



ACTION RESEARCH REPORT

May 2014

TOPIC: art; photography; resilience; independence

I am an artist

If I encourage my Year 12 and 13 photography students to inhabit the role of artist/photographer, with a practice of their own, will they become more independent and resilient?

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Thomas Tallis School is a large, mixed comprehensive school in south east London. The school has recently been rebuilt under the Building Schools for the Future scheme. The nearby Ferrier Estate has also been redeveloped and is now known as Kidbrooke Village. According to OFSTED's data dashboard, the school is in the highest quintile for the % of pupils eligible for free school meals and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of SEN. By contrast the school is in the lowest quintile for % of girls. In 2012, the school's results placed it in the top 40% of similar schools, and in the top 40% of all schools. The school was designated as a specialist arts college in 1998 (in partnership with Kidbrooke School). It achieved Leading Edge status in 2005 and was named one of the original national Schools of Creativity¹ in 2008, having been involved in the original pilot phases of the Creative Partnerships network. The arts continue to play an important role in school life despite initiatives like the EBacc² and the loss of both specialist schools and Creative Partnerships funding. Uptake and attainment in arts subjects is strong and many parents and students choose the school because of its commitment to the arts and creative learning. The school has recently developed a model for promoting and developing particular Habits of Mind³ associated with creativity, influenced primarily by research⁴ carried out by The Centre for Real World Learning on behalf of CCE in which the school took part.

I have taught at the school since 1990 and had several roles including arts college manager and School of Creativity co-ordinator. I began as a teacher of English. Since then I have taught A level history of art, BTEC media, GCSE and A level photography and an innovative ICT based enquiry based KS3 curriculum entitled Tallis Lab. My current title is Director of Arts, Creativity and Communications.

For this research I chose to focus on the learning of my A level photography students in Years 12 and 13. I formulated my action research question as follows:

Stimulus: I'd like my A level photography students to be better able to generate their own ideas and be more independent learners.

Hypothesis: I suspect they haven't yet made the leap from considering their work as belonging to school, in their role as students, rather than to themselves as artists.

Research: I'm interested in ideas like Mantle of the Expert, design thinking, studio schools and 'How to be an artist' by Michael Atavar.

¹ <http://www.creative-partnerships.com/schools-of-creativity/>

² <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/englishbac/a0075975/theenglishbaccalaureate>

³ <http://www.thomastallischool.com/tallis-habits.html>

⁴ <http://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/progression-in-creativity-developing-new-forms-of-assessment>

Consequently, my research question is:

If I encourage my Year 12 and 13 photography students to inhabit the role of artist/photographer, with a practice of their own, will they become more independent and resilient?

My experience of teaching and my views about an appropriate pedagogy have been informed by research about creativity and creative learning. I believe that all young people can learn to be creative and subscribe to this view expressed by Ken Robinson in 'The Arts in Schools'⁵:

The role of the teacher in the arts is at once vital and complicated. The task is not simply to let anything happen in the name of self-expression or creativity. Neither is it to impose rigid structures of ideas and methods upon the children. The need is for a difficult balance of freedom and authority. In principle, everybody can be enabled to develop their knowledge and skill to a point at which they can become innovators. Their doing so depends on their interest and commitment to, and on the extent and quality of their experience in, the work in question.

Critics of creative learning tend to characterise it as "progressive dogma"⁶ in which the acquisition of knowledge is sacrificed for group work and a student centred approach. Such false dichotomies, although provocative and great newspaper fodder, radically misrepresent the thoughts of educationalists like Ken Robinson who have always advocated the "difficult balance of freedom and authority."

I am interested in the kinds of aptitudes a teacher can deliberately model and encourage for students. According to Arthur J Cropley:

Summarising the literature, it can be said that creativity-fostering teachers are those who:

- encourage students to learn independently;
- have a co-operative, socially integrative style of teaching;
- do not neglect mastery of factual knowledge;
- tolerate 'sensible' or bold errors;
- promote self-evaluation;
- take questions seriously;
- offer opportunities to work with varied materials under different conditions;
- help students learn to cope with frustration and failure;
- reward courage as much as being right.⁷

I have also been influenced by Elliot W. Eisner's thinking about the relationship between curriculum and pedagogy and the role that teachers have in helping to create what he refers to as the "modus vivendi" of the classroom:

⁵ Robinson, K ed. 'The Arts in Schools - Principles, practice and provision', Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1989

⁶ <http://civitas.org.uk/pdf/PrisonersofTheBlob.pdf>

⁷ Cropley, Arthur J 'Creativity in Education and Learning' Kogan Page, 2001 p.138

We need to do what we can to identify the ways in which the arts influence the experience students have in working with them and thereby the cognitive abilities that they are likely to develop. One way to address the matter is to recognise the forces that affect what students learn in the arts. Let me identify four: there are the constraints and affordances provided by the activities and the materials with which students work; there are the prompts, cues, and scaffolding that the teacher provides to enable the student to succeed; there are classroom norms, the kind of thinking and behaviour that is encouraged and discouraged in the setting; and there is an ambiance we can refer to as the classroom milieu. What is the *modus vivendi* in the classroom? What is its sense as a community of practice, and how does it relate to what students experience and learn?⁸

In the summer of 2012 I took part in a CCE research project entitled ‘Signature Pedagogies’⁹. The final report contains some powerful observations about the humanising impact of creative practitioners working in schools but it was this description of the learning and teaching observed in one particular secondary school that struck me as most significant for my own practice:

There was little front-of-class teaching. Teachers worked alongside students, seeking to help them resolve technical or aesthetic problems: teacher comments tended to be appreciative - ‘that looks interesting’ rather than didactic; evaluative language of a stronger type tended not to be used. Teachers made reference to the work of artists working in the same medium or with similar ideas to the students, thus positioning students as artists working in an established domain.

As a non art college trained teacher of a visual arts subject, I am interested in the notion of the classroom as studio and what might be termed ‘studio teaching’.¹⁰ I am keen to explore the relationship between knowledge, both ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing how to’, and the development of particular habits of mind afforded by a an approach to learning that is facilitative and authentic. Key to this is students’ relatively high level of ownership of the learning process and the ways in which the teacher can promote the development of a ‘community of practice’ in the classroom. In my case, I was interested in developing my students’ awareness of what it was like to think/learn like an artist, to develop their understanding of what it might mean to have a ‘practice’ as an artist who uses photography and to encourage their sense of connectedness to each other as fellow artists and the wider community of contemporary artists outside school. I also felt that this process would benefit my practice as a teacher and that I would be learning alongside my students.

In the summer of 2013 I was involved in a research project co-ordinated by Tate Learning¹¹ entitled ‘In Site of Learning’. Over a period of 5 days, a group of curators, artists and teachers, plus Pat Thompson, Professor of Education from the University of Nottingham,

⁸ Eisner, Elliot W ‘The Arts and the Creation of Mind’ Yale University Press, 2002 p.71

⁹ <http://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/the-signature-pedagogies-project>

¹⁰ Claxton, Lucas and Spencer, ‘Making It’ Centre for Real World Learning, University of Winchester, 2012

¹¹ <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/our-work/learning-at-tate>

met at Tate Modern to share thoughts about the relationship between art and learning. Discussion focused on Tate's commitment to working with contemporary artists alongside teachers and students in the gallery and on its holiday schools for teachers as an alternative model of CPD.

I came away with two notions from these days of discussion that I felt I wanted to put into practice back at school:

1. The teacher/artist learning alongside the student
2. The teacher/artist as curator of an art room atmosphere

Credit must go to artist Anna Lucas¹² for articulating both of these issues in our discussions. I find myself teaching A level photography having not experienced an art college education. My interest in the visual arts is primarily art historical and my current practice as a teacher reflects this. I have worked alongside many artists over the years in my capacity as arts college manager and School of Creativity co-ordinator and I have been interested to observe the way artists work and think. I recently read Michael Atavar's book 'How to be an Artist'¹³. A sample of the Contents provides a clear indication of the nature of the advice contained inside:

Building an artist's vocabulary that's distinctively your own. Invitation To Process / Developing A Vocabulary / Artist's Compass / No boundaries / Scraps / Tell Us How It Feels / Grow Your Own Artist / Curiosity / What's Inside You / Time / Doing Nothing / Titles

Despite being a self help book aimed at aspiring and practising artists, I wondered whether I could use some of these ideas in the context of my A level photography lessons. I was interested in the idea, derived from Mantle of the Expert¹⁴, of the persona of the artist. What difference might it make to students to begin to think of themselves as artists as well as art students? What role could the teacher play in this context and how might the dialogue shared in class be different if our roles shifted from the conventional student/teacher dynamic to one of co-learning? The issue of artistic identity is clearly central to the concerns of contemporary artists:

For artists, "self" knowledge is sometimes discovered through the process of creating art. For other artists, establishing "self" is a prerequisite for creation.¹⁵

I wondered whether deliberately encouraging my students to reflect on their artistic identities, to consider their coursework as contributing to an artistic practice and reflecting on the relationship between the work they made and the way they saw the world might have a positive effect on their self-esteem and, ultimately, lead to the creation of more

¹² <http://www.lux.org.uk/collection/artists/anna-lucas>

¹³ <http://www.how-to-be-an-artist.com/>

¹⁴ <http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/>

¹⁵ Weintraub, Linda 'Making Contemporary Art: How Modern Artists Think and Work' Thames & Hudson, 2003 p.195

personal and meaningful work. I was also interested in the potentially positive effect this approach might have on their attainment as prescribed by the exam board's assessment objectives.

I recently discovered that the Andy Warhol Museum has structured its education programme on the notion of an artist's practice as a "framework for learning".¹⁶ The museum defines an artistic practice as "the techniques or media an artist uses to create art, but also fundamentally the artist's conceptual approach or method by which he or she goes about making art." The gallery identifies features of Warhol's practice: reproducing, documenting, collecting, and suggests that these could be used as "frameworks for learning". Reference is made to learning theory in order to support this approach:

Current research and theory supports this use of artistic practice as a framework for learning in its emphasis on giving the learner choice and control, using the learner's experience and prior knowledge, and seeking ways to motivate learners by offering much more open-ended, task-oriented activities. Here, one of the key benefits of using artistic practice as a framework for learning is that as a student collects or documents, for example, the practice itself provides fairly immediate feedback. This quick response to practice is a core characteristic of effective "flow" experiences—optimal learning experiences as noted by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly—and is vital as it leads to learners shifting from being extrinsically to intrinsically motivated to learn. It is also central to developing mastery over performance. This notion of built-in feedback is also primary to constructivist learning theory. For example, Vygotsky's influential theory of learning as a socially mediated process of "scaffolding," where learning is fundamentally constructed and based in interaction, is central to the idea of using artistic practice as a framework for learning.

