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Visual
Literacy

engage 38

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Foreword

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Director engage

The publication of an engage Journal on the topic of visual literacy is timely, as engage, together with the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust and the National Association of Writers in Education announces the hosts of the 2016-17 Max Reinhardt Literacy Awards (MRLA): BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Leeds Art Gallery and York Art Gallery. The awards were conceived and developed by the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust to encourage visual arts venues to use their collections, displays and buildings to work with schools on projects that would inspire children and young peoples' literacy and creative writing. As the National Association for Gallery Education, we feel strongly that the awards and the educational resources produced by the venues are a valuable way to facilitate cross-curricular work in schools, and to enable children and young people to connect with the visual arts through writing and literacy.

Through the pilot MRLA programme in 2014-15, three venues worked with creative writers who took inspiration from their collections and displays for work around literacy and creative writing: Manchester Art Gallery, Kettle's Yard in Cambridge and Falmouth Art Gallery. Resources were produced by Manchester Art Gallery and Kettle's Yard Gallery. Evaluation of the pilot was impressive, with clear evidence that participants' confidence and competence as writers grew as a result of engagement in the programme. Emma Carroll's article in this issue explores her experience of taking part in the project and how it built on the gallery's inspiring work with teachers and teacher trainees, in developing tools for others to use.

Another contributor to this issue, Claire Collison, was the creative writer at Kettle's Yard throughout the inaugural MRLA. Her article makes for poignant and inspiring reading in the way that it charts her experience of illness. Collison, as a visual artist who has more recently turned to writing, is an interesting example of someone who models both visual literacy and creative writing skills. As Barbara Dougan notes in her editorial, digital and social media embrace visual imagery and demand a high

degree of visual literacy from users. The explosion of digital and social media coincides with a steep downturn in public investment in the arts, particularly in England since the 2008 recession, and the erosion of art and design education in the state-funded formal education sector in England. As Kathryn Welford from Yorkshire Sculpture Park explains in her article, which looks at the history of the National Arts Education Archive at the venue, there have been other periods since the archive was established in 1945, when creative education has not had primacy in the state sector. Welford argues that arts organisations and artists are perfectly placed to model how the creativity of children and young people of all abilities can be nurtured, through the arts and through cross-curricular work. engage will continue to champion the importance of creative education for children and young people and the vital role that artists and arts organisations play in supporting this, through programmes such as the Max Reinhardt Literacy Awards, Children's Art Week, Generation ART and the Alexandra Reinhardt Memorial Award. engage is grateful to the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust for their support of MRLA and to The Ernest Cook Trust for their additional support for the 2016/17 programme.

Editor's introduction

Barbara Dougan

This edition of the engage Journal explores the purposes and value of viewing, critically engaging and creating in the visual arts, and the broader world of imagery and objects.

The term 'visual literacy' was first coined in 1969 by John Debes, who gave the following definition:

'*Visual literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment.*' [1]

Since the concept was outlined by Debes there has been lively debate about what the term means and its implications, informed by different ideologies and changing circumstances. As Karen Raney summarises, broadly 'the change has been from thinking of literacy as a set of fixed skills, to thinking of literacies – in the plural – as kinds of social practices'.[2]

Currently – at least in the United Kingdom – reductions to public funding are threatening galleries and museums, and in England particularly the status of the arts is being undermined in schools and further education. The opportunities to engage critically with historical and contemporary objects and images, and learn how to do so, are arguably eroding. This is occurring during a vast increase in the employment of imagery in the arts and the expanding, sophisticated fields of marketing, the internet, print, digital and social media and digital entertainment. A critical engagement with, and understanding of images and objects is vital to understanding the world.

In his article, **Ernst Wagner** reports on a survey of national art education curricula across 28 European states, that analyses 'visual literacy' and the competencies which result in 'European, visually literate citizens who can lead a successful life

(personal domain), succeed in their career (occupational domain) and play an active part in social, public and political life (public domain).' The research undertaken by the *European Network for Visual Literacy (ENViL)* has developed the *Common European Framework of Reference on Visual Literacy,* published in August 2016.

It was a prerequisite to find a common understanding of visual literacy. 'In the first sense *literacy* is understood as the ability to read and write. But there is a broader definition of literacy, which we have referred to': 'Literacy involves a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development'.[3] This conception expands the idea of literacy to further symbol systems than language. Further, to inform the framework:

'we decided to adhere to the definition of Brill, Kim and Branch who define visual literacy – independent from specific areas – as "a group of acquired sub-competencies for interpreting and composing visible messages. A visually literate person is able to a) discriminate and make sense of visible objects as part of a visual acuity, b) create static and dynamic visible objects effectively in a defined space, c) comprehend and appreciate the visual testaments of others, and d) conjure objects in the mind's eye."'

In its employment of 'situations' in which individuals act, 'competencies' and 'sub-competencies' the framework addresses Raney's assertion that:

'within this expanded field of visual culture, we need to be specific in respect of two things: particular kinds of products and particular kinds of responses or abilities. By visual literacy do we mean being able to follow MTV, or being able to discuss the symbolism in a medieval altarpiece? Do we mean being able to tell a Morisot from a Manet, or being able to analyse an advertisement in terms of theories about representing the 'other'? One can be versed in fashion codes, but unable to relate to a silent film. One can draw, but know nothing about the conventions of soap operas. To broaden our scope but refuse to generalise, is to recognise that there is a huge range of visual skills, habits and inclinations which are called upon in different contexts and for different purposes.' [4]

Wagner highlights issues that other contributors discuss, particularly the problematic reliance on linguistic literacy in developing visual literacy, and the necessity for verbal and language skills to satisfy some of the competencies.

