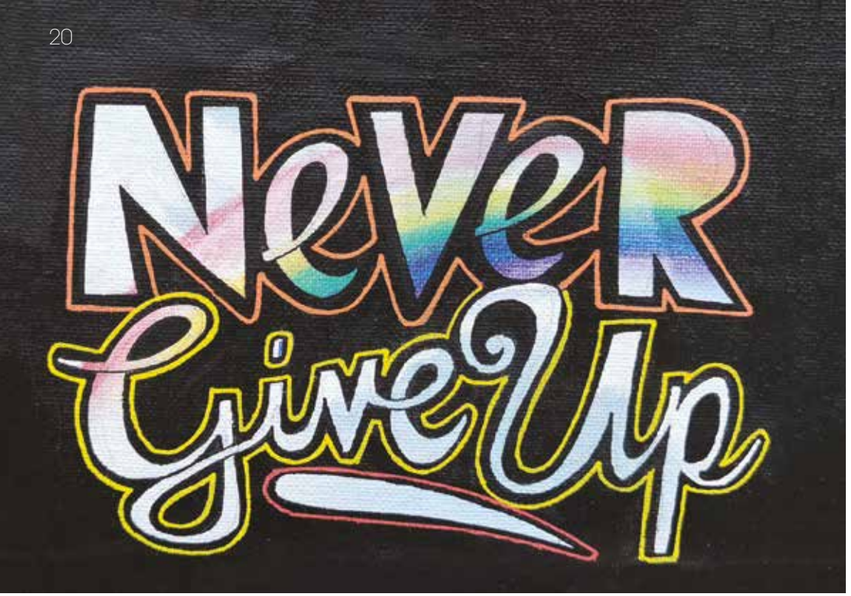
A selection of cultural capital films are available here in NSEAD's YouTube channel: bit.ly/3mvG7AT

NSEAD wishes to thank, Sarah Phillips, chair of the NSEAD Special Interest Group for Cultural Capital Group and all its members: Susan Coles, Sue Gibbons, Lolly Stewart-Thomas, Anne-Louise Quinton and Clare Stanhope





# Artful conversations, collaborations and change

***Honey Dearsley**, founder of The Art Hive, was a primary art and design teacher before becoming a freelance art educator and wellbeing collaborator. She describes, in a time of nationwide lockdown, how she returned to making her own art, with inspiration coming from unexpected online conversations*

**This time last year there were definitely days I woke up asking myself whether I was awake or in a dream. Minute by minute plans and expectations were changing, merging into one big blur. I wondered if I had accidentally zoomed down a rabbit hole by mistake, not unlike Alice in Wonderland. Everything I thought to be clearly defined in my life was turned upside down. If, at that time, I had been asked by a pipe-smoking blue caterpillar 'Who are you', I would have probably muted myself in confusion. Indeed, who in the world am I?**

In my pre-pandemic life, I had been a great many things. A confident, resilient, intuitive art teacher, as well as a mentor, volunteer, head of art at a great school and a gallery workshop facilitator. I had also just set up my new business The Art Hive, which offers art clubs to local school children. Following the start of the crisis, like many other freelance artists, I suddenly found myself displaced, isolated and struggling with staying safe at home, shielding my family whilst also desperate to connect, contribute, thrive and survive in an unfamiliar world. A global pandemic was closing in and this was not a dream. Our normal lives were about to be hijacked.

In my search for dialogue and distraction, I actively engaged with social media, flowing from one network to another. My posts got noticed and people's comments filled me with a sense of positivity, kindness and creative camaraderie. I had found a tribe, a Twitter campfire where there were no barriers, and a level platform where NSEAD existed next to educators, inspirational artists, wellbeing and mental health practitioners, authors and musicians. This was where art consultant *@TheArtCriminal*, BBC Life Hacks presenter Dr Radha Modgil, sat next to the extraordinary 'mouth artist' Henry Fraser and podcaster Giles Paley-Phillips. These were the kind people that kept me encouraged and lifted me up with a kind word or gesture, none more so than receiving tech support from the unstoppable spirit and artist Liz Atkins, who changed my despair into 'respair' .

However, whilst teachers, artists and practitioners changed course by adapting and reconfiguring plans for online teaching,

> 'Having the confidence to paint again, without judgement and for pleasure, is an acquired "wisdom without fear" that perhaps comes with experience'

**Top left** Lockdown mantra, 2020

**Above** Setting my voice into type with TYPETOM.com

**Right** Origami shadow play

I felt stuck in the mud. I was frozen by an internal monologue of self-doubt and hoping someone else would 'unstick' me. I didn't recognise myself except when I was making art, so the truth of Bob and Roberta Smith's words 'Make Your Own Damn Art' lit up like a beacon for me – I was born an artist, so that's exactly what I did.

In my role as a primary teacher and head of art in primary schools over the years, I had forgotten 'the artist teacher' balance, that illusive hybrid existence as both practitioner and educator. Most of my own art practice was unpacked on holiday or family days out. On reflection, I was just consumed with surviving life, grief, loss, parenting and teaching to really focus on progressing my own artistry. The days were full and that was enough, and I regarded teaching as my most important 'work of art'.

Like most things, making art requires practice. It takes a little bit every day until you get really good at it, and to improve you just need time, which I had ironically mismatched with fragile mental health and low self-worth. I missed purposeful work and I felt the grief, wanting to be productive but who for? How could making art support and help others?