I certainly support the impetus of this approach with its emphasis on the centrality of the learner, the importance of feedback and the development of intrinsic motivation. My approach has been to attempt to draw attention to a variety of contemporary artists' thinking and working habits and to encourage students to inhabit the role of the artist in the learning process.

A level photography attracts a wide diversity of students, from those determined to apply to art college to those who are interested specifically in photography but did not select to study a visual arts subject at KS4 to those who have relatively poor KS4 results and are simply searching for a third A level choice. The entry requirements for the course are 5 A*-C grades including maths and English and a portfolio of work. I have a Year 12 group comprising 19 students, 12 girls and 7 boys. My Year 13 group has 8 students, 6 girls and 2 boys. Groups are taught by two teachers who plan and assess collaboratively. Although I initiated the action research programme of interventions, these were discussed with my colleagues who both supported and contributed to the project.

¹⁶ http://edu.warhol.org/ulp_ctm_appendix.html

In order to establish a benchmark for the research I decide to conduct an attitudinal survey.¹⁷ The aim of this survey was to discover how the students felt about three things:

- their relationship to the skills and understanding assessed on the A level course
- their sense of confidence in relation to the Habits of Mind prioritised by the school
- their identity as artists/photographers

The results¹⁸ were illuminating for several reasons. Documenting the process of their learning was felt by 50% of the students to be the skill they needed to develop most. For example, one of the Year 13 students studying for AS photography commented:

I think I need to think of different ways of presenting my work in more imaginative ways and think more about how it looks in my book. Also I need to think of making my book more like a sketch book/my personal book rather than a finished thing.

As far as the Habits of Mind were concerned, being disciplined, inquisitive and persistent appear to be problematic for many students. As one Year 12 student observed:

I think I need to keep going when things are difficult and stick with things. I also need to be better with knowing that things aren't always certain and may not turn out how I want.

When asked what she plans to do to further develop her Habits of Mind, a Year 13 student comments:

How I move on from or keep going with something that I don't think will work. Be more daring with my work.

A large number of students (83%) appeared to know artists or other creative professionals personally and 71% said they had visited an artist's studio. When asked how comfortable they felt about describing themselves as artists/photographers, feelings were mixed. This is not surprising since the Year 12 group had just embarked on a new advanced level course. However, 70% said they felt as if they did have a practice as an artist/photographer and a reassuring 71% believed that their learning in school supported their development as artists.

Students were candid in their response to the questions about what the school/teacher could do to better support their development as artists/photographers:

I don't think it is achievable in a school environment. The only way I feel that I could 'feel more like an artist' would be to have my own space, not a big space but just somewhere for my own materials. Coming into school and sitting down at a generic desk, with communal drawers for materials that aren't always what we need or would like, just reiterates the fact that we are in school and here because we want

¹⁷ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Qn-VlssHmqe7tuHZmUf8lKtKvaNiuuqv_X_isWU_rKE/viewform

¹⁸ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/ccc?key=0AqQ7E_mFLXm_dHpaVjhXQTUyWHhMQ0FSQWYzSjMtdnc&usp=sharing

to become artists/ have a creative career in the future. I don't think it's bad that we don't feel like artists, because we aren't and know it, but it is nice when you can talk about your work in a way that doesn't involve discussions about what grade it will get. (Year 13 student)

I don't feel I have my own ideas/opinions that I want to show in my work yet. I haven't found my direction. (Year 13 student)

I feel most like an artist when I am surrounded by space, with my work spread out so that I can see everything, and when I have loads of materials around me that I can use from so I have a range of different mediums to use. Working in this kind of environment makes me feel free to create whatever artistic approach to my work that I want. (Year 12 student)

Time, space and resources are clearly key issues for some students who perceived school as an inauthentic environment. Clearly the more a classroom can be made to feel like a studio or workshop, the greater the chance that students will be able to work on extended projects and get into the 'zone' or 'flow' of their learning. Another key issue appears to be about confidence and identity. I am interested in the notion of 'becoming artists' and how far along this spectrum each student feels able to claim as their territory.

Finally, the students were asked to describe what they would like to be able to do as artists that the school currently does not offer. Many students were reasonably satisfied with the resources and opportunities afforded by the school but there were a few interesting suggestions including:

- Going on trips to galleries and for photo shoots
- Meeting and interviewing artists
- Collaborating with younger students
- Working independently in a studio-like space
- Access to more materials and processes (screen printing, film cameras etc.)
- Working on projects for the school

One Year 13 student commented: "Be able to be taught more like an artist."

Reviewing these responses enabled me to see that there were refinements I could make to my practice as a teacher to better facilitate the learning of my students, particularly with regard to their perception of themselves as independent creative agents.

I resolved to to employ the following strategies:

- A. Encourage students to explicitly adopt the identity of an artist
- B. Begin the process of students undertaking a personal project in response to the set theme earlier than in previous years
- C. Use short video clips of artists/photographers talking about their work as lesson starters to encourage a sense of connectedness with a wider community of practice
- D. Ask students to articulate the nature of their practice as artists/photographers

- E. Attempt to withhold judgement about the students' work. Provide encouragement and affirmation. Asking questions rather than making suggestions
- F. Use classroom display to reinforce the importance of Habits of Mind and using the space of the classroom more flexibly
- G. Organise a trip to an art gallery followed by a photo shoot on location
- H. Work with a contemporary artist

Another concept that emerged from the 'In Site of Learning' sessions at Tate Modern was the notion of 'unlearning', specifically the impetus for teachers to unlearn old practices or habitual ways of working in order to refresh their practice. This idea was introduced to me in an unpublished research paper by Pat Thompson entitled 'Unlearning what you know: A narrative analysis of university and school teacher reflective journals.' In the paper she refers to McWilliam's seven deadly habituated beliefs that underpin particular kinds of pedagogical practice, namely - (1) teachers should know more than students, (2) teachers lead, students follow, (3) teachers assess, students are assessed, (4) curriculum must be set in advance, (5) the more we know our students the better, (6) learning is the key to social success, and (7) our disciplines can save the world. Numbers 1 to 4 seem to have particular relevance to this action research project.

A. I am an artist

Fig 1:
Students wearing **I am an artist** badges

Q: What would help you to feel more like an artist?

A: If I was taught and treated more like one."

Year 13 photography student



In the same lessons that I explained the EEDnet action research project to students I asked them to write the phrase "I am an artist" somewhere in their books. Subsequently, I asked them all to create a badge with the same phrase as a home learning assignment. There were a variety of responses to both these activities. Several students hid the phrase in their books by writing it in an out of the way place. One student even wrote the phrase then scribbled it out. I made it clear that the purpose of writing it was about claiming the identity for themselves rather than boasting about it. Clearly, some students felt a little unsure about the legitimacy of the claim. Similarly, with the badge activity, whilst the Year 13 students all created imaginative and individual badges (see image on title page), there was a more mixed response from the Year 12 class. A minority of students returned to the next lesson with imaginative solutions including adapted Polaroids and word searches. When I asked to photograph their badges, some students refused to face the camera and wore the badges on their backs. Several students chose not to complete the task and remain badge-less. The real significance of this task for me as the teacher was to signal to the students that I

was taking their work seriously and showing respect for the creative processes. I was curious about those students who seemed uncomfortable about identifying themselves as artists. Dennis Atkinson writes powerfully about the concept of “that-which-is-not-yet”.¹⁹

Within teaching and learning contexts it is quite possible for there to be learners whose ontological status is not recognised and so their potential for becoming is constrained and who therefore have marginalised existence within the pedagogical space.

The space of “that-which-is-not-yet”, argues Atkinson, is full of potential, a space where new possibilities are opened up, where new ways of seeing are acknowledged and valued and he consequently asks “How can we facilitate and support such spaces?” I was interested to observe whether or not students would accept the identity of artist (whilst acknowledging their status as “not yet artists”) and use this to fuel their explorations. Would this identity function as a kind of expert mantle under which students might gain the confidence to practice their tolerance of uncertainty, daring to be different and sticking with difficulty? In other words, would their independence and capacity for persistence be enhanced? If I repeated this activity next year I might change the phrase to “I am becoming an artist”. It might also be interesting to encourage students to experiment with their social media profiles, playing with the mantle of “becoming artist” both in and out of school.²⁰

B. The Personal Project

Units 1 (AS) and 3 (A2) of the A level course are long term coursework projects designed to elicit a range of responses from the students exploring diverse processes, techniques and genres of photography. Year 12 students create a portfolio of work. Year 13 students undertake a personal investigation. As a consequence of this action research project I discussed with my teaching partners the strategy of allowing the students to begin creating personal responses to the set themes at an earlier point in the course than previously. This required letting go of aspects of the scheme of work that we had planned, thus freeing up some additional time for students to develop their own responses, particularly in Year 12. Rather than specifying particular artists for students to research and respond to, our strategy was to personalise the research process, encouraging the students to find their own sources of inspiration and to identify a particular focus for the development of their own ideas. In Year 12 we had selected the theme of ‘Contrasts’ and in Year 13 ‘Surrealism’. This approach meant less teaching from the front of the room and more one-to-one dialogue with the students. Teacher/student dialogue focused on several issues:

- particular approaches to the themes of ‘Contrasts’ and ‘Surrealism’
- recommendations of artists/photographers whose practice might prove interesting to explore in relation to these themes
- discussion of specific processes/techniques and presentational strategies to support the development of students’ work

¹⁹ Atkinson, D ‘Pedagogy of the Not Known’ published in Fisher and Fortnum ‘On Not Knowing. How Artists Think’ Black Dog Publishing, 2013 p.142

²⁰ Thanks to Chris Francis (@DevNicely on Twitter) for this suggestion and for his helpful comments about this research report.