'… a unique problem occurs with regard to the sub-competencies in visual literacy that require the medium of language in order to explore images/objects. These include the sub-competencies describe, analyse and interpret images/objects. Here, in the context of education, level scales must not only include terms and descriptions related to artistic thought but must also refer to levels of general linguistic competency, i.e. they must combine the two. A high level in visual literacy is therefore dependent on a high level of linguistic

*competency. This also applies when the
performance of that which is recognised visually
is linked to language, such as when visual processes
are reflected in the medium of language
(e.g. naming, explaining, justifying).'*

The employment of the word 'literacy' is cited
by Raney as a particular focus of controversy.
In her research:

*'Answers to the question: ''do you use the term
visual literacy?'' ranged from ''yes of course'', to
''absolutely not!'' Why is this the case? Coupling
''visual'' with ''literacy'' does two things. First, it
introduces the metaphor of language, provoking
debates about the value of linguistic metaphors for
getting to grips with visual things. These are in
essence debates about the nature of words and
images and how we understand them. Second,
'literacy' suggests entitlement or necessity, and the
need to seek out deficiencies and remedy them.'* [5]

Education policies and curricula inevitably reflect the
broader political and economic context. The global
recession since 2008 has led to a demand for
conservative, knowledge and skills-focused curricula,
with increased demand for formal testing and
measureable outcomes. In describing the
progressive art education of 1960s Britain,
Kathryn Welford evokes a very different era,
when the privations of the Second World War
and its aftermath were making way for greater
prosperity, more liberal attitudes and an optimistic
interest in new ideas and opportunities.

Welford writes from her position as Formal Learning
Coordinator at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP), which
houses the National Arts Education Archive (NAEA).
The NAEA, which opened in 1985, traces
developments in art, craft and design education
in the United Kingdom and is a major resource for
arts education research – and specifically for YSP
learning and curatorial programming. A large part
of the archive is from the personal collection of Alec
Clegg, West Riding Chief Education Officer from
1945 to 1972. A hugely influential figure – in Britain
and abroad – Clegg believed that the creative arts
are fundamental to the moral and educational
development of children, emphasising the whole
person and the importance of developing all areas
of personality, abilities and potential.

Clegg reacted against an education system in the
middle of the last century that was similar to that
promoted today. He philosophically reminded an
audience in 1956 that:

*'When we over-emphasise the spirit and
personality of the child, the cure is alleged to be
more rote-learning, more distilled techniques,
more obedience and more authority. When we
eventually become too rigid the cure is more
self-expression and more "finding out" – And so
the pendulum swings and the swinging must be as
old as education itself. It swings between mind and
spirit, between intellect and personality, between
the cognitive and affective, between obedience
and self-realisation, between the "loaves and
hyacinths.'* [6]

There are many waiting for the pendulum to start to swing the other way, but in the meantime, as Welford argues, arts organisations – galleries and museums, and artists – do exploratory, reflective and nurturing work with children and young people. In working with schools they advocate by example what can be achieved, amongst all learners and not just the more academic, in art and across the curriculum.

Kate Noble, Education Officer at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, carried out doctoral research into the development of visual literacy in young children, and has focused since in her work at the museum on how children learn through analysing and responding to images. Noble discusses different definitions of visual literacy, referencing Boughton's[7] three aspects; communicative visual literacy, aesthetic visual literacy and artistic visual literacy, and describes her research through case studies with children aged five, seven, and nine. These ages were chosen due to wide recognition that seven is a crucial year in the artistic development of children and the studies found a close link with meta-cognition, the means by which individuals learn to control and regulate their thinking.

Noble also describes the Fitzwilliam's participation in the National Gallery's *Take One Picture Initial Teacher Education Cultural Placement Programme.*[8] She cites the positive responses from the trainees following a week-long cultural placement for primary Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) teachers, what they have learnt and the impact it will have on the way that they teach, in art and across the curriculum.

The ways galleries and museums support schools and can complement the work of teachers is also explored by **Emma Carroll** and **Lynn McGrane**. Carroll writes from Manchester Art Gallery, which hosted the Max Reinhardt Literacy Award in 2014-15. The gallery applied for the award with the specific objective of developing its schools' literacy programme for secondary schools and responding to the needs of teachers in teaching towards a new GSCE examination. McGrane describes Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) as 'an educational curriculum and teaching method which is designed to enable students to develop aesthetic and language literacy and critical thinking skills'. Having trained in VTS, she has put its methods into practice in Dublin, in partnership with Dublin City Arts Office, the Lab Gallery and Central Model Senior School and she reports on the project and its impact on students, as noted by their teachers.

Claire Gunningham writes from the perspective of an artist who was a gallery educator and is now a primary school teacher, and who uses visual literacy as a tool in her teaching. She identified that one of her pupils who struggled with learning and particularly found writing difficult, found it easier to understand and communicate by images. Gunningham consequently developed ways of using visual literacy to increase achievement in conventional literacy, using paintings as the starting point for creative writing, and reports on the

improvements to the children's work and their enjoyment.

Pre-school children are the subject of **Glenna Barlow**, who has developed weekly sessions for them and their adults at Columbia Museum of Art in the US:

'While many of our participants are not yet able to read words, we are teaching them first to read images, which is, after all, the first way we begin processing information as soon as we are born. In our discussions of art, both in and out of the galleries, the focus is always on learning to break down and digest visual imagery.'

The sessions also have the explicit aim of demonstrating strategies for engaging children in observation and conversation about works of art to the accompanying adults so that they might make use of them on other occasions.

Given the primacy of verbal and written language and the inherent tension in the use of the word 'literacy' it is fascinating to read about two projects that focus on movement in relation to visual imagery and objects. **Gill Hart** is Head of Education at the National Gallery in London, a partner in the European project *Dancing Museums.* The two-year research project between five dance organisations, five choreographers and eight museums and galleries explores how working across these disciplines might lead to 'more powerful interpretations or experiences of art'. At the National Gallery 'a desired outcome of *Dancing Museums* is

to test and learn from the proposition that we need not be dependent upon sophisticated verbal language to create meaningful, in-depth learning experiences that enhance visual literacy'.