I started by creating something every day to sew, craft, post or share with friends and followers. I listened to the daily government briefings and began a visual journal to document them. I sketched on Zoom, which I never knew was 'a thing' before lockdown. I illustrated the #ALittleBitOfPositive podcast, connected with nature, grew tomatoes and made my Neuro Ninja '12 Rocks of Wellbeing', suggested by Andrew Wright's Action Your Potential website. Empowering words and life affirming statements such as 'Adversity, Creativity, Victory' and 'Never Give Up' motivated me to print again, summarising how I felt we would all win through this pandemic.

My art was becoming my voice and I was beginning to draw, paint and print what I wanted to say. Having the confidence to paint again, without judgement and for pleasure, is an acquired 'wisdom without fear' that perhaps comes with experience. After years of not painting, I wasn't agonising over whether my paintings would be commercial, profitable or liked. I just loved the flow and the happy place it took me to where all track and trace of time disappeared. I was practising what I had preached for years to my students and turning my mistakes into successes.

My resilience and confidence started to return. With encouragement I began to make the leap into filming tutorials. The Watts Gallery – Artists' Village had offered me my first commission to create a video on collagraph printing. With this patronage and encouragement I found my teaching confidence again and have now completed several commissioned videos, including a Mini Pocket Watts Gallery!

Since then, I have created a variety of new online content for families, teachers and wellbeing forums. I am also most proud of collaborating with clinical psychologist Dr Hazel Harrison, devising an Origami Brain House, helping to support young people's mental health at this time and presenting online activities for professional educator networks on social media.

As I write this, a third lockdown is upon us and yet I feel stronger and better prepared to meet the challenges ahead. Like Alice, 'I can't go back to yesterday because I was a different person then', but I can look forward to the future with more creativity, collaboration and hope. ■

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# Our Curiosity Cart

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*Teaming up with artist community Bow Arts and designers Make: Good, students at Lansbury Lawrence Primary School in London were entrusted to design and create a project for the early years classes that would nurture curiosity and capture the essence of play.* ***Kerri Sellens****, assistant headteacher, describes the process*

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**What is curiosity and how can we nurture curiosity within schools? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, curiosity is 'a strong desire to know or learn something. Or an unusual or interesting object or fact.' At Lansbury Lawrence Primary School, we embarked on a project with Bow Arts and designers called Make: Good to embody this definition through the creation of the unique and wonderful Curiosity Cart.**

Lansbury Lawrence is located in Poplar, Tower Hamlets. We are a two-form entry community primary school with a large nursery. Our school was built as part of the Festival of Britain in 1951 and we are very lucky to be surrounded by exciting design and architecture. We're very proud of our creative offer and the arts are firmly embedded within our curriculum. We have established relationships with several local arts organisations, including the artist community at Bow Arts.

Each year, we join together with a consortium of local schools to commission a bespoke project through Bow Arts. In 2018-19, we knew we wanted to run a project led by our school arts council, who are made up of a group of pupils, aged 6-11.

We set up the arts council at Lansbury Lawrence a few years ago because we wanted to strengthen pupil voice within the arts. We wanted to develop young creative leaders; for our pupils to shape our arts curriculum. Pupils apply annually and it is very competitive. Last year there were 90 applications for 15 places. Pupils must explain why they want to join the arts council and how they think the arts could be improved within our school. Benefits include collaboration across phases, how the pupils take such pride in the responsibility, and developing confidence and problem-solving skills together.

We also knew we wanted our arts council to design a creative resource to inspire our youngest pupils. After initial conversations, Bow Arts gave us a shortlist of potential artists and designers who could help us realise our vision. Architecture and design studio Make: Good stood out on the list as the designers who would be the right fit for this project.

The arts council began the project by exploring the school environment and researching what our early years children liked to play with through going in to their classrooms, watching them play and interviewing them. They worked with Make: Good, undertaking a site analysis, exploring architectural scale, pattern and textures, and capturing what the resource would need to include. The designers from Make: Good were great at embracing the ideas the pupils were bringing to the table and created an atmosphere of professional collaboration.

After drawing designs and building small models, the design of the cart began to take shape. From research, the arts council knew it needed to be on wheels to move around, have a handle to push and pull it, be narrow enough to fit through doorways and sturdy enough to be used by children. It also needed to be lots of fun! The Curiosity Cart was to be a mobile junk modelling storage unit, with surprising accessories and multi-sensory activities included within the design. This included a spy cam periscope, a soundblaster and flying string shapes. It was empowering for the arts council to see their ideas beginning to take shape.

> 'By entrusting our pupils with the responsibility of design we have captured an essence of childhood, play and wonder'

The project included a visit to the Make: Good studio to see the Curiosity Cart in production. The students on the arts council helped with sanding the different components and gained an insight in to how designers work together and the different stages of the creative design process. Working with professional practitioners is always inspiring, and through this project our pupils learnt about teamwork, enabling the progression from initial ideas to the final product.

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The completed Curiosity Cart exceeded expectations and the arts council were incredibly proud of their creation. We now have a creative resource for our youngest children to use, explore through and create three-dimensional work. Curiosity can be satisfied through making something with the junk modelling materials stored within the cart and the actual vessel is both an unusual and interesting object in itself – full of fascinating curiosities at every angle. The final colour scheme was chosen to match our Peggy Angus tile mural in our reception area where the Curiosity Cart now lives. The resource has fitted right in and is a perfect way for our young pupils to begin their journey on our creative curriculum.

By entrusting our pupils with the responsibility of design we have captured an essence of childhood play and wonder. The Curiosity Cart is obviously and proudly created from the imaginations of children. Make: Good did an excellent job of encapsulating this integrity and we're grateful for their commitment to the project.