- the resolution of specific aesthetic or technical problems faced by the students

C. A community of practice

I realised I am an artist and that's my life and that is the way I live. So I started to take some photos. **Ai Weiwei**

In order to provide access to a range of artists' practice, we have used the following video clips as starters in our Year 12 lessons:

- *Imagine - Edmund De Waal - Make Pots or Die*²¹ The film follows the artist as he prepares for a major exhibition in New York. Key themes include the relationship between art and literature, resilience, crafting and refining, repetition and difference.
- *TateShots: Lewis Baltz*²² Baltz discusses his career as an artist who works with photography, his concentration on changes to the human landscape and the unique nature of photography as the "only deductive art".
- *TateShots Edinburgh: Boyle Family*²³ Members of the family discuss an installation of their work in Scotland, their collaborative practice, how they resolve disagreements and the joy of creating with both head and hands.
- *TateShots: Peter Fraser*²⁴ Fraser is shown with a half completed installation of his pictures in St. Ives. He discusses his instinct for a photograph, the need to be constantly vigilant and the importance of the subconscious.
- *What do artists do all day? Cornelia Parker*²⁵ This film follows the artist for a day as she prepares for an exhibition. We see her engaged in numerous activities linked to her practice, working with a wide variety of materials and explaining her motivations and decisions.
- *Venice Biennale: Sophie Calle*²⁶ The artist discusses two major pieces installed in Venice. She explores the relationship between art and her personal life, deep or shocking moments that call her "attention" and her belief that the viewer is free to make his or her own mind up about the work.
- *TateShots: Ai Weiwei in NYC*²⁷ The artist discusses the 10,000 photographs he made during his life in New York as a young man and the realisation that "Art is really about your own motivation, your own passion, your own character. It is not something that a teacher can teach you."

²¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03hcmmp>

²² <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-lewis-baltz>

²³ <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-edinburgh-boyle-family>

²⁴ <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-peter-fraser>

²⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b02tg2z2>

²⁶ <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/venice-biennale-sophie-calle>

²⁷ <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-ai-weiwei-nyc>

- *TateShots: Taryn Simon*²⁸ Simon is interviewed at Tate Modern where her work is being installed. She discusses the relationship between the images and the way they are framed and displayed, her interest in family history, biology, time and fate.

We deliberately selected a range of contemporary artists whose practices spanned a variety of mediums and techniques but who might all be said to have a conceptual approach. We were keen for the students to gain an insight into the thoughts, practices and strategies of contemporary artists in the expectation that they might both internalise the language used by the artists to describe their own work and reflect on some of the artists' concerns. Each video was accompanied by one or two provocative questions for students to ponder as they watched the footage. For example:

What motivates Lewis Baltz to make photographs?

What does Peter Fraser say about the relationship between photography and the unconscious?

In the case of the Cornelia Parker video, we collectively wrote down a list of all the verbs describing the artist's activities. For example:

photographing, wondering, crafting, looking, arranging, titling, re-presenting, driving, exploring, hopping, preparing, finishing, honing, obsessing, stopping, eyeing up, noticing, appreciating, altering, tweaking, pointing, considering, drawing, exploding, destroying, collecting, working, choreographing, walking, playing, looking (again), talking, reflecting, thinking, modelling, casting, sculpting, checking, inspecting, discussing, creating, learning, explaining, visiting, realising, concentrating, listening, punching, repeating, exhibiting, remembering, forgetting, sabotaging, collaborating, displaying, borrowing, joking, framing, presenting, comparing, considering, parenting, enthusing, appreciating

An attempt was also made at the start of each lesson to make an explicit link to specific Habits of Mind²⁹. Thus, Cornelia Parker's practice, with its emphasis on playing with materials, noticing phenomena and transforming the ordinary, might be said to exemplify the habit of **Persistence** with the sub habit of **Tolerating Uncertainty**.

Although we encouraged the students to make notes whilst watching each of the videos, we accepted that they might decide not include these annotations in their books. The idea was to provide models of artistic practice, to inspire and provoke, rather than to provide subject content. We decided not to show the Year 13 students the same series of videos, partly because they expressed more confidence in describing themselves as artists/ photographers and also because, unlike the Year 12 students who had only just begun the photography course, they generally had already well-established personal investigations. However, we did use films about The Situationist International³⁰, John Baldessari³¹ and

²⁸ <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/video/tateshots-taryn-simon>

²⁹ <http://www.thomastallischool.com/tallis-habits.html>

³⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SvdWk8zRrl>

³¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eU7V4GyEuXA&safe=active>

Sophie Calle³² since they related directly to their investigations and provided models of artists responding to the theories and practices of The Surrealists.

D. My Practice

We asked the Year 12 students to generate statements about their artistic practice. We provided two kinds of stimulus:

1. An active listening session in which students interviewed each other about their approach to art making. Questions included: *What interests you? Where do you get ideas from? How do you develop ideas? What do you do when you don't have any ideas? How do you deal with difficulties?* (See Appendix 2: Active Listening Prompts)
2. A visit to the Arty Bollocks Generator website.³³ The site satirises the process of creating an artistic statement by offering to generate one for you using the conventions and jargon of contemporary art lexicon. For example:

My work explores the relationship between gender politics and romance tourism. With influences as diverse as Kafka and John Lennon, new tensions are created from both mundane and transcendent dialogues. Ever since I was a child I have been fascinated by the theoretical limits of meaning. What starts out as yearning soon becomes corrupted into a hegemony of greed, leaving only a sense of dread and the inevitability of a new understanding. As shimmering phenomena become clarified through emergent and diverse practice, the viewer is left with an epitaph for the edges of our existence.

We hoped that a mixture of the art interview format and satirical statement generator would create a playful space in which the students could attempt to assume the mantle of contemporary artist and write their own statements. We received some very interesting responses which include these extracts:

“As my portfolio has developed and people have started to review my work, I noticed a pattern I hadn't intended but am now pleased with.”

“My work captures the beauty of now.”

“When taking a photograph the first thing I have to consider is whether or not this means anything to me. If the answer is yes, I continue and play around with it until I get an outcome that I am entirely happy with. If the answer is no however, I consider whether it would be beneficial to do it anyway. For the most part I make a spontaneous decision as to whether I follow through or not.”

“I want people to interpret the meaning behind my images themselves. I like the idea of people being able to think deeply and not have a fixed idea.”

³² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3GLEn8crd4>

³³ <http://www.artbollocks.com/>

“I think art is being able to capture something common or everyday and make it beautiful or even point it out. I think art is almost like comedy as comedy is pointing out the obvious things and making them funny.”

“My art looks at distorting the ‘normal’.”

“My work explores the idea of expression through colour and the different ways colour can influence human feelings. Colour consumed my childhood, with cartoon characters and arts and crafts with my nan. My work focuses on the idea of movement in colour. I am intrigued by the idea of a magical colour explosion which can never be re-created, like memories.”

“My work always comes from either a huge emotional change in my life or a sudden burst of inspiration and desire to create something that totally entices me.”

“I hope that through my work I can make people think twice about wondering ‘why do people like London so much?’”

“My work explores the persistent problem of social division between the upper class and the every day vagrant. It explores how those who value their privileges above their principles soon lose both.”

“As an artist I take photos of light. I take the boring and mundane and abstract it.”

What interested me in these tentative statements was the extent to which many of the students appeared to be hovering between responding to the demands of the course, generating responses to the theme of ‘Contrasts’, and fully committing to the idea of their own practice. Nevertheless, it was clear that they had begun to absorb the language of evaluation and reflection to the extent that they were able to formulate coherent statements about the work they were making. I would certainly repeat this strategy with future groups of Year 12 students.

One of the strategies used with the Year 13 class was borrowed from Michael Atavar’s book ‘How to be an Artist’. I asked the students three questions which I’ve included here with their responses:

1. Tell me how it feels

Responses: Angry (I want to make work that creates anger); Relaxing; Addictive; Big; Overwhelming; Amused; Great; Confident

2. What don’t you know?

Responses: Fine Art; Painting/film cameras; Failure; Meaning; Stillness; Reasons; Aliens; Certainty

3. What’s your word?

Responses: Connecting; Observation/development; Fast; Slow; Collage; Alone; Resignation; Super

The students found this activity challenging. In retrospect, I should have taken more time to discuss their responses. They are intriguing and even the less than serious answers (“Aliens”, “Super”) could have provided the starting point for a potentially meaningful enquiry. The activity was intended to be a quick provocation but if I use it again I would spend more time exploring the students’ responses with them and/or asking them to share them with each other.

Another technique I used to encourage the students to think like artists was to have the Oblique Strategies³⁴ website displayed on the whiteboard during lessons. The original deck of cards, designed by Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt was based on a set of basic working principles which guided them through moments of pressure in their working lives as a musician and painter respectively. “Both Schmidt and Eno realised that the pressures of time tended to steer them away from the ways of thinking they found most productive when the pressure was off. The Strategies were, then, a way to remind themselves of those habits of thinking - to jog the mind.”³⁵

Every few minutes I would click to reveal one of the messages, sometimes making a comment about it, but often just leaving it to speak for itself. For example:

Retrace your steps

From nothing to more than nothing

Is there something missing?

I propose to make more use of these prompts in future, perhaps including them in a thinking toolkit for students.

E. Dialogue for growth

“To be able to make educational gold out of emerging activities in the classroom requires a high degree of artistry in teaching ... More is required if the teacher is to work more or less individually with students to enable them to think through and to plan what they are going to address in their art program. In addition, the teacher has a key role to play in calling the students’ attention to qualities in the work they produce that need attention of one kind or another. The students might learn how to address certain formal relationships, technical matters, or imaginative features of their work that they had not noticed. Calling the students’ attention to such matters addresses other mini-curricular activities that invite students to think about the content of their work in new ways and to experiment with ways to strengthen what needs attention. Thus, curriculum and teaching merge within a dynamic content.”³⁶

I discussed with my teaching partners the strategy of withholding judgement about students’ work and fostering an open dialogue with them about the direction of their

³⁴ <http://stoney.sb.org/eno/oblique.html>

³⁵ <http://www.rtqe.net/ObliqueStrategies/OSintro.html>

³⁶ Eisner, Elliot W ‘The Arts and the Creation of Mind’ Yale University Press, 2002 pp. 152-3

investigations. As much as possible we aimed to work alongside the students, sharing our own experiments and investigations and creating a climate of co-learning. We were keen to share our enthusiasms for particular artists' work, using video footage and creating Pinterest boards³⁷ with useful reference material. In addition, we regularly posted images from the lesson and links to resources on the departmental blog.³⁸ We adopted a questioning approach with a focus on "What next?", on the progress made rather than on summative assessment. We subscribe to Carol Dweck's idea of learnable intelligence and the Growth Mindset.³⁹ Hence, in discussion with the students, we were concerned with promoting the second assessment objective of the course which requires candidates to:

Experiment with and select appropriate resources, media, materials, techniques and processes, reviewing and refining work as it develops.