Artist **Sam Metz** works with movement and space in participatory workshops to develop alternative interactions with contemporary art, particularly for young people on the autistic spectrum. Metz documents in words and images *Choreographic Objects*, a project developed at Nottingham Contemporary involving two groups, a respite centre for young people and a collective of young people that engages with art and exhibitions at the gallery. Metz points to the processes that they and the young people work through to respond to work and how non-verbal methods can reduce pressure and anxiety, and enable relationships to gradually develop between the two groups.

Two articles look at how the visual arts can communicate complex and controversial issues and examples of visual literacy in developing reflection, sensitivity and critical thinking. **Claire Collison** speaks as an artist, whose work is deeply personal in reflecting her beliefs and her experience of breast cancer. Referencing her own work and that of other artists, she discusses the ways that art can address difficult subjects, open up debate and change perceptions.

The images she makes and cites in her article are direct and carry strong messages. Whilst editing this issue I was struck by two images that featured in the news and provoked heated responses, evidence of

the power of the visual to communicate complex layered meaning – intentionally or not – and to deceive. The first is the *Breaking Point* poster produced by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) for the EU referendum in the UK.[9]

The impact is immediate, the implication being that hoards of immigrants are pouring into the UK. It was immediately pointed out in the media that the poster resembles a Nazi propaganda image.[10] The photograph used by UKIP was originally taken by Jeff Mitchell, of refugees walking into Slovenia, who has said, 'Photographers are there to record stories, as they happen and when they happen, in the best way

we can. But what happens after that, how our images are used, can be out of our control, especially in the digital age – which is unfortunate, particularly in this case'. Mitchell continued, 'It's just unfortunate how it's been picked up. It's difficult for any agency – Getty, Reuters, AP – that circulates photographers' images. They're out there. And it's not just UKIP. Newspapers also use shots in the wrong context. It depends on the political slant of any organisation'.[11]

The second was the statue by artist Martin Jennings of Jamaican born nurse Mary Seacole, who cared for soldiers in the Crimean War in the 1850s, unveiled opposite the Houses of Parliament in London in

June. Hugely symbolic, it has been greeted with acclaim as the first memorial in the UK to a named black woman but apparently criticised by fans of Florence Nightingale and her biographer as misleading about her work and based on misinformation. To add insult to injury, the statue is taller than statues of Nightingale and Edith Cavell, also in central London – size matters![12]

Earlier this year the UK emerged bruised from the EU referendum and many were been reminded of the necessity of decoding and critically engaging with images. This overlapped with the United States presidential election, which is always lengthy but

rarely as dramatic as in 2016. Due to the interest of its Teen Council in political discussion, earlier this year Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Arkansas started a programme of gallery conversations entitled *SmART Voter.* **Janelle Redlaczyk** writes about the museum's work with its growing young audience, its Teen Council and this particular project.

'Initially our teens wanted to know about artists whose work was specifically influenced by the politics of the day, or was created to directly express a political point of view. We broadened the scope of the discussion, and they began to realise

that many different topics addressed by artists can be become important points of discussion during an election. We explored the permanent collection galleries as a group, considering a growing list of topics – racism, immigration, wealth, poverty, war, welfare, women's rights, and environmental issues – and selected works to feature during the initial SmART Voter program.'

One of numerous changes to the world since the 1960s is the overwhelming prevalence of images, their increasingly sophisticated use, the advent of digital reproduction and manipulation of images, and digital devices that enable instant photography, filming, distribution and appropriation. It becomes increasingly difficult to trust our eyes, to understand provenance, authenticity and how we might be being manipulated.

Two articles discuss some of the complex issues associated with the digital. **Miranda Baxter** contributes an article about the role of the original artwork, proliferating reproductions and digitised versions in developing visual literacy. Tracing a history from the invention of photography, she argues that an understanding of the modes of reproduction are part of an interrogation of the work, and that digitising work enables the mobility and access that are so important now to the development of visual literacy.

1215.today is an online project that 'brings digital and physical engagement strategies together to empower and provoke young people to explore themes associated with the Magna Carta – such as justice, power and conflict – through art'. In her article **Sophia Kyprianou** describes the project and discusses how it works in relation to digital initiatives by galleries, research into why young people use digital media and how they use it to access culture. Kyprianou extols the synergy of digital and physical encounters, and how *1215.today* demonstrates impacts of digital experiences on the creative process, the opportunities for artists in terms of their practice, and direct discussion with audiences through online debate.

Sarah Campbell, Head of Schools, Families and Young People at the V&A, echoes issues raised by several of the contributors to this issue in her review of *Agent of Change in art, design and environmental education* by Eileen Adams. Adams brings to this new publication a lifetime of wide ranging experience and a passionate commitment to improving formal education, mixing personal narrative with historic insight and policy recommendations. As Campbell appraises this 'timely and essential book' she highlights how depressing it is that the same arguments come round over the years about the role of art and design in education and how governments often fail to learn from research and practice. But she urges readers to 'take heart. Adams concludes her book with very useful policy recommendations, cannily drawing on research from the early 1990s onwards to suggest ten ways in which arts education can

progress. In her words:

'This chapter argues for policy that takes a strategic and long-term view. This requires us to re-think how we conceive of education for a changing world, how we create learning environments, what we deem to be relevant knowledge, how we view visual literacy in the school curriculum, how we manage relationships between learning and teaching, and how we shape educators' roles in their training and professional development.' [13]

Notes

1. **http://ivla.org/drupal2/content/what-visual-literacy-0**

2. Raney, Karen, (1999) 'Visual Literacy and the Art Curriculum' **http://www.readcube.com/articles/10.1111/1468-5949.00152**

3. Kickbusch, I.S. (2001) 'Health literacy: addressing the health and education divide' in *Health Promotion International, 16* (3), p.292

4. Raney, Karen (1999) op.cit.

5. Ibid.

6. NAEA (Trust) publication (date unknown), *Sir Alec Clegg and the Arts in Schools, A Research Project.* p.21

7. Boughton, D. (1986) '*Visual Literacy: implications for cultural understanding through art education*', *iJADE*, 5 (1 & 2).