How else can we improve our learning environment if we enable children as the designers? This is something we continue to explore at Lansbury Lawrence and we're excited by the possibilities. ■

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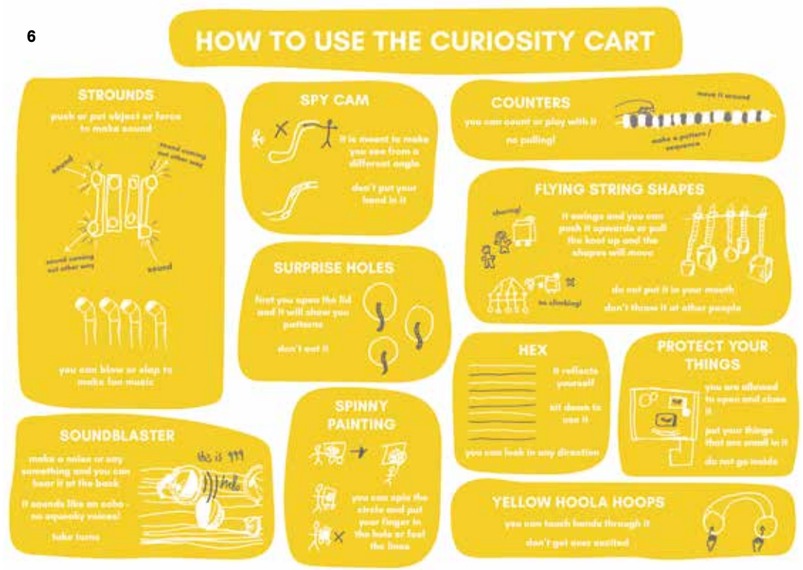


**1** Initial research. Interviewing younger pupils about what they liked to play with

**2** The finished Curiosity Cart

**3** Lansbury Lawrence arts council

**4** Sanding the cart components at the Make: Good studio

**5** Visiting the Make: Good studio to help with constructing the cart

**6** Instruction sheet

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# Planning, preparing and providing – what happened next?

*In 2016, the first Plan, Prepare, Provide: Art Teachers Residential course for art history educators at the University of Leeds was held. Five years on,* ***Anne-Louise Quinton****, freelance art education consultant,* ***Abigail Harrison-Moore****, professor of Art History and Museum Studies at the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, and* ***Dr Sarah Harvey-Richardson****, AFHEA, Outreach and Saturday Club project officer, offers an update on its progress and funding*

**In spring 2018, Sarah Phillips, head of History of Art at Godalming College and author of the Pearson A level History of Art specification, wrote a feature for *AD* magazine called *Art History: prepared, planned and provided* about a three-day residential course, set up in 2016 by the University of Leeds for art and art history teachers. She explored how art education had collectively responded to the 2016 loss and the subsequent re-birth of the Art History A level. She also looked at the crushing impact of the EBacc from which to develop, in partnership with the Association for Art History and Susan Coles, arts, creativity and educational consultant, a programme for teachers to work positively, creatively and supportively together.**

Now in its fifth year, the Plan, Prepare, Provide (PPP): Art Teachers Residential course has received further funding to enable us to continue to deliver PPP, for free, until 2024. The fundraising effort has required us to reflect on our achievements in partnership with over 100 teachers, and to evaluate the impact and plan for the future. This seems, therefore, a perfect moment to share further our learning and experience.

The residential course originally began as a one-day conference held at The School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies in 2014. By luck, one of the first participants was Anne-Louise Quinton, then an art and design teacher in Bradford, who shared how she brought art history into her art room. Thinking about how we might develop our teacher training to make it useful, current and, importantly, produce planning and resources, we asked Anne-Louise to curate the next conference. The key to its success was her ambition to enable teachers to reconnect with their practice as a part of thinking critically and creatively about their teaching. This was how PPP was born.

Since 2016, the residential course has offered fresh ideas, resources and opportunities to inject new ways of working for 30 teachers a year. The sessions are designed to share knowledge, be practical and interactive, and provide time to think like students, as well as share knowledge and skills with each other. The teachers are then able to take away ideas for practical projects that can be used as soon as they are back in their classrooms.

As art educators, we are all acutely aware of how exhausting the profession can be and how practical subjects bring extra workload and logistics. By July, art teachers have marked, standardised internally and dealt with the moderators – they are justifiably ready for a break. Watching them arrive at the School of Fine Art and settle into friendly conversation is only the start. We see new friendships bonding, shoulders untense and yawns turn into laughter. The teachers find inner strength and are rejuvenated. Before the first evening is over, they have created, played and participated, and become art students themselves again.

We have learnt much about what works (and what does not). One of our key revelations has been that if we 'make' (in the nicest way possible) teachers actively take part in the sessions, in the same way they expect their classes to engage, then we better understand what we ask our students to do everyday and how they feel, moving from initial panic through to experience and confidence. So many times we have heard 'I can't do this...' turn into 'wow, I did that'.

For example, we asked participants to take part in one of the university's Discovery days, developed for key stage 4 (ages 14-16), but equally as daunting and revealing for teachers attending the course. This involves preparing and delivering a group presentation in front of a professor, who then offers feedback. Perhaps more fun but equally as illuminating is Anne-Louise's session on how to bring a classical piece of sculpture to life and give its history value for the 21st-century art student. You can indeed link the ancient Roman statue of *The Dying Gaul* to Lady Gaga!