However, we also made the decision to document the progress each student was making in the form of an online spreadsheet to which all students had access. All relevant data - completion of home learning tasks, assessments, teacher comments - was made public via a link on the blog.⁴⁰ We felt that this transparency of information would provide students with all the information they needed to make wise decisions and reflect on the impact of the choices they made. It would also, we thought, level the playing field so that the teacher was not the sole owner of assessment information. We made the spreadsheet editable so that students could amend it as necessary and we experimented with self-assessment.

We were amused to discover that one student saw creative potential in playing with the online spreadsheet application:



Fig 2:
Student
adaptation of
the online grade
tracker
spreadsheet

One of the primary reasons for adopting this approach was to avoid the necessity of writing comments in the students' books. We felt that these books belonged to the students. They were a mixture of visual diary, critical studies texts and works of art in their own right. It seemed to us that writing in them would undermine our attempts to build the students' conceptions of themselves as artists.

³⁷ <http://www.pinterest.com/tallisarts/>

³⁸ <http://tallisphoto.tumblr.com/>

³⁹ <http://mindsetonline.com/whatisit/about/>

⁴⁰ <http://tallisphoto.tumblr.com/aleveltrackers>

F. Display space

The Year 12 and 13 classes are taught in different rooms. Year 13 occupy a conventional classroom of average size that is mostly used by media students. The displays are media focused and the room is organised as a series of group tables. The Year 12 room is designated as a photography teaching space with a studio backdrop and lights at one end, a large practical space in the centre and a darkroom with revolving door at the other end. Photography work is displayed on the walls and there is a well stocked library of books on one wall. The desks in both rooms are heavy and located above power and data ports in the floor. This makes the spaces relatively inflexible, although the photography room is multi-purpose and larger.

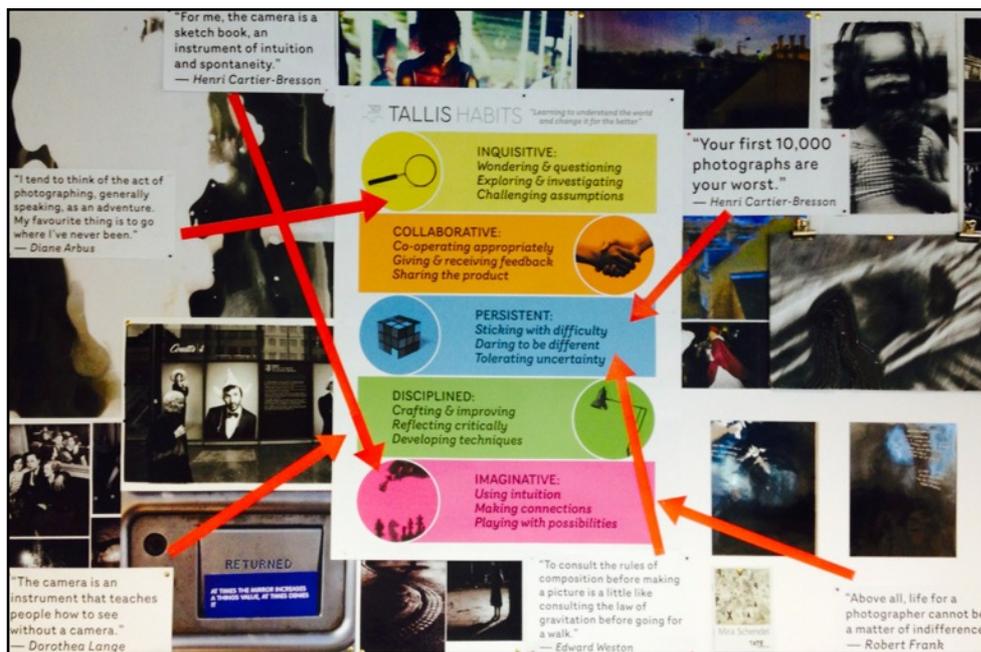


Fig 3:
Photography
Habits of Mind
wall display

I decided to create a wall display in both rooms using a large habits of Mind poster as the centrepiece. This enabled easy reference at the start of each lesson to relevant habits and also acted as a subliminal reminder of the status of the habits in terms of learning and teaching. I specifically engaged the Year 13 students in helping to construct the displays in both rooms. For one display they researched relevant quotations by famous photographers that appeared to reinforce the various habits of mind and for the other display they contributed their own statements connecting various habits with their own practice. Given that they spent their lessons in a less visually stimulating and flexible space I wanted them to have more ownership of the displays.

I also decided to experiment with seating arrangements as a way to subtly change the dynamic in both rooms. In the smaller Year 13 room I changed my own seating position from the desk near the board, the 'teacher's chair', to one of the spaces around the larger group table where the majority of students sat. I only returned to the chair at the front of the room if I wanted to share something on the IWB. This change of position enabled me to engage in conversation more directly with students about their work without the need to move across the room. In the Year 12 classroom I attempted several strategies:

- I moved away from the 'teacher's chair' and sat at the large group table

- I grouped student chairs near the IWB at the start of the lesson, away from the desks, so that we could watch and discuss videos of artists describing their practice
- I occasionally encouraged students to sit in unfamiliar spaces in the room rather than stick with an habitual seating pattern

In addition, as students began to construct and mount their final outcomes it was often necessary to spread their work out, sometimes on the floor or even in the corridor outside the classroom. This created a more free-flowing, flexible environment and a working atmosphere akin to a studio or workshop.

I am still unhappy about the relative inflexibility of these rooms and I would like to spend more time re-arranging the furniture and thinking about the environment in order to better facilitate collaborative and individual ways of working. The major constraint on space in these rooms is the necessity of them being used by a variety of classes of different sizes and ages during the day. The other is access to ICT. No one configuration of furniture will be appropriate and constant reconfiguration is frustrating and tiring. Nevertheless, I would like to experiment with new arrangements in collaboration with colleagues in the coming months. I am also keen to address the issue of access to tools and resources, ensuring that students are able to locate and use a range of materials as easily as possible.

Survey Results

Appendix 1 shows comparative results from the first and second attitudinal surveys in table form. It is difficult to make generalisations about the data based on such a small sample of students. However, there is an indication that students feel slightly more successful in meeting the assessment objectives of the course. If a score of at least 7/10 is taken as a positive measure, the percentage of students expressing this level of confidence is as follows for each of the objectives:

AO1:	Survey 1: 66%	Survey 2: 77%
AO2:	Survey 1: 63%	Survey 2: 78%
AO3:	Survey 1: 38%	Survey 2: 46%
AO4:	Survey 1: 55%	Survey 2: 82%

The biggest increase in AO4 is not really surprising since students are bound to feel more confident about the completion of work that is personal and meaningful at the end of a unit than at the beginning. Nevertheless, it is pleasing to see such a high percentage with only one student below 5/10.

In terms of the Habits of Mind, levels of confidence for Collaborative and Persistent remained fairly stable across both surveys and there were slight increases for Inquisitive (+5%), Disciplined (+10%) and Imaginative (+4%). Again, I have taken 7+/10 as the measure.

In response to the question “Do you feel comfortable describing yourself as an artist?” the results were identical at 46% 7+/10 for both surveys. However, the number of students

comfortable in describing themselves as photographers rose from 42% to 60%. I can only conclude from this that, since this is a photography course, students feel as though their specific photography skills and knowledge have grown over the course of Unit 1 in comparison to skills and knowledge they might associate more directly with art.

Rather intriguingly, in response to the question “Do you feel as though you have a practice as an artist/photographer?” there was a drop from 63% to 50% between the surveys. However, the number of students responding “Not sure” increased from 29% to 41%. This could indicate that students’ growing awareness of practising contemporary artists and their work has prompted some insecurity about the status of their own work. This is not really surprising and might indicate a growing sophistication in their understanding. Their growing understanding of the ambition, commitment and complexity of contemporary art practice might cause them to feel that they have much more to learn and experience before they are able to describe their work as a form of practice.

Finally, the students register similar levels of satisfaction across both surveys with the way the course supports their learning (71%/73%) and their desire to continue learning about the arts beyond school (79%/82%). It would be interesting to repeat this survey after considerably more time has passed. I tend to agree with Elliot W. Eisner that a school education can only really be assessed once the students have left and begun to make decisions for themselves. This presents an interesting challenge for schools in maintaining contact with their alumni.

Student evaluations

Students were required to write an evaluation of their progress throughout the coursework units (1 and 3). Many reveal developments in understanding but also changes in students’ orientations and beliefs. The following is a selection of their comments:

Year 12 Example #1:

I overcame my belief that photography was purely to look aesthetically pleasing and discover the world of documentation and presentation of essentially, what could be ideas of a more scientific and documentary theme, represented through the medium of photography ... I went from little direction to a strong understanding. I was hoping to create a series of images documenting extracts from random points in my life over a week. I took photographs looking straight up and straight down on the same spot. My choice of the moments to take the photographs was totally random. I would take one set of two every time I got a text message, for example. The randomness made for a more interesting selection I felt because I wasn't looking for the best possible photographs so when I produced good photographs, there was something far more exciting about it.

Year 12 Example #2:

I came across John Stezaker’s work online when I was doing research. His work made me realise that photography can be put together in so many different ways and made me see a new type of collage. It also was new to me because of the way he used found photography. It made me think about how I could make a response

to this process, and what the idea behind it would be. I started to think about the theme of contrast and all the different ways it could be perceived. I liked the way he used faces of people against backgrounds of landscapes; I felt that his photography of people against an entirely different photograph of a forest screamed isolation, therefore screamed emotion. This led me to the idea of contrasting emotions of faces against faces and faces against landscapes. This was when I discovered how much of a meaning I wanted my work to have.

Year 12 Example #3:

I was hoping to design a concept of emotions in motion ... When making my work I noticed that certain colours reflect different emotions ... The lines and texture that different liquids and shapes create show off the different moods one person can feel. The poster image mirrors the idea of 'hidden feelings'. Emotions in motion. The 3D model allows the audience to create their own interpretation of the mood of the image. Placing them with spaces in between demonstrated the change between the moods. I love the artist Bill Viola and the moods that he generates through the motion of water and human impact. I love the idea that water is unpredictable just like humans.

Year 12 Example #4:

When planning my idea for my final piece I took most of my inspiration from the documentaries we had watched as I feel I pick up more ideas of my own from visually seeing other people's work through things like videos because I understand them better and I can quickly adapt from them to form my own theories or creations.