8. **https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/initial-teacher-education/**

9. **http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/06/brexit-anti-immigration-ukip-poster-raises-questions-160621112722799.html**

10. **http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/16/nigel-farage-defends-ukip-breaking-point-poster-queue-of-migrants**

11. **https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jun/22/jeff-mitchells-best-shot-the-column-of-marching-refugees-used-in-ukips-brexit-campaign**

12. **http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3649931/Florence-Nightingale-supporters-row-black-rival-s-new-statue-claiming-sold-alcohol-sandwiches-Crimea-venerated-based-false-achievements.html**

13. Adams, E. (2016) *Eileen Adams: Agent of Change.* Loughborough Design Press p.22 **http://www.ldpress.co.uk/book/visual-literacy-prompting-change-art-design-environmental-education/**

Images

1. United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) EU Referendum poster, June 2016.

2. Jennings, Martin, *Mary Seacole*, 2016. Bronze. St Thomas' Hospital, London.

Towards a European framework for visual literacy

Ernst Wagner

Abstract

Europe is a continent with rich and diverse traditions in the arts and education and thus in arts education. Plurality of educational philosophies, theories and practices is the result, and much could be learnt from looking at different frameworks, practices and evidence of effectiveness. However, school-curriculum development in visual art in many countries and states takes place in isolation and often without consulting current theories and empirical data.

In 2010 a European Network for Visual Literacy (ENViL) with more than 50 researchers from nine European countries began a bottom-up process to develop a Common European Framework of Reference on Visual Literacy. The project won the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union in 2014/15. With these funds it was possible to start with a survey on national art education curricula in 28 European states. Despite differences, many commonalities were found. Based on this insight ENViL started to adapt current theories of competence (the integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes) to the field of art education. Furthermore, the project worked to define the situations in which visual competencies are needed. A joint and common model of visual competencies (with a contextualised set of sub-competencies) was formulated on this basis and is now the foundation on which appropriate scales of levels, as well as types of assignments and forms of assessment, are developed as tools for teachers, educators, lesson designers, curriculum developers, etc. These components shape an inclusive framework, the prototype of the *Common European Framework of Reference for visual literacy*.[1] We hope that this document covers the diversity of the European landscape and will stimulate the enhancement of learning visual literacy in Europe.

Survey on national art education curricula

In order to find a common starting point for such a *Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy*, we consulted with relevant experts.[2] We asked these experts about the national or regional curricula in all school subjects relating to the

domain of visual literacy: 'visual art', 'design', 'visual culture', etc. The qualitative empirical analysis of the answers has given a deeper understanding of the situation in Europe. The survey collected data on curriculum structures, as well as curriculum contents and curriculum contexts in 28 EU member states and from Switzerland and Turkey. The results of the comparison of the national guidelines indicate that many country-specific curricula are competency-based (either explicitly or implicitly). Competence mainly comprises production (making and using images) and reception (responding to images). These two main dimensions are always divided into different sub-competencies. Sometimes a third main dimension is added, which relates to the other two dimensions, for instance reflection on production and reception. Despite differences in denominations and subcategories, the curricula show a high degree of conceptual similarity. This was good news for our attempt to write a *Common European Framework of Reference for Visual Literacy* (CEFR-VL). The results of this analysis formed the basis for modelling the competency model in the next step (see below). In order to ensure that our framework is inclusive, the most important sub-competencies found in the national curricula were chosen and structured in a coherent way. Therefore they actually depict the national or regional concepts in Europe.

Situations in which visual competencies are needed

Visual literacy becomes apparent in specific *situations* in which individuals act. Thus we have collected and discussed relevant, existing and future situations where visual literacy is required. Anybody who is responsible for learning processes in visual literacy (curriculum developers, textbook authors, learners and teachers) must ask themselves questions such as the following:

- In which domains will learners need to use visual literacy? What situations will they need to deal with? Which activities will they need to engage in this context?

- What kinds of people, places, occasions and time periods will be involved? How will they communicate using the tools of visual literacy? Under what conditions will they produce or respond to images/objects?

- What types of images/objects will they draw on? What topics, what tasks will they need to use them for? Which images/objects will they have to see and understand? How will they produce images/objects and what resources will they use?

- What world knowledge or knowledge of other cultures will they need in order to help shape their world responsibly?

There are certain aspects and factors that recur. Situations in visual literacy always consist of four key factors: actions, places, image/object forms, and interests / core competencies (see table below). Furthermore, situations are rooted in *domains* in which life and society are organised. The choice of domains that learners are to be prepared for in

terms of visual literacy has far-reaching effects on educational decisions. We consider the following categories as relevant for visual literacy:

- The personal domain, home life, life with friends or holidays where one pursues private activities such as watching a film for entertainment, buying clothes, decorating a room or practising a hobby.

- The public domain in which a person acts as part of the general public or a public organisation in various ways and with various purposes, such as when being involved in making decisions in democratic processes or as a building contractor.

- The occupational domain in which a person works, such as creating the layout for a business letter or designing a workspace.

- Organised learning in and outside of educational institutions has a special status here. Education is a life-long project that is part of all three of the domains given above. At the same time, it is a separate domain (a 'protected' domain where one can experiment with actions) in which the required competencies can be acquired through specifically designed and organised learning processes.