In 2020, when the first lockdown was announced, we wondered what we could do as a residential course on campus would not be possible. The idea of delivering PPP digitally was terrifying but we didn't want to let down our 70+ applicants. All of our PPP family deserved support, and delivering digitally meant that we could also invite our alumni to participate. Over three evenings in July 2020, therefore, when everyone was exhausted, we were reminded of the creativity, care and courage of our teachers.

In one online session we looked at how the work of artist Joana Vasconcelos made us think of the value of everyday objects, especially during the pandemic, and how we might rethink their status. By interacting with the teachers and getting them to make the same decisions they would ask their students to, we created cityscapes of cupboards and new gallery exhibitions. These were then given back as immediate resources for the teachers.

We learnt a great deal from the process and have launched digital PPP pop-up sessions for alumni to refresh and repair, starting with 'Stretching the Canvas' in January 2021. Aimed at helping teachers decolonise the art room, this session looked to embed inclusion, diversity and cultural capital into the art and design curriculum.

> 'The teachers find inner strength and are rejuvenated. Before the first evening is over, they have created, played and participated, and become art students themselves again'

To date, 115 teachers have engaged in PPP, with a combined average weekly student reach of over 20,000 pupils. Teachers have travelled from across the country to join us, and 2020's digital offer saw delegates attending from Nigeria and Moscow.

The year 2020 also saw us enhance our programme evaluation, including pre- and post-event questionnaires. We found that 94 per cent of participants rated the sessions 8/10 or higher, while 100 per cent of participants strongly agreed that PPP provided ideas and/or resources that they are going to deliver in their classroom, which cemented their desire to attend the residential in 2021. Post-PPP we saw a 36 per cent increase in participants who strongly agreed they feel valued as a teacher, and a 24 per cent increase in participants who strongly agreed they were interested in delivering the Art History A level in their school.

As one of the attendees Laura Stewart-Thomas, a subject co-ordinator for art, said: 'As a single person department for the best part of 15 years, it can feel creatively isolating at times. Finding the Plan, Prepare, Provide course in 2019 has given me a new energy for my own practice and teaching. This is a course that keeps on giving beyond the intensely-filled three days; a rich network of colleagues has been opened up to me, with whom I still share ideas (and struggles!) with regularly.'

Having secured funding from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, an educational charity that champions new ways of understanding British art history and culture, we have ensured the future of the course until 2024 and are very excited to be back on campus (if Covid-19 allows) in July 2021. We have also secured bursaries for six teachers a year to turn their PPP learning into a Postgraduate Certificate in Developing Teachers' Research and Practice from Leeds University. This programme was developed after our first PPP cohort spoke about the benefits of accreditation for career development, and our first participant-teacher graduated with a distinction in December 2020.

Our art teachers leave us, happy and hopeful, armed with new resources, skills and ways of thinking. They join a long line of brilliant art teachers who have become our PPP family and we are excited to see the research and thinking that our next generation of PPP graduates will produce. ■

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**1** PPP online 2020. Teachers drew objects that had become more important to them during lockdown, which were then presented back to the group in an online gallery

**2** Teachers were given only foil to create a sculptural work from an historical artwork selection

**3** PPP residential 2019. Art teachers creating a portion of the Parthenon frieze, as part of the 'become' sculpture' session

**4** PPP residential 2019. Post production Photoshop image shows how rapidly images can be manipulated and enhanced

**5** An extensive printing workshop session, by the expert technicians, is offered on the course


# Liz Macfarlane
## president of NSEAD

*As an art and design consultant, a member of the expert subject advisory panel for Ofqual and now president of NSEAD, **Liz Macfarlane** applauds how the NSEAD community has risen to the challenges of last and this year, and argues that the curriculum should be used to support pupils' mental health and wellbeing*

**I have never had a career plan. Everything I have done professionally has been a response to circumstances at the time or a leap of faith. I see myself as very fortunate as I have ended up being involved in all sorts of interesting, challenging and valuable pieces of work, all the time keeping faith with my core belief that high-quality art, craft and design education is a fundamental right for everyone.**

I can't remember a time when I haven't been engaged in one form or another of drawing, painting, stitching and making. All through secondary school my sole (or should it be soul!) desire was to go to art college. The progression to becoming an art educator was the result of signing up for the PGCE course to keep my parents happy when, during my final year at Loughborough College of Art and Design, they started to inquire about my employment intentions. Neither of my parents went into higher education – they both went straight into jobs on leaving school, taking professional qualifications as they went. It was during my first placement in a notoriously challenging school that I discovered that I really enjoyed working with young people and could see the difference to lives that teaching art, craft and design can make. What was initially an exercise in appeasing my parents resulted in a lifelong commitment to art, craft and design education.

Photo © Casper

I didn't leave classroom teaching because I stopped enjoying it but because I was offered the opportunity to support, promote and celebrate the subject that I love in a national role working for the Schools, Students and Teachers network (SSAT). The concept of schools using curriculum areas of strength to drive whole school improvement and increase community engagement with arts education fitted my educational philosophy. I fundamentally believe that a good education has the arts at the heart of it. My job entailed supporting schools to apply for and retain their specialist status, working with the headteachers steering group, liaising with arts and educational stakeholders, identifying and disseminating best practice, and organising CPD and conferences. When the coalition government came to power in 2010, the concept of specialism was quickly overthrown without any formal evaluation of impact, leading to redundancy for all of the curriculum-based staff at SSAT. However, my time there opened the door to a range of opportunities and I have since engaged with visual arts education in many different capacities. It has been, and still is, a great privilege to work with so many dedicated and inspirational educators across all of my different roles, which have taken me into hundreds of different schools and art departments, seeing visual arts education from multiple viewpoints.