Year 12 Example #5:

I have found photography tricky but rewarding and everything I have learnt has helped me to understand the message within images as well as understand why photographers feel the need to take a certain picture at a certain time in a certain place. For me, the most important thing I have learnt so far is that photography lets you understand and express your feelings through images which in return allows others to try and un-pick the hidden message within the picture (which for each individual will be a different process and outcome) ... I feel like I have really connected with the final outcome as, throughout the process, I connected both emotionally and personally with the ideas behind piecing back together something broken.

Year 13 Example #1:

I feel my approach to art in general has changed because of this surrealism project. I feel more confident as an artist and that I feel I can see the world differently. It has proven to me art is not just creating something beautiful or one of a kind it can be about noticing something and making others notice. The term "marvellous in the everyday" has changed my approach to art especially photography as I think this is the fundamental idea in photography and that it is what makes a photograph powerful ... I feel I have created a body of work that develops and changes.

Year 13 Example #2:

I started looking at the work of Situationists and tried to create my own situations within my area. I found my area was very regimented so I chose to disturb this by leaving humorous Post It notes, inspired by the work David Shrigley. While doing this work I began to notice the 'marvellous in the everyday' (Robert Desnos), and how something that at first appears regular and mundane can be changed. I then began to look at some photographers who take photos at night ... Both final outcomes do portray my work as an artist quite well. They show how I have looked at my local area and changed the atmosphere to create a different side to it.

These examples seem to indicate that the students recognise the benefits of several features of the photography course:

- The emphasis on research about, analysis of and reflection about the work of a range of reputable artists with a particular focus on contemporary practice.
- The significance of students developing their own ideas and concepts in the process of responding to the work of others (rather than attempting a more straightforward pastiche).
- The importance of students reflecting critically on their own learning journey and the development of a range of habits of mind (particularly exploring & investigating, sharing the 'product', sticking with difficulty, tolerating uncertainty, crafting & improving, reflecting critically, developing techniques, using intuition and playing with possibilities).
- The encouragement provided for students to consider their work as artists who use photography and as a form of contemporary practice.

It is certainly the case that some students either don't recognise these as features of the course experience or are resistant to the notion that they are doing anything other than studying an A level. However, a significant number of students of varying abilities appear to have grasped that something else is at stake and are able to put this into words.

G. Visit and photo shoot and H. Working alongside a contemporary artist

I decided that the combination of a visit to a series of galleries and a photo shoot for the Year 12 class would be beneficial in the early stages of their preparations for Unit 2: The Externally Set Task. I also wanted the students to have the opportunity of working with a contemporary artist. Initially, my plan was to take them to an artist's studio. However, in discussions with artist Anna Lucas⁴¹ (who I had met during the 'In Site of Learning' project at Tate) she reminded me that, although she had a work space in her garden, she considered her studio to be wherever she was working. Given the lack of studio space in school I was interested in Anna's practice and the way she might model a way of working outside the studio environment. The school agreed to pay Anna to work with the students over two days. Day 1 would be the trip and photo shoot and on Day 2 Anna would work with the students in school. Anna's practice involves working with film and video but also encompasses drawing and still images. At Tate she had spoken about the importance of

⁴¹ <http://annalucas.co.uk/about/>

“working alongside” students as a teacher/practitioner. I felt that she would be able to not only challenge the students but also provide me with some valuable new pedagogic tools in my quest to better understand the way contemporary artists think and work.

What struck me most was the way Anna’s practice, her strategies for looking and thinking, enabled her to not only tolerate uncertainty but actively embrace a condition of not knowing. This ability to suspend a desire for resolution, to maintain an openness to possibility and play, relying on her intuition, seems consistent with much writing about contemporary art. Finding ways to encourage this approach in school is challenging since the experience of learning for many students (and their teachers) is dominated by tests or assessed tasks designed to produce attainment data. The frequency with which this data is requested often leaves little room for playful experimentation. Nevertheless, a commitment to not knowing and tolerating uncertainty is vitally important if we wish to promote genuine enquiry, rather than formulaic box ticking exercises, for our young people.

Anna suggested the galleries we should visit and devised all the activities for both days. She chose three exhibitions: William Burroughs’ photographs at The Photographers’ Gallery, a film by Jaki Irvine at Frith Street Gallery and an installation by Richard Hamilton at the ICA. Each of the associated tasks encouraged the students to look carefully and to record the process of their looking visually using drawing and photography. She was keen to develop this ability to think visually first rather than with words, to allow time for seeing, to think in pictures. These prolonged periods of silent looking were quite uncomfortable for some students. On a gallery visit my tendency would be to encourage debate and discussion quite quickly. Anna reminded us that the effort of attentive looking requires concentration and that it is primarily a physical process. One task in particular was drawn directly from Anna’s practice. Whilst watching the Jaki Irvine film she asked the students to create blind movie drawings.⁴² Each student was given a piece of carbon paper, black card and a pencil. They were required to make drawings representing the movement of their eyes as they scanned the film. This process again foregrounded the business of looking and removed any concerns about drawing skill. The work on the second day in school was focused on curatorial issues. Having amassed a considerable number of images from day 1, the students were asked to make a selection. Anna used a variety of strategies to promote a collaborative exhibition of these images on the classroom wall. These were then used to create a film documenting each student’s personal selection of a sequence of 5 images. Again, Anna’s practice⁴³ was the starting point for this activity. The lights were turned off and each student conducted his/her tour using torch light.

I made a short film⁴⁴ of the first day’s activities. Appendix 3 contains Anna’s notes for both days which provide a detailed description of the activities.

There were several extremely positive outcomes:

- The majority of the students expressed an awareness and some understanding of Anna’s practice as an artist. The tasks set by Anna on both days reflected her concerns and

⁴² <http://annalucas.co.uk/work/blind-movies>

⁴³ <http://annalucas.co.uk/work/things-that-had-stories-rubbed-out/>

⁴⁴ <https://vimeo.com/87981753>

ways of working. Students were encouraged to think carefully about their looking, to avoid cliché, to frame, juxtapose and sequence their images, to articulate what they thought they had seen, to consider types of shot, genre and point of view, to notice the relationship between sound and image etc.

- Each of the galleries we visited was relatively unknown to the students, thus developing their cultural awareness. The students were exposed to exciting and challenging exhibitions and encouraged to question conventional exhibition display strategies (particularly at Frith Street and the ICA).
- The students created lots of images⁴⁵ on the walk to and between the galleries. In excess of 1000 images were made, providing them with lots of material to use subsequently.
- The work on the second day in school provided the students with another opportunity to work alongside an artist, to edit, sequence and display images from the gallery visits and to create a film⁴⁶ documenting ways of looking at these images. Anna spoke about her work and showed several examples.
- I was able to take on a slightly different role to the typical classroom teacher on both days. My colleague and I accompanied the trip but were able to behave as active participants in the various tasks, working alongside the students, since Anna was the designated leader of the group. On the second day, I took part in the activities as if I was one of the students, responding to Anna's instructions and guidance. This was liberating for me and provided the students with an opportunity to view me working creatively.
- Both the trip and the workshop provided lots of opportunities for students to develop their Habits of Mind. There was a particular emphasis on collaboration, both in terms of the visual research on Day 1 and during the making of the film on Day 2.

The less positive aspects of the experience were largely caused by the constraints of school life. Some students felt unable to attend either the trip and/or the workshop due to pressure of work elsewhere. Some students struggled to engage fully with the challenges presented, preferring to remain aloof or expressing bewilderment. One student described the experience as "too arty"! I wonder whether the activities would have been even more successful had they taken place near the start of the course. However, despite these frustrations, I am convinced that this model of working is hugely beneficial for both students and staff members and I am committed to finding ways to develop this practice in the future.

⁴⁵ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tallisphoto/sets/72157641618754514/>

⁴⁶ <https://vimeo.com/87981754>

Conclusion

The following is an extract from Ofsted's 2013 supplementary subject-specific guidance for Art, craft and design:⁴⁷

Outstanding (1)

Pupils demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of other artists, craftmakers and designers. They think and act like creative practitioners by using their knowledge and understanding to inform, inspire and interpret ideas, observations and feelings.

Pupils show independence, initiative and originality to develop their creativity. In relation to their ages and stages of learning, all groups of pupils select and use materials, processes and techniques skilfully and inventively to realise intentions and capitalise on the unexpected.

Pupils reflect on, analyse and critically evaluate their own work and that of other pupils and creative practitioners to instigate, pursue and develop work in art, craft and design that is uniquely meaningful to them.

They are productive, sustain intense interest, develop resilience and understand that creative practice is often challenging, purposeful and collaborative.

This guidance presents teachers of art, craft and design with an exciting and challenging set of criteria. The emphasis on thinking and acting “like creative practitioners”, the need for students to “show independence” and embrace “the unexpected”, to create “uniquely meaningful” work and “develop resilience” in their “practice” all suggest a creative pedagogy that seeks to engage with contemporary artists, craft makers and designers. Fortunately, the current assessment criteria⁴⁸ for qualifications at KS4 and 5 are also in sympathy with these aims, rewarding students for thinking and behaving like artists.

In order to fully support young artists it is vital that they have opportunities to develop their own practice, to access works of art first hand and to work alongside creative practitioners. Their teachers too require the same kinds of opportunities if they aspire to become outstanding professional learners. It is easy to feel disheartened by current attitudes to art, craft and design in schools. The impact of the EBacc⁴⁹, discount codes and the Progress 8 performance measure⁵⁰, cuts in funding and news that schools are getting rid of arts subjects from the curriculum⁵¹ are all indicative of the view that the arts lack rigour, are

⁴⁷ http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/inspection--forms-and-guides/supplementary_subject_specific_guidance/Supplementary%20subject-specific%20guidance%20for%20art%2C%20craft%20and%20design.pdf

⁴⁸ <http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/specifications/alevel/AQA-2200-W-SP-14.PDF>

⁴⁹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/b00231686/english-baccalaureate-information-for-schools>

⁵⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>

⁵¹ http://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/userfiles/files/CLA_Arts_GCSEs_research_2013.pdf

'soft' subjects specially suited to non-academic students. This research project has been an important reminder for me that a high quality arts education is a fundamental right for all young people.

I began this research with what I thought was a simple question:

If I encourage my Year 12 and 13 photography students to inhabit the role of artist/photographer, with a practice of their own, will they become more independent and resilient?