In the context of the framework (which already represents the educational domain), the aim of acquiring competencies is to result in European, visually literate citizens who can lead a successful life (personal domain), succeed in their career (occupational domain) and play an active part in social, public and political life (public domain) – see also Figure 1.

Example: The following table shows basic situations within one of the four domains, the personal domain. The situations selected are not intended to be fully representative. They are merely meant to demonstrate how a situation-orientated approach can work. It must be clear that individual actions, such as getting dressed, play important roles also in the other domains, which means that there will always be overlaps. (Moreover, many images or objects are multimodal, i.e. they are linked with several different senses and media such as language, music, smells or noises.)

Personal domain

The last column in the table shows that normative aspects, ethical questions and political aspects must also be considered when producing images or objects and responding to them. Aspects such as the following may be addressed, at the same time: legal questions (e.g. right to one's own image, copyright, offence, fraud), social and ethical aspects (taste, appropriateness, intercultural sensitivity) or political questions (social circumstances of producers and distributors, economic and ecological consequences, responsibility for the social effects of messages, the balance of power, enlightening criticism vs. propaganda). These aspects – in addition to the aesthetic and functional ones – usually all play a role in any given situation. In the context of images/objects, what is important is what is shown with them (content, topic), which form (medium) they are shown in (design, code), whom they are shown to (audience), where they are shown (place, context) and when they are shown (point in time).

Production/Response	Action	Images, objects, genres, media	Places	Core competencies, topics
P	dressing with a specific visual appearance in mind	clothes, jewellery, accessories	private space (home), public space	cultural identity, intercultural awareness, creativity, lifestyle, self-confidence, active dialogue with the world, personal fulfilment
P	designing one's own private space	interior design, design, images, textiles, furniture, plants, lighting	home, garden	lifestyle, creativity, cultural identity, self-confidence, ability to express oneself with visual means, personal fulfilment
P	expressing personal memories with images and objects	photographs, memorabilia	photo album, memory board, cabinet in home, shelf, grave	integrated personality, ability to act, ability to express oneself with visual means, lifestyle, appreciation
R	using visual media for leisure activities	TV, digital and interactive media, video, computer games, music video	online, on a screen, TV, home	cultural identity, integrated personality, critical thinking, openness, curiosity, lifestyle
R	observing foreign customs and rituals and understanding their aesthetic forms	rites - multimodal	travel, urban space	intercultural awareness, critical thinking, openness, curiosity, empathy, appreciation, exchange, active dialogue with the world
R	consuming	consumer products, advertisement, presentation, staging, packaging	supermarket, shops, online on a screen	critical thinking, reflective thinking, ability to act, lifestyle

Table 1: Example of a table of situations (personal domain)

Definition of visual literacy

The next essential step was to find common ground in the understanding of visual literacy. In the first sense 'literacy' is understood as the ability to read and write. But there is a broader definition of literacy, which we have referred to: 'Literacy involves a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development'.[3] This conception expands the idea of literacy to further symbol systems than language. And indeed a number of different literacies have been distinguished, such as quantitative literacy (or numeracy), technological literacy, media literacy, computer literacy and even health literacy. As it is often stated that we live in an increasingly visual culture,[4] there is the need for citizens to be visually literate. Already in 1969, John Debes coined the term 'visual literacy'.[5] In the following decades many other definitions of visual literacy have been offered.

To define the content of the domain, we decided to adhere to the definition of Brill, Kim and Branch who define visual literacy – independent from specific areas – as 'a group of acquired sub-competencies for interpreting and composing visible messages. A visually literate person is able to a) discriminate, and make sense of visible objects as part of a visual acuity, b) create static and dynamic visible objects effectively in a defined space, c) comprehend and appreciate the visual testaments of others, and d) conjure objects in the mind's eye.'[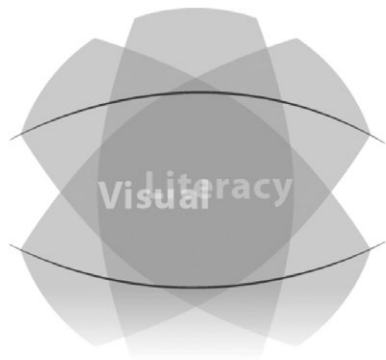6] This definition covers all possible applications in the context of education, and also expands our understanding in a poetic way (in my ears the term 'conjure' transports a sense of miracle).

Competence model

Visual literacy is a competency. Our work is based on a competency model that describes the skills, abilities, attitudes and knowledge that can be acquired in the context of dealing with the visual world. The desired learning outcomes are described in the form of domain-specific competencies. Our framework uses the definition of the term 'competency' formulated by the education scientist Weinert. He describes competencies as 'the cognitive skills and abilities that an individual possesses or is able to learn and that are used to solve certain problems, and the associated motivational, volitional and social willingness and skills required to use the solutions successfully and responsibly in changing situations.'[7]