Watching the arts fall from favour through policy changes and curriculum reform over the last decade has been heartbreaking. The squeeze on curriculum time for arts subjects since the introduction of the 2014 national curriculum in England is a travesty. Scotland has also undertaken major curriculum and assessment reform through the introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and all across the UK art teachers have had to battle to justify the merit and value of art and design. For the current cohort of children and young people, the Covid-19 pandemic has also snatched away part of their entitlement to experience all that our subject has to offer. While some young people will have thrived creatively during the periods of lockdown, too many have missed out. Even with schools open, many teachers have faced massive challenges of the reality of delivering the curriculum in non-specialist rooms, often with limited resources and equipment at their disposal, further limiting opportunity. We have a massive job as art educators to bridge gaps of attainment and opportunity when normality is finally fully re-established, never mind addressing the mental wellbeing agenda that our subject can contribute massively to.

It's times like this that make me really proud to be a member and now president of NSEAD. I have served on council and as vice president and president elect and can safely say that what the Society has achieved over a very short time span during the most difficult of times has been quite astonishing. As well as managing increased demand to support members, switching to online working practices, bringing our community together and growing the membership through digital conferencing and the new website, we have contributed to discussions with policy makers in response to the ever-changing educational demands. Throughout, I have been working with and chairing the Examinations Special Interest Group (SiG), meeting regularly and often at short notice, to discuss issues, respond to consultations and ultimately shape NSEAD's standpoint in response to changes to examination arrangements. Our voices matter and make a difference.

'We have a massive job as art educators to bridge gaps of attainment and opportunity when normality is finally fully re-established, never mind addressing the mental wellbeing agenda that our subject can contribute massively to'

Writing the textbook for the International AS and A level really required me to think beyond my own experience of art and design education in a much more culturally diverse and sensitive way. I was challenged to confront my thinking and learned a great deal from the process. So, during 2020 when the Society responded to the tragic events triggered by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the Black Lives Matters protests, I saw it as a privilege to be invited to contribute to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of NSEAD's work, supporting anti-racist art education. The Society responded by making a series of pledges in relation to challenging and eliminating racism across the organisation and set up the Anti-racist Art Education Action (ARAEA) Group to steer the work and ensure that pledges translate into actions that underpin all of NSEAD's work and permeate across all aspects of visual arts education. I also represent the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work on F&GP, the executive board of NSEAD.

Covid-19 has devastated lives but any tragic event inevitably presents opportunity for self-reflection and meaningful change. NSEAD members have proved what a community can do, whether it be sign-posting quality online resources for home schooling, taking inspiration from attending virtual conference and CPD events, writing materials for the Oak Academy, responding to the debate and discussion around examinations and grading or to world events, or coming together to support each other and challenge the status quo. Moving forward, as the UK recovers from the pandemic, I would like to think that greater value will be given to our subject's place within the curriculum in terms of supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, as well as in its own right. I would like to see art educators across all settings looking for opportunities to reassess their curriculum offer as they implement recovery strategies, making it responsive to young people's emerging needs and representative of the values that NSEAD promotes.

I have taken over the presidency at an exciting time for NSEAD. The pandemic saw the Society accelerate plans to implement a 'digital first' strategy and is now bringing on board new officers to increase support for the growing membership and online presence. As it grows, I hope to see the Society extend its reach across all four nations of the UK, building new audiences and conversations to ensure all communities, locally, nationally and even internationally, can access and thrive through and in our subject. ■

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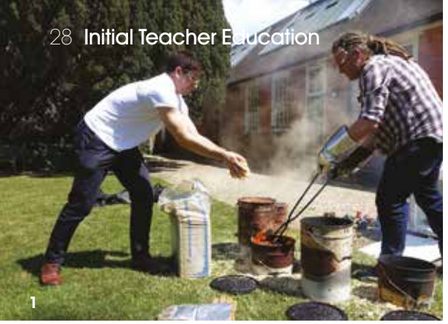
**Liz Macfarlane** is a freelance art and design education consultant, working with primary and secondary schools and academies across the country to provide support and bespoke CPD. She is a visiting tutor for a SCITT provider, is on the expert subject advisory panel for Ofqual and she holds the Professional Qualification for School Inspectors and has inspection experience with Ofsted. Liz is also the Chair of Governors of a Leicestershire primary school.

As the former National Specialism Coordinator, Visual and Media Arts for Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, Liz oversaw a network of 560 arts colleges. She has been a senior GCE moderator for a leading awarding body and lead practitioner for Applied Art and Design as well as a subject and faculty leader in Leicestershire secondary schools. Additionally, she is co-author of the *Cambridge International AS & A Level Art and Design Student's Book*. She continues to enagage in her own art practice.



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# Seeds and Stitches

**1** Raku firing workshop with Grant Pratt of Blue Matchbox Gallery

**2** A secondary art teacher trainee and her final 'seed'

**3** Felt-making with three special schools on campus

**4** Years' 3 and 4 creative, collaborative pieces of felt, working with year 2 art specialist trainee teachers

**5** Yarn sculptures – student collaborations

**Below** A university tutor's raku-fired 'seed of diversity'

*Keen to enhance inclusive and diverse approaches in art and design education, BAEd and PGCE primary art pathway lead **Suzy Tutchell** and **Mel Jay**, secondary art lead, both at the Institute of Education, University of Reading, came up with two cross-phase projects to promote collaboration between partner schools, trainee students and teachers, whilst recognising wellbeing and mindfulness as a consideration for the current times*



**At the University of Reading's Institute of Education, we have a vibrant and inspiring art department used by staff and students across all phases of art education. We are very fortunate to work with fantastic, top-of-the-range facilities which have helped to instil and maintain a proactive, dynamic and contemporary art-based culture for our courses and programmes. We actively engage with and inspire participation from students and staff across all our teacher training programmes, in order to make vivid and real the expressive wonders of art and design education. As art and design tutors working with both primary and secondary trainee teachers, we were keen to devise projects to enhance cross-phase, inclusive and diverse approaches, modelling good practice for our partnership schools.**

With the help of internal funding from the university, we rolled out two projects over two years: Seeds of Diversity and Stitches in Time: Inclusive Threads of Learning.