It is impossible for me to answer this question with any degree of certainty. Those students who appear to be more independent and resilient may well have developed these habits of mind had I adopted an entirely different pedagogy. Not all of the students have enjoyed the process of reflecting on their practice or of engaging with contemporary art. Some have thrived on the challenge and are confident in articulating the progress they feel they have made. I am certainly encouraged by the quality and sophistication of the work the Year 12 students have produced for Unit 1.⁵² There is tentative evidence that some students are aware of having developed a new understanding of art and themselves. I am aware that further research is needed here. Whereas schools tend to focus on and assess progress in acquiring propositional (knowing what) and procedural (knowing how) types of learning, I am interested in attempting further research about other learning outcomes less easily assessed and yet central to an arts pedagogy. These might include axiological learning (changed values) and ontological learning (feeling differently related to things). I feel fortunate to be part of a reference group at Tate which is engaged in evaluating the particular affordances of its own model of CPD for teachers and for whom these alternative frameworks are key to understanding what happens when teachers learn in a gallery setting. This, I hope, will help me structure similar enquiries in school. I'm also interested in re-thinking assessment models in the arts both in the light of the removal of National Curriculum levels at KS3 and in order to place more emphasis on the above types of learning processes and the development of creative learning Habits of Mind.

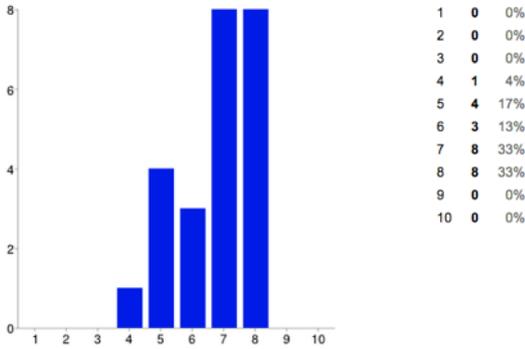
Perhaps the most valuable aspect of this research, however, has been on my own sense of growth as a teacher. As someone who didn't attend art college and who was never trained to be an artist, the last few months have been an exciting and energising journey of discovery and affirmation. I feel I have developed a much better sense of what it means to be a contemporary artist. I have gained an insight into the way artists think and work, their tolerance for uncertainty, their ability to embrace not knowing and their ceaseless curiosity. I have developed a newfound commitment to the benefits of an arts education. I feel better able to support my students now as they develop their own artistic identities. I am also committed to the process of action research and the potential benefits for my school of engaging more widely in this approach to professional learning.

⁵² <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tallisphoto/sets/72157642064883715/>

APPENDIX 1: Survey Results

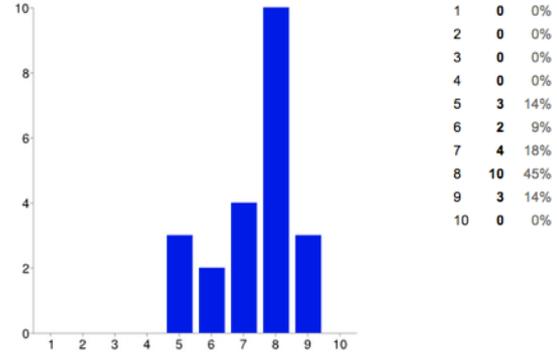
Survey #1

AO1: How successful are you at generating creative ideas based on detailed research?

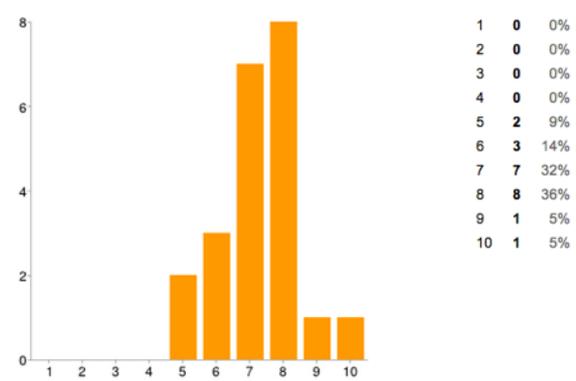
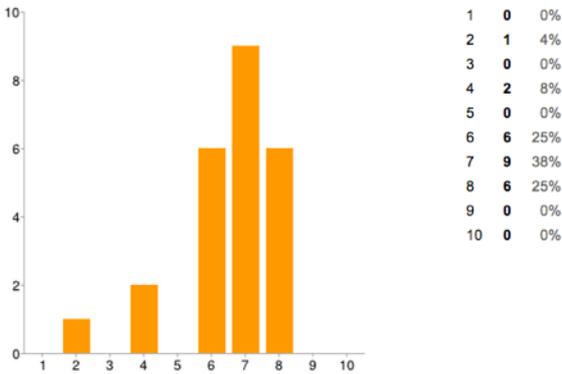


Survey #2

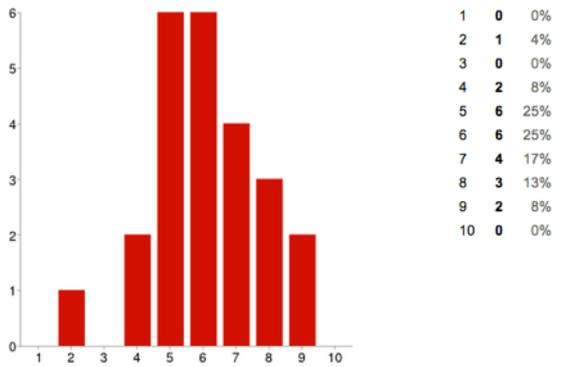
AO1: How successful are you at generating creative ideas based on detailed research?



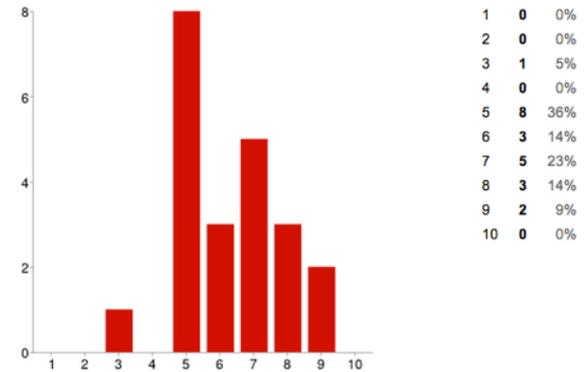
AO2: How successful are you at experimenting with materials, techniques and processes and refining your work as it develops?



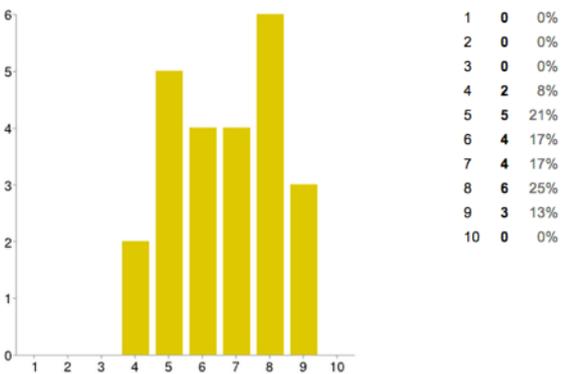
AO3: How successful are you at documenting your work imaginatively?



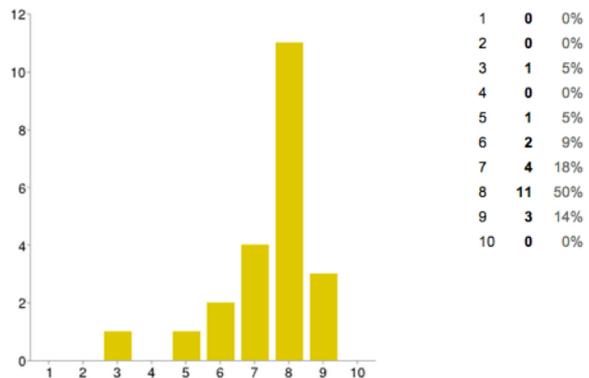
AO3: How successful are you at documenting your work imaginatively?



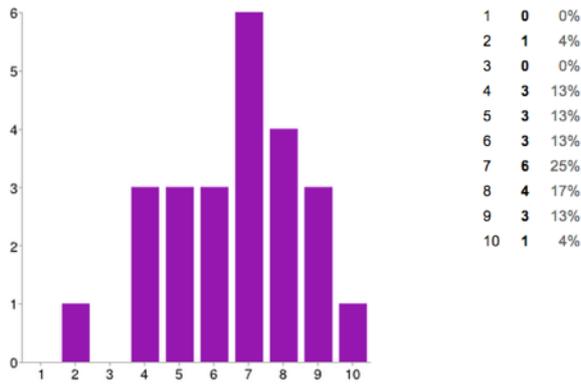
AO4: How successful are you at completing work that is personal and meaningful?



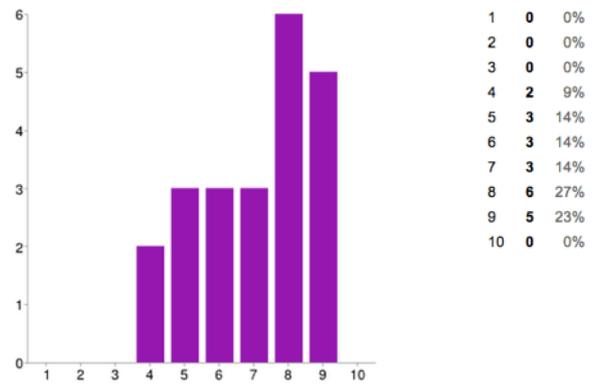
AO4: How successful are you at completing work that is personal and meaningful?



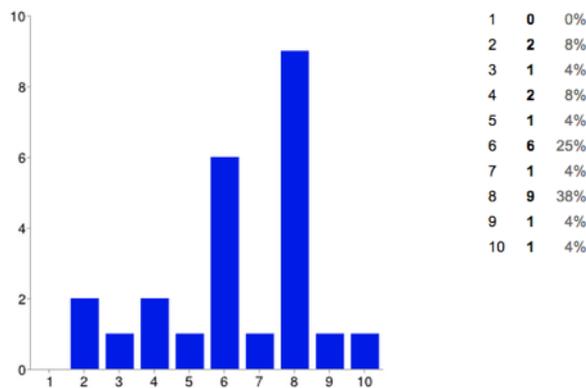
How confident do you feel about your ability to be inquisitive?