According to the given definition by Brill, Kim and Branch, visual literacy (as a competency in the definition of Weinert) is required in order to deal effectively with certain situations. The situations in our work have to be analysed from two perspectives. Firstly, which situations are particularly relevant for education? And secondly, which sub-competencies are required in each situation in order to deal with it appropriately? However, these questions do not yet consider the aims of applying visual literacy. This requires a normative statement on the educational aims that are central to visual literacy. Visual literacy, a competency that is relevant for school subjects

civic engagement
social cohesion **personal unfolding**
employability

Visual Literacy

situation
situation situation
situation situation situation
situation situation

Figure 1: Visual Literacy in its context

methodological competencies
self-competencies
social competencies
reflect
(metacognition)

produce respond

knowledge skills attitudes

Figure 2: Basic elements

reflect
(metakognition)

create
present
experiment
communicate
draft
realise use
envision
describe perceive
analyse experience aesthetically
interpret
value empathise
judge
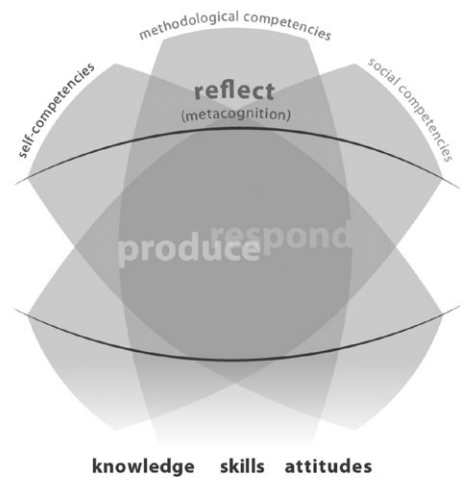
**Produce and respond to images/objects
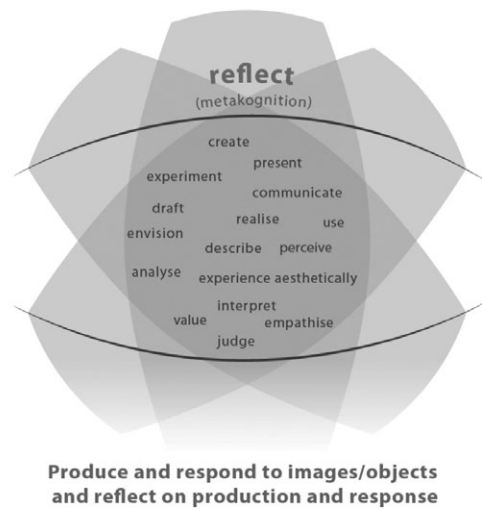and reflect on production and response**

Figure 3: Differentiation of sub-competencies

such as art, design or art education, fundamentally consists of two basic dimensions: production of and responding to images/objects.

In order to adequately describe the processes and results of learning to use the concept of competencies, certain basic elements – knowledge, skills and attitudes – must always be considered (see Weinert's definition above). These are necessary in order to deal with a situation or a problem. Furthermore, visual literacy as a domain-specific competency is always embedded in an over-arching interdisciplinary, general concept of education:

- Visual literacy relates to the person who produces or responds and is therefore always connected to personal competencies (self-competencies);

- Visual literacy is equally fundamentally based on expression and communication, and therefore takes place in a social context. Thus, visual literacy is also and necessarily linked with social competencies;

- Furthermore, responding and producing in the context of education uses specific methods, the classification of which specifies how responding and producing take place. Visual literacy therefore also always involves methodological competencies.

Reflection or metacognition plays an important role in this context. Whatever a student is doing or learning, he or she has to use metacognition in order to understand what he or she is doing or to control the learning process. Finally, the basic dimensions of producing and responding can be broken down into sub-competencies.

Based on an analysis of curricula in Europe (see above) and intensive conceptual discussion, the following sub-competencies have been included in the CEFR-VL: analyse, communicate, create, describe, draft, empathise, envision, experience aesthetically, experiment, interpret, judge, perceive, present, realise, use, value (in alphabetical order).

Scales of levels
Scales for competency levels are used to describe a specific performance in which the corresponding sub-competency becomes evident. The competency level achieved by an individual therefore describes their ability to deal with a specific challenge in a specific situation on a specific level. The aim of creating such scales is to ensure that a competency-orientated approach is productive in practice. The set of scales can be used as an instrument to assess learners' achievements, whether this assessment is carried out by the learners themselves or by the teacher.

The *levels* developed are general ones, i.e. they are not related to specific ages, educational policy or contexts, for example. In light of this, they can and must be defined more exactly for specific tasks, ages and learner groups, and differentiated from one another a second time. In order to ensure that consistent differences in, for example, advancements in learning can be recorded, three levels have been determined (elementary, intermediate and

Level	Description
Elementary	Can select familiar motifs and topics for a draft or realisation that are appropriate for his/her intention and use pre-set artistic means.
	Can apply rules and principles, as well as the results of experimentation when producing an appropriate form.
Intermediate	Can choose appropriate content, motifs and topics on the basis of suggestions and under consideration of what he/she intends to depict.
	Can select artistic means and strategies from among a number of options and use them appropriately.
	Can take into account artistic rules but break them to a certain extent in order to achieve a desired effect.
Competent	Can use a range of contents, motifs and topics and give them an adequate form under consideration of the intended effect.
	Can use methods and strategies purposefully and in a targeted manner or experimentally in order to enhance his/her artistic expression.
	Can reflect critically on rules and conventions with regard to a specific effect and consider them when producing (follow or break them).

Table 2: Example of a scale of levels in respect to the sub-competency create

competent). The elementary level describes the basic requirements for participation in society (e.g. professionally or in culture) and for comprehensive personality development that includes the cultural dimension. The third level (competent), by contrast, describes the characteristics of the fully visually literate European citizen (i.e. not professionals trained as designers, artists, art critics or art historians, or those in training for these professions).

The levels have been constructed on the basis of criteria that are not specific to visual literacy but are based on general didactic principles and/or generic cognitive abilities. But a unique problem occurs with regard to the sub-competencies in visual literacy that require the medium of language in order to explore images/objects. These include the sub-competencies describe, analyse and interpret images/objects. Here, in the context of education, level scales must not only include terms and descriptions related to artistic thought but must also refer to levels of general linguistic competency, i.e. they must combine the two. A high level in visual literacy is therefore dependent on a high level of linguistic competency.

This also applies when the performance of that which is recognised visually is linked to language, such as when visual processes are reflected in the medium of language (e.g. naming, explaining, justifying).