Seeds of Diversity was an ambitious and enriching initiative, drawing together the University of Reading's community of teachers and learners to produce a collaborative and evolving sculptural installation. The project celebrated the university's roots and growth over the past 90 years and reflected future aspirations. Sculptural ceramic seeds were created over ten months and planted within the campus grounds as an installation and a final cross-disciplinary celebration at the end of the academic year.

Seeds of Diversity is now a prominent feature of our campus grounds, showcasing hundreds of individually designed ceramic seed pods created by partnership schools, staff, students, pupils, community groups and visitors. The creation of the pods was overseen by us as art and design technology tutors and inspired by contemporary ceramic practice. Participants were invited to sculpt a seed in clay or to decorate a ready-made form with a design which reflected their connection to the university.

The workshops also involved our ceramicist-in-residence Sue Mundy. Sue, who is a prestigious artist in the world of ceramics and an integral part of our ongoing vibrant artist-in-residency programme at the IoE, enriched the process further with her professional expertise and knowledge base. The project naturally evolved over the duration of the year in response to a widening community interest stemming from our initial workshops. This development included working with Grant Pratt, a local raku expert and owner of the Blue Matchbox Gallery in Tilehurst. Two raku firings provided participants with the opportunity to experiment with glazing and firing their pods in an outside kiln – this was a magical experience for all involved, even on the coldest of days. 'It was like a multi-sensory experience, the smell of the wood and burning materials was evocative of a smoke-house in Whitby!' said Andrew Happle, lecturer in science education.

As Brian Murphy, former head of art of the Piggott School in Wargrave, remarked, 'Raku is all about community, and as the clay transformed and the bisque reached a new stage, the bond of the people in the group grew closer. It was an equalising activity as all ages and abilities learnt together.'

The legacy and impact of the project has been rewarding for all involved. One university tutor commented, 'Every time I arrive in the mornings, no matter the weather, it's such a treat to see the pods dotted around the campus and remember their creative beginnings.' Importantly, the cross-phase project lives on as new students and visiting pupils continue to add their pods to the evolving installation.

> 'The participants, and particularly our trainee teacher students, learnt how to become accepting, respectful and patient, working at each other's pace and appreciating diverse responses'

Building on the success of our Seeds adventure, we launched our second cross-phase project called Stitches in Time: Inclusive Threads of Learning. Over the past two years we have seen an increase in the number of students with a variety of needs and, more recently, mental health issues. This sensory and somatic textile-based project offered a learning 'space' and teaching environment which recognised an inclusive, mindful and wellbeing approach. We explored tactical, visual and therapeutically rich opportunities for individuals to achieve and demonstrate their full potential, whilst responding to their individual needs.

As future teachers, we feel it is vital that all our trainee students have the opportunity to work with young people of all abilities. This peer-teaching project offered a unique opportunity for students to be immersed in an inclusive creative project where they worked alongside each other and pupils from partnership schools. The project also recognised that people bring a wide array of skills and interests which they have gained from all sorts of experiences in their lives to date, regardless of their particular circumstances. The participants, and particularly our trainee teacher students, learnt how to become accepting, respectful and patient, working at each other's pace and appreciating diverse responses. The collaborative-textile project aimed to be both democratic and peer supportive, requiring the participants to contribute as whole-heartedly as possible, without fear.

Students and staff from across our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes worked with partnership schools – primary, secondary and SEN institutions – over the course of the year. Activities included yarn-bombing, story sticks, branch weaving and felt making. Due to Covid-19, the project was brought to a premature close but we have every intention of reigniting it when restrictions lift. Our aspiration is to replicate the success of our Seeds installation and curate an evolving and diverse textile installation made up of participants' individual work. The textile installation will be another living legacy of our cross-phase creative approach to art and design in education. ■

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# Online MOOCs on art and feminism


***Katy Deepwell**, editor of KT press/n.paradoxa and professor of Contemporary Art, Theory and Criticism at Middlesex University, explains why she developed her mass open online course on feminism and contemporary art, and reveals how her specific style of MOOC was designed to appeal to university lecturers, independent artists and teachers alike*

**Why did I develop a MOOC (a mass open online course) on feminism and contemporary art for art educators? As a feminist art critic and professor, this was an experiment in online feminist pedagogies as student interest remained high in the fourth wave of feminism(s). The online learning model I adopted approaches FemTechNet's model of DOCCs (Distributed Open Collaborative Courses).[1]**

MOOCs have many different features and vary in quality, as well as differing in the actual tutor or technical support offered. As distance learning, the world's universities and educational companies (dominated by the USA) have built many MOOCs as bespoke credit-bearing courses. The survey course of A-level art history and first year BA degrees was an obvious candidate for an institutional accredited MOOC, but this model is not prominent in the UK with the exception of the Open University. With the switch to online learning in the pandemic, some MOOCs now appear close to modules delivered through virtual learning environments and 'live' video classrooms. A standard MOOC consists of pre-recorded video lectures with discussion forums and quizzes/tests for students to learn at their own pace and time.