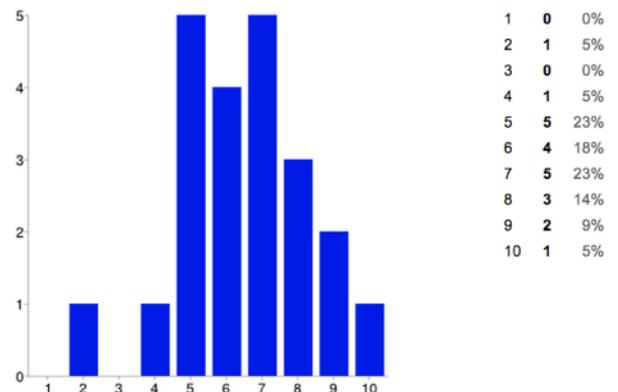
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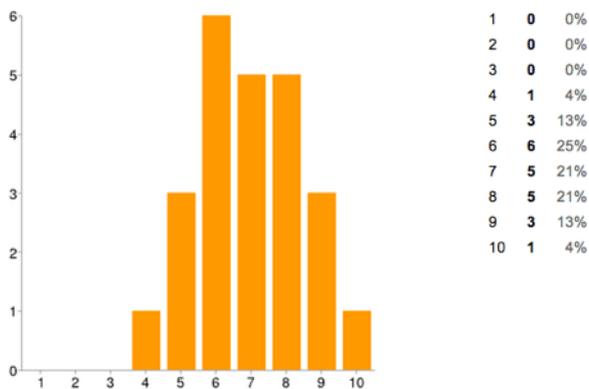
How confident do you feel about your ability to be collaborative?



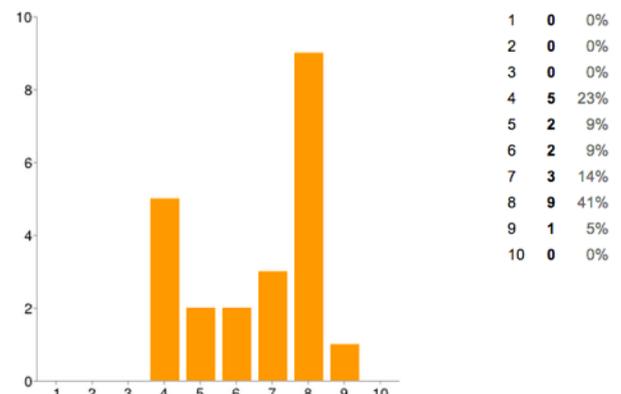
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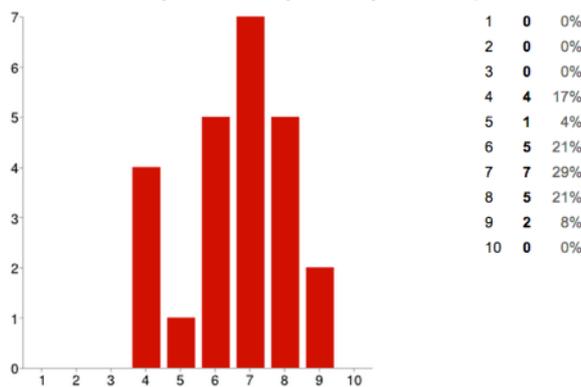
How confident do you feel about your ability to be persistent?



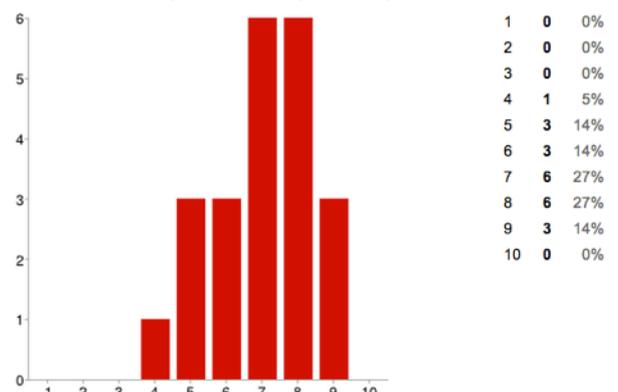
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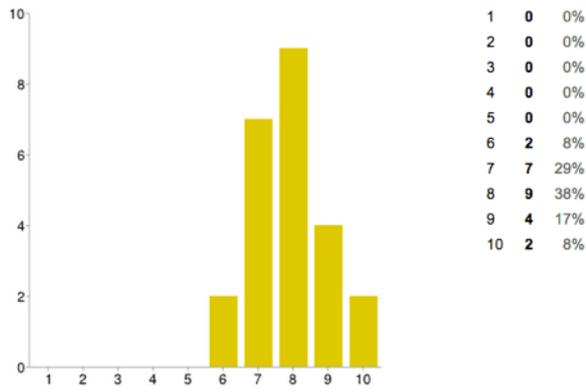
How confident do you feel about your ability to be disciplined?



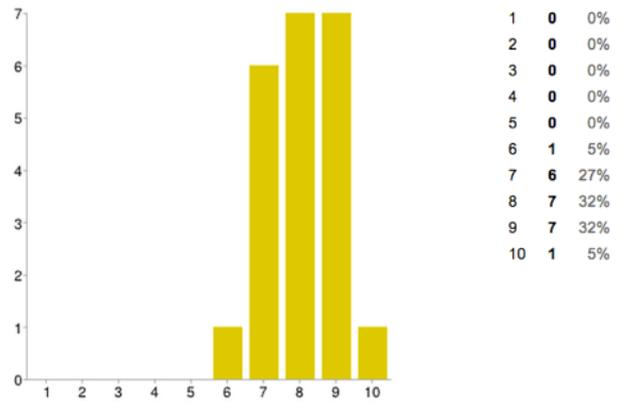
How confident do you feel about your ability to be disciplined?



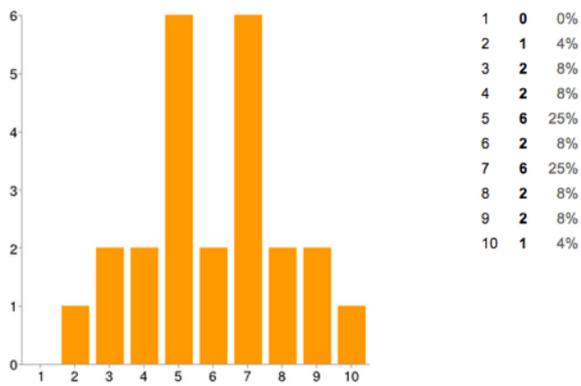
How confident do you feel about your ability to be imaginative?



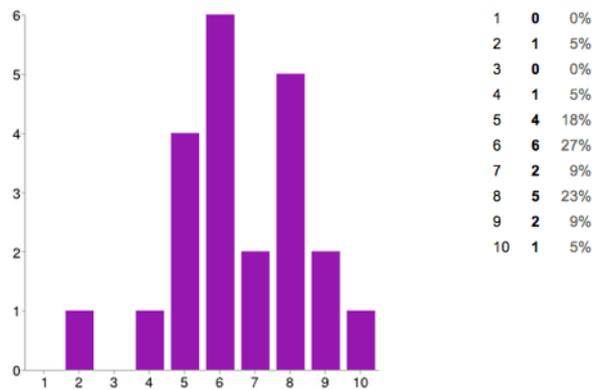
How confident do you feel about your ability to be imaginative?



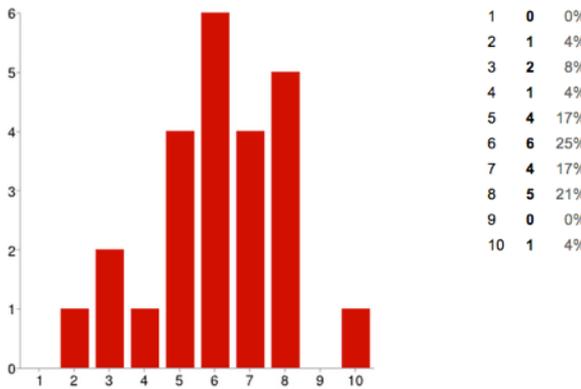
How comfortable do you feel about describing yourself as an artist?



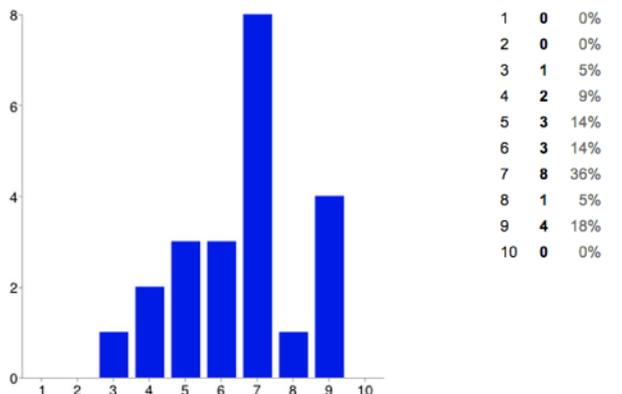
How comfortable do you feel about describing yourself as an artist?



How comfortable do you feel about describing yourself as a photographer?

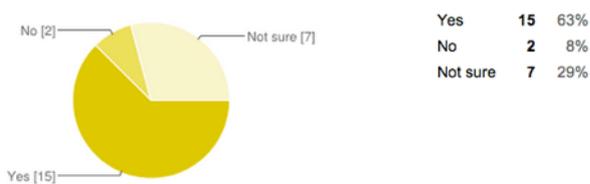


How comfortable do you feel about describing yourself as a photographer?

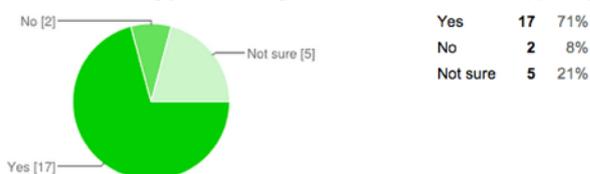


Survey #1

Do you feel as though you have a 'practice' as an artist/photographer?

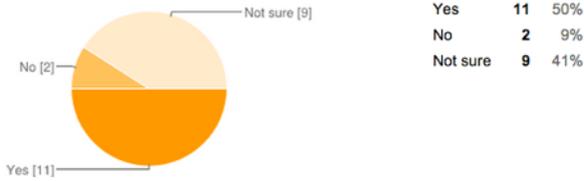


Do you think the learning you are doing about the arts in school supports your development as an artist?

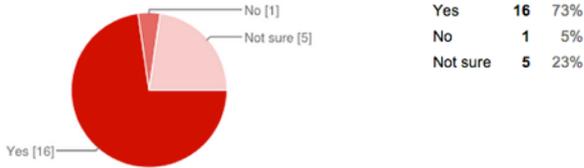


Survey #2

Do you feel as though you have a 'practice' as an artist/photographer?

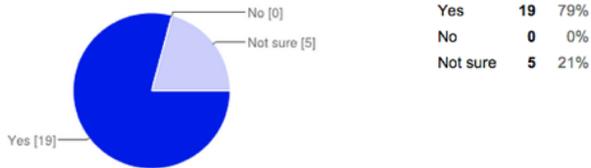


Do you think the learning you are doing about the arts in school supports your development as an artist?

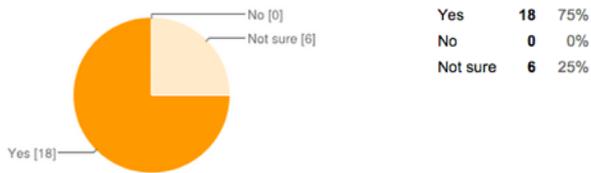


Survey #1

Are you planning to continue your study of the arts beyond school?

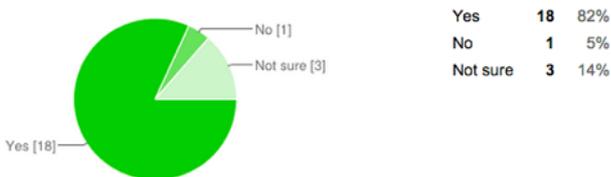


Are you interested in working in the creative industries as an artist/photographer/designer etc.?

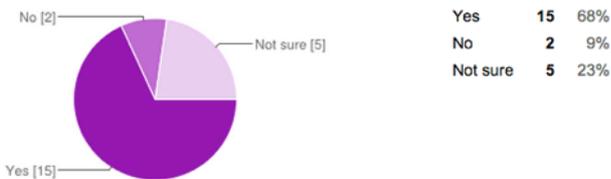


Survey #2

Are you planning to continue your study of the arts beyond school?



Are you interested in working in the creative industries as an artist/photographer/designer etc.?



APPENDIX 2: Active Listening Prompts

Questions that seek clarification of students' understanding

Can you explain?
What do you mean by ? *Defining*
Can you give me an example of ?
How does that help...? *Supporting*
Does anyone have a question...? *Enquiring*

Questions that probe students reasons and evidence

Why do you think that...? *Forming an argument*
How do we know that...? *Assumptions*
What are your reasons...? *Reasons*
Do you have evidence...?
Can you give me an example/counter-example..?

Questions that explore alternative views

Can you put it another way..? *Re-stating a view*
Is there another point of view...? *Speculation*
What if someone were to suggest that...?
What would someone who disagree with you say...?
What is the difference between those views/ideas...?

Questions that test implications and consequences

What follows from what you say...? *Implications*
Does that fit with what we said earlier...? *Consistency*
What would be the consequence of that...?
Is there a general rule for that...?
How could you test this to see if it were true...?

Questions about questions/discussions

Do you have a question about that...?
What kind of question is it...? *Analysing*
How does what was said help us...? *Connecting*
Where have we got to...? *Summarising*
Who can summarise so far...?
Are we any closer to answering the question...? *Drawing conclusions*

APPENDIX 3: Anna Lucas Notes

Galleries Visit and Photo Shoot – Day 1

1. The Photographers' Gallery

Three classic artists using photography – the cut up – and sequence both in text and image, refs to film, a great era/ fundamentally important figures across three genres to talk about

<http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/taking-shots-the-photography-of-william-s-burroughs>

2. Frith Street Gallery

contemporary female artist – moving image and photographic installation, relationship with sound and image. Colour. Good Commercial gallery.

http://www.frithstreetgallery.com/shows/view/jaki_irvine_this_thing_echoes

3. Institute of Contemporary Art

Hamilton - Link to Photographers gallery show, but less conventional presentation

<http://www.ica.org.uk/whats-on/richard-hamilton-ica>

Materials

Day 1

Black White Grey 6x4" card

Silver pencils

Carbon paper

Sharp HB pencils

White Letraset

DSLR charged with clear space – mini tripod

Day 2

Live link to projector from video camera

DSLRs linked to computers. Print option for specific prints

Photocopier

Powerpoint

Gallery Visits

10 – 10.30

Intro

I want to know:

How are you looking? What are you seeing?

But I only want to know from a very small amount of text, and a precise set of photos that you create.

Making sense and order from the chaos of the world. The frame can help this – how it contains and extends the space. Depth of field – what is picked out. Formal aspects. When I am taking a photo I am not fully conscious of all these things, - I might have made a precise frame, but something moves within it, the light changes. How it helps my looking, to be looking through a camera.

Studio practice, thinking practise, curiosity and problem solving.

So you need to think about exactly and precisely what you are showing me, and how. That means if there is a detail in a work you want to capture, you need to find a way to present just that- so you may need to cover part of the image, or use depth of field, or cropping, or move the camera closer or further. Did you want me to see the orange McDonalds, or glowing Fire escape sign in the background?

Finding ways to show this through photography and moving image

10..30-11.30 See work exhibited

Choose one or two of these ways of documenting the work:

These instructions are passed from one student to another, so they all share the information

KIMS GAME

*Look at an image for a minute. Turn away from it and describe it. Film the image with the remembered description as a voice over. Repeat over time gaining or losing clarity as you go.
You can do this on your own, or with others.*

FRAME PAIRS

Look at a work, hand frame a section or detail of a work that intrigues you. Describe your frame in detail from corner to corner to someone else who will frame it with a (video/mobile) camera capturing both your description and their attempt to precisely capture it as a moving image work. (or use drawing and text as a still frame and subtitle)

PHOTOGRAPH A PHOTOGRAPH

*Using three simple shots based on Wide shot, Mid Shot, Close Up.
How does this change the context of the original work?*

SILVER DRAWING

Draw only the light or highlights in a photo. Use silver on 6"x4"white or grey card

THEN – everyone must do this:

WHAT CAN YOU SEE?

*Take another person to the work that inspires you the most.
Ask the other person to tell you what they see.
Write down single sentence description*

SHOT/GENRE MOTIF

*Together, Identify the crucial qualities of an image– genre, and formal aspects, photographers point of view
Eg: Industrial/low wide shot
Self portrait – camera in hand/Mid shot straight to camera
Leisure/deep space/wide shot
Use these characteristics to generate your own photos as you journey to the next venue*

How to avoid standard street shots of badly dressed brits on branded streets?

11.30-1

Eat lunch, document journey and get to Frith St

1-1.30

Frith St Gallery Jaki Irvine

Gather text from soundtrack – either by scripting the action OR transcribing fragments of text you hear

Blind carbon drawing of film – black on black

SEQUENCE

Create video sequence of image wall? How will you move across the images? Which will you show us first, for how long? What will you exclude. Do you need to walk away and towards the wall. Do you need help from someone else?

Review photos taken. Select your favourite.
Show another person, repeat exercises from earlier
WHAT CAN YOU SEE?
SHOT/GENRE MOTIF

Together, Identify the crucial qualities of an image— genre, and formal aspects, photographers point of view

Eg: Industrial/low wide shot

Self portrait – camera in hand/Mid shot straight to camera

Leisure/deep space/wide shot

Use these characteristics to generate your own photos as you journey to the next venue

Be more specific this time. Use these revised instructions to generate work to next venue

Make something
Do something to it
Do something to that

Jasper Johns

1.30-2

Photograph journey to ICA

2-3

See show at ICA

Images next to others, fluid movement.

Just the frame – upstairs, overlaid, multiple planes

Presentation of photography

SEQUENCE and JUXTAPOSITION

Choose a juxtaposition across space to photograph/draw.

Really look at the edges, where one thing joins or overlaps another, what meaning or formal connections are being made.

How do they change as you move around

EDGES and FRAMES, IMAGE WITHIN IMAGE

Make a photograph without figurative representation. Think about what is in the frame, what is framing what?

Information display, display on its own

Cup of tea and discussion in bar

Bookshop browse

Themes to address:

Chance – calculated/structured – only some elements left to chance –

Eg: structure/instruction based formula

Day 2

School classroom

Live Subtitles

Live Collage

(We didn't do this in the end)

NOSTALGIA

Using found images/postcards/images from magazines
Standing in a line, first person holds their image to the camera whilst second person describes their image and so on – a time lag between description and image seen. In camera edit. Show as loop
(simple exercise in non diegetic sound, use of stills to make moving image, a group portrait, slippage between comprehension of an image and what we are told about it, individual choice and use of words, refers to Hollis Frampton piece named Nostalgia –a classic film about photographic image, memory etc)
magazine images, video camera, tripod

LIVE OPTICALS

Use a hole in a card as a frame in front of a static camera to show what you want to see
Speak or Add handwritten text saying what you wish was happening
Live opticals use coloured paper (origami paper) to add/obscure parts of the image
coloured paper, card, pens, camera

EDIT TRACING

From Rostrum juxtaposition or animated analysis or Torchlight stills, select juxtaposed images and trace the area where they join in as much detail as possible. If these were two moving images, what might the edit be like? What might the film be? Eg: jump cut, smooth edit, narrative/abstract/documentary/cinematic etc
Tracing paper, pencil, selection of images

Double projection (one overlapping the other a bit)
Powerpoint doc black background courier font text, create slideshow of descriptive text

Upload all images from previous day
Make a selection – up to 6 images that could form a sequence
Print

AL, and others to Work with this body of images with live link to projector,

Select one – install it
Select another – thoughtfully place it
Move one
Add/remove one

Look for a minute- create a sequence of five images
Write a one sentence description for each
Make a diagram, like a dot to dot across the space linking each image in sequence

IN darkness, using torchlight, decide on the pace and time you will give to showing each image to the camera.
Co-ordinate group to film each other illuminating the images with torchlight.
Call the shot – set the atmosphere of quiet concentration
Take 2, refinements
Take 3?

Project film over curated show
Add powerpoint descriptions of images as subtitles

Adapt, transform, continue to play with image juxtaposition, framing, cropping and connection to text

Decision –making – getting to know your work
Draw/trace the/an image you have taken
Write the image – as a script/direct sentence
Get someone else to describe your image – write that down
Start sequencing, juxtaposing
Re-photograph the shift
Print and re-present the new one within the old

Where is this leading?
What is the context?
What do I need?
How to use the available facilities? Lights/backdrop.