In the commercial market, MOOCs are training programmes mimicking printed textbooks as instructional technical learning and offered in bite-size chunks with try-it-yourself exercises. Access courses in digital photography, video editing or computer coding predominate. Self-education in the arts also includes MOOCs for arts administration or curating echoing 'short courses' in higher education, including business education and language learning. Outside formal education, technically savvy self-motivated learners are far from the reality and the high abandonment of online courses is widely acknowledged as a problem. Hence, 'gamification' incentivises completion through badges, prompts, quizzes and the locking of levels or lessons. When I wrote my course in 2016–17, no MOOCs addressed feminist art histories.

With 'mass' education in mind, most art history MOOCs remain based on surveys of great artists, periods and movements. They are introductory and self-contained. Feminism has extensively critiqued the concepts of 'greatness' this art history reproduces for its exclusions and bias.[2] Humanities learning should not be based on transmission, where key facts are 'absorbed' by watching and reading and then tested. Critical thinking about the discipline of art history, its canons or evaluation of works of art are essential ingredients to a progressive student-centred course.

Meanwhile, in most face-to-face art education, the Internet is the tool for students to find information. The web is the largest visual database in the world (bigger than any textbook). There are extensive online sites on artists, artworks and exhibitions (providing access to much contemporary art and criticism before publication in books), which are better sources than Wikipedia or YouTube.

> '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'

Into this landscape, my course was offered as an autonomous website (without using a pre-prepared package or educational company framework). Its ten lessons are thematic, can be followed in any order, and their written narrative questions basic assumptions about feminism(s) and the work of contemporary women artists globally. While they focus on art made after 1970, no survey of period, movement or 'great women artists' is provided. Instead, questions are offered about feminism as 'feminisms' (plural and diverse), the uses of statistics and whether a feminist avant-garde or the female gaze actually exist. Each lesson is linked to how to research the subject on the net. The purpose was to go beyond common-sense understandings of gender, women artists or feminism, as well as diversify and deepen art debates. I embedded other people's videos to create counterpoints to my own narrative and introduce many different voices on this subject. The accompanying forums were designed to build a community of shared learning and discussions as a means of valuing what students bring to learning. There are no quizzes, no links to Wikipedia and no Ted Talks. Each lesson shows how websites, not least my own Feminist-Art-Observatory (built since 1996) frames questions about feminism and contemporary art. The course has appealed to university lecturers, independent artists and many teachers, with some incorporating insights gained directly into lessons.

In May 2020, I finished six lessons on Feminist Art Manifestos (1969-present), which is based on my *Feminist Art Manifestos: An Anthology* (KT press, epub, 2014) of 35 documents collected from around the world. The lessons are built around strong contrasts between the styles, ideas, poetics and varying political demands in these manifestos and to discuss who produced them. This second course considers these documents written by women artists to explore histories of feminism in relation to contemporary art.

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[1] FemTechNet is an experimental platform for online education in feminism in the USA: *femtechnet.org*. See also: Katy Deepwell 'n. paradoxa's MOOC (mass open online course): a case study in feminist online pedagogies in Gail Crimmins (ed) *Strategies for Resisting Sexism in the Academy: Higher Education, Gender and Neoliberalism* (Series: Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education, 2019).

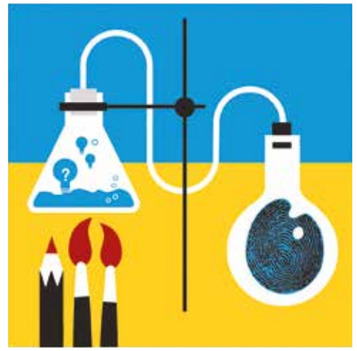
[2] Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock: *Old Mistresses: Women Art and Ideology* (1981); Christine Battersby *Gender and Genius* (1989); Helen Gorill *Women Can't Paint: Gender, the Glass Ceiling and Values in Contemporary Art* (2020).

**Top left** Front covers of *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal* (volumes 1-40, 1998-2017). This image of the print journal determined colour palette used in the MOOC site

**Above** Screen grab of first eight lessons: showing display on the MOOC



# Artists play – with ideas, materials and failure



*As part of his continuing series, **Chris Francis** unpacks his tin box to reveal another Threshold concept and some dangerous, fun and inspiring words for our challenging times*

**I've a tin box where I store the dangerous words. Stand back and I'll show you. In fact, whilst we're here – in the dark, in the art room (where breaking in wasn't exactly easy) — let's toy with this lively lexis.**

Don't look at me like that. SCHOOLS ARE SAFE. Honestly. I heard it on TV. Plus, we did agree that: 1. Home-schooling and constant screen time is draining everyone's creative energy; 2. Doing, demonstrating, making *something* – mischief, a commotion, a radical performative act – might be the inspiration our art students need right now; and 3. Filming this illicitly in the art department – at night! – would be exciting. We did agree that too, right? We'd have the materials, space and inspiration, plus a chance to collect all the cardboard and masking tape we need (to build our own home-school offices, to hide from our own kids, to teach all the others).

*Right! Shine the torch on the tin box then.* Perfect! Camera on and action! Let's see what we've got...

*Whoa!* Check out this frisky fella – it's PLAY! This word's like putty in my hand. An amorphous morpheme indeed! Misunderstood, undervalued, energising. I'd love to share this sprite wider. Every teacher should handle PLAY – it's not as childish as it seems.

*What's next?* – Ouch! This one's bruised and prickly. Look – RISK TAKING. No wonder it's defensive. It's been bandied about, misapplied and misappropriated. But wait. RISK TAKING is warming to us. It likes what we're up to. Hey, RISK TAKING! I'm getting to grips with you now – the real deal, not a blunt imitation. It's true, I did feel a prick at first, but you're sharpening my senses. I'll handle you with care.

*Wait. Keep filming, there's another.* It's forlorn, heavy, tough. Careful – it's FAILURE. *Hold on, don't run off.* It's not as bad as it seems. Push it, it's like rubber. Ha, brilliant! Watch this: hit FAILURE the right way ... you bounce right back!

You know, these words aren't dangerous at all. Have you noticed too, those worries we've been carrying for weeks – the pressures to teach in lockdown as if still in school; the intensity of so much screen time; the fear of assessment, exams (or whatever patched-up solution lies in wait) – it's all disappeared. We've been busy playing, thinking, grappling on our own terms. It's energising!

*What's that you say? It wasn't even recording?! There's no evidence at all?* Do you know what? It doesn't matter. We've had fun. I think we learnt something. Here, grab some cardboard and let's go.

I could always write about it.

*artpedagogy.com*

# Diary of an Artist Teacher Masters #2

***Zoë Crockford**, secondary art teacher and student at Oxford Brookes University, offers her experience of embarking on an MA in Artist Teacher Practice, whilst dealing with the impact of the pandemic and providing online lessons*

**As I write this, I am sitting in an almost empty school, huddled up against a radiator. Lockdown three is about to kick in and, although this is familiar territory, the culture shock is palpable. My class are at home, messaging me from time to time and I am looking forward to seeing what they submit later on today. A year ago this would have sounded like an excerpt from a dystopian nightmare, and that's because it is.**

The last time I wrote for *AD* Magazine I was a fresh-faced, year-one student, full of anticipation and mild anxiety as I embarked on my MA in Artist Teacher Practice at Oxford Brookes University. Who would have thought that a challenge bigger than just learning how to write an essay properly was on our horizons?

Several modules later and I feel sage, learned and definitely more skilled, but the anxiety is still there; more so lately with that mild sense of panic that keeps you on your toes. As a small cohort, my fellow students and I were gagging to start year two; the year that was full of self-indulgent promise. The brief? In simple terms, go off and make some art, exhibit it somewhere and write about it. We all gambolled off into our various workspaces and began to make, explore and experiment, and basically have a lot of fun. By Christmas we had all secured spaces for our exhibitions, ranging from a local library to commercial gallery space. The sense of personal pride in what we had achieved and learned was evident. The process helped us to evaluate our own practice and become more reflective and analytical about what we make.

As a group we are quite diverse, both in terms of working lives, family lives and artist lives. And this is the thing – we now comfortably refer to ourselves as artists. We no longer feel guilt when we scurry off to paint or sculpt, and we have the huge support and friendship from each other and from our course leader, the unstoppable Rachel Payne (fan girl moment).

Fortunately for us, we had all staged our exhibitions by the time lockdown hit in March. Unfortunately for us, it meant no more glorious uni visits. For me it meant all the plans I had put in place for the rest of the year in terms of developing the artist side of my career were put on hold, indefinitely it now seems. The move to online learning was an interesting turn as most of us were also providing online lessons for our students. To be on the receiving end was challenging.

'Looking back, it is clear to see how much we have all grown in the world of academia'

Whilst it was good to see each other via Zoom, the lively discussions and flowing conversations were absent due to the whole mute/unmute protocol. On the plus side, it's easier to attend if you only have to go to another room, and meetings are efficient. As we spent the summer term writing essays and completing a module on research methods, we relied heavily on the copious amounts of online support, tutorials, group chats, drop-ins and ephemeral videos (look it up, it's a thing), and any opportunity to connect and share was greedily grasped. Our WhatsApp group chat is our off-the-record lifeline. Tentatively begun in our first year, it has gained confidence and is now a rip-roaring volley of boldness and sarcasm. I wonder if we would have been as proactive in taking advantage of everything technology provided had we not been so isolated.

Looking back, it is clear to see how much we have all grown in the world of academia. We all still have the same concerns and moments of sheer panic, usually close to a deadline. Perhaps that has also given us better insight into the lives of our students. As we embark on our final year there is a sense of achievement mixed with trepidation and a touch of sadness. That's one hell of a cocktail. ■

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**Left** Zoë Crockford's year 2 solo exhibition *Present Imperfect* held at Studio 53, Salisbury, February 2020

**Above** Detail from *Present Imperfect* showing ceramic tiles and moulded flowers



# #NSEAD21

## A festival of art education

Our NSEAD national conference for 2021 is taking the form of a series of linked online and physical-space events with the National Gallery. NSEAD members, partners and friends are invited to continue the conversations to explore and ensure that art, craft and design is part of a better future and a better education for all.

**Our festival of national events, online and onsite continues with:**

**20 May:** Equity is... value and voice
**17 June:** Equity is... being well and belonging
**3 July:** Art re-union at the National Gallery

We hope that we will be able to meet some of you in person on 3 July for a Covid-secure art reunion – a day of reflecting and doing at the National Gallery, London. As the situation regarding national restrictions becomes clearer, we will confirm arrangements for this session.

**All online sessions are free for NSEAD members – fees apply for non-members. Visit nsead.org for the full programme and bookings**




nsead

# #NSEAD21

## The conversation continues

## 3 Saturday July 2021

Save the date for the 2021 NSEAD annual conference, to be held in partnership with the National Gallery, London

#NSEAD21 will be part of our summer festival of online and face-to-face events for art, craft and design educators



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