As an example the three levels of the sub-competency *creating* are presented in the table overleaf. To create means primarily to purposefully develop the visual form of images/objects and, at the same time, to interpret a topic. The levels described refer above all to independence, the scope of the repertoire and the quality of the relationship between form and content.

Forms of assessment – an example

Assessing the learning progress and results in visual literacy is a complex issue. The creative process and the process of visual perception are often associated with unpredictability and individuality, whereas assessment stands for predictability and comparison. However, especially in formal education, we need to say which results of learning are expected, and to evaluate whether the goals are achieved. Assessment can be carried out by teachers, but also by students themselves or peers. The advantage of having students assess their own performance is that the assessment itself can become a tool for learning as it stimulates self-regulation and metacognition.[8] When students learn to assess themselves, they can monitor and regulate their own learning processes. Self-regulation can be considered an important goal of education in visual literacy as it is required for learning after school when external feedback is not always present.

Taking into account the importance of formative assessment as well as self-assessment, we decided to construct an instrument for self-evaluation. However the instrument should also be suited for teacher assessment and peer assessment and potentially could be used for summative assessment as well. Most instruments focus on artistic performance, on the process of creating something. Others are paper and pencil tests, portfolios and logbooks. A checklist of criteria is the most used scoring tool, but our review shows that also rubric is currently a very popular instrument for assessment. (A *rubric* is a scoring guide, which contains criteria of evaluation as well as definitions of levels of achievement. A *rubric* is usually in a table format. The criteria are stated in several different levels of competence, for instance from beginner to proficient – see above.) Rubrics are transparent for students and therefore enable students to assess themselves and regulate their own learning. On the other hand, rubrics enable the assessment of complex tasks, such as in visual literacy, with many dimensions and open answers, which are not just true or false[9] describe that rubrics are useful for summative and formative testing as they provide early and informative feedback. Rubrics can be used for scoring and explaining scores, as an instrument to have students understand criteria, as an instrument to support self and peer assessment and as an instrument to define the contents of education.[10] Some examples of the visual rubrics, developed within the project, are published here.
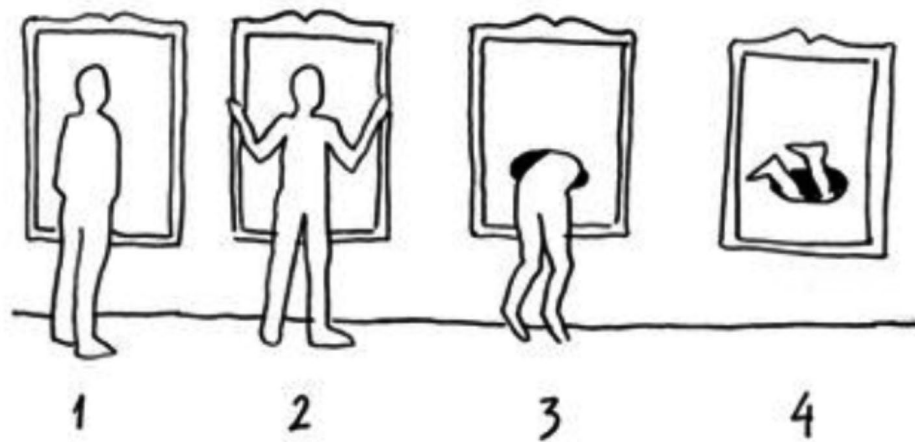
Figure 4: Visual rubric example: 'analyse and interpret'.

Figure 5: Further items from the visual rubric:
'Collaborating, Using media and techniques, Using visual elements'.

Using Perspectives	You interpreted the visual products from 1 perspective. The interpretation is not convincing/ plausible.	You interpreted the visual products from 1 perspective. The interpretation is quite convincing/ plausible.	You interpreted the visual products from more than 1 perspective. The interpretations are quite convincing/ plausible.	You interpreted the visual products from more than 1 perspective. The interpretations are convincing/ plausible and surprising/ original.
Being curious and open	When you did not like the visual products at first, you stopped paying attention.	When you did not like the visual products at first, the teacher could stimulate you to have another look.	You were open and curious towards the visual products even if you did not like them at first.	You were very open and curious towards the visual products even if you did not like them at first. You like new experiences in art reception/ reception of visual products.

Figure 6: Each level is accompanied by a text, describing the respective level in a similar way, as in Table 2. The first step in using an instrument like this in teaching visual literacy is to formulate these descriptions together with the learners.

Conclusion

The framework, developed by the European Network for Visual Literacy (ENViL), is a reference document that can be consulted e.g. as a foundation for national or regional curricula, to develop teaching and learning materials. Its aim is to advise, not to standardise. By drawing on the knowledge and experience of international and independent experts, it offers orientation for strengthening quality development in learning visual literacy in schools and in all forms of adult education and self-organised learning. At the same time, it is hopefully a useful instrument that can be used to observe and describe the visual competencies of learners. It also facilitates transnational exchange and understanding between subject communities in Europe, as scholars, NGOs and institutions with different traditions and backgrounds are provided with a *tertium comparationis* that also gives the dialogue between teacher and learner, layperson and academic a foundation. Through its connection to the current discourse on education policy, the framework gives national efforts in quality development in visual literacy education a new, well-founded document of reference.

The framework was published in August 2016 and was presented at the European InSEA Congress in September 2016 in Vienna[11]. As a follow up, six working groups on specific topics have been founded. ENViL is looking for cooperation in respect to the implementation of the framework into different fields, institutions and countries. Please visit **www.envil.eu**

Notes

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10. Ibid., p.53

11. Schönau & Wagner (2016), op.cit.

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Loaves, hyacinths and swinging pendulums

Looking back on the legacy of Sir Alec Clegg and the future of creative education

Kathryn Welford

My primary schooling took place in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the 1970s. The town where I grew up was typical of large highly industrialised swathes of the West Riding; working class, dependent on manufacturing with pockets of severe social and economic deprivation. In contrast to this sometimes bleak environment, my primary school was a new-build and comprised open-plan classrooms, partitioned by floor-length, brightly coloured curtains, stimulating displays and a diet of creative activity across the curriculum. I believe that my enduring excitement for learning and subsequent career in creative education was borne from this environment and my early experience of active, social learning which had the arts and creativity at its foundation.

At Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP), [**http://www. ysp.co.uk/**] where I currently work as Formal Learning Coordinator, we have the *National Arts Education Archive* (NAEA). The NAEA, which opened in 1985, traces developments in art, craft and design education in the United Kingdom and is

a major resource for YSP learning and curatorial programming. A significant part of the archive is from the personal collection of Sir Alec Clegg, West Riding Chief Education Officer between 1945 and 1972. The collection comprises his lecture notes and papers, as well as paintings by local school children created during his tenure. Clegg presided over an extraordinary period for education in the West Riding, which positioned the creative arts as central to the moral and educational development of the child.

Before arriving at YSP, the name of Sir Alec Clegg was familiar to me. My mother, who trained and entered the teaching profession during the latter part of his administration, had spoken of these formative years and Clegg's enduring influence on her teaching. Clegg's philosophy of education, his legacy and his relevance today, therefore, resonate with me personally as well as professionally.

As Formal Learning Coordinator at YSP, I am interested in how children learn through a visual, non-verbal language; how learning in 'key' subjects

such as numeracy, literacy and science can be enhanced through a visual and multi-sensory experience of the arts. To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the NAEA last year, YSP invited artist, agitator and former parliamentary candidate Bob and Roberta Smith to be in residence at the NAEA and to create new work in response to its collections. This culminated in the exhibition *Art for All* **http://www.ysp.co.uk/exhibitions/bob-and-roberta-smith-art-for-all** (2015) and a major open-air work *Art Makes Children Powerful (2013)*, which is still sited in the park and seen by the many visiting school groups, leaving a vibrant and insistent message to school children as they depart.

Art for All shared pivotal eras of art education, from the time of Joshua Reynolds to the present day, through material selected and uniquely interpreted by Bob and Roberta Smith. The commission extended Bob and Roberta Smith's provocative advocacy for the role of art in education and invited ideas towards an art curriculum for the digital 21st century. Included in *Art for All* were paintings created by children in the 1960s from West Riding schools, paintings which evidenced close and felt observation, time spent and concentration as well as technical skill. These were from Clegg's private collection.

Art for All provided a glimpse of my mother's time as a teacher, from the early 1960s to the mid 1990s, and reminded me of my own formative early education. It made me curious to discover more about the contribution made by Clegg to a

generation of children and teachers in Yorkshire, and how his model of creative learning became a touchstone for educators and administrators in Tasmania, Canada and beyond.

This is no
It is remarkable how Clegg's ideas still seem so current, and how similar today's education system is to the one he railed against a half-century ago. How could pedagogical approaches that were modelled in Yorkshire in the mid-20th century, and exported across the world as models of good practice, still be relevant to 21st century learners?

Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and indeed other arts organisations, play a vital role in enabling and creating opportunities for visual learning and experience in schools. Do we have the confidence now, given the emphasis on literacy and numeracy in British schools, to re-assert the importance of the visual as an experience and mode of understanding?

The government professes a commitment to the arts and cultural learning, not least because of the need to create a workforce for the wealth-generating creative industries, but also on a principle of cultural entitlement.

'The government believes strongly that culture should be an essential part of every child's education and the new national curriculum aims to broaden access to the arts for all children.'[1]

However, current government policy on education emphasises a knowledge-based curriculum as a

cornerstone of 'an excellent, academically rigorous education'.[2] In a speech to the Creative Industries Federation in 2015, the former Education Secretary Nicky Morgan stated, 'we've made changes to ensure that GCSEs in arts subjects are more rigorous, in line with our reforms to other academic subjects',[3] citing this as evidence of the government's success in giving the arts greater status in schools. She went on to say 'schools should place high quality arts education alongside a strong academic core at the heart of the curriculum'.[4]

Across all arts subjects, the curriculum emphasises knowledge, skills and critical engagement. Children's experience of the arts is positioned within a context of academic achievement and assessment. Where does creativity sit within this current knowledge-based curriculum? Is art fundamentally at odds with an education system which prioritises measurable attainment and academic success?

That was then

In a speech given to Central Hall, Westminster, May 1970, Clegg stated 'Most people in charge of education have never themselves regularly failed. They assume all can learn as they learned. They are therefore apt to dismiss other experience as irrelevant or in some way ''soft''.[5]

Art can be about knowledge and skills. The study and creation of art can have economic returns in terms of creative employment. It can provide a counterbalance to the school 'core' subjects of numeracy, literacy and science, and thus provide

Clegg saw the arts as a dynamic catalyst that could create 'intent' in a school, nourish individuality, develop resilience and offer children a creative outlet to compensate for any material deprivation in their lives.

a broad and balanced curriculum. However, art is not just another subject or discipline to 'know' about or be 'skilled' in. I believe it is a *mode* of learning. Without the arts and creativity, children who can only really learn through creative, active engagement are denied access to an effective education.

Clegg saw the arts as a dynamic catalyst that could create 'intent' in a school, nourish individuality, develop resilience and offer children a creative outlet to compensate for any material deprivation in their lives. He refers to the example of a 14-year-old Doncaster schoolboy whose self-portrait Sir Alec described as the most moving picture he had ever seen. The boy had failed in school, left at the earliest opportunity and dropped into delinquency:

'This picture came from a child who is branded as an educational failure. We have no right to talk about

this child in these terms. His fate is a failure for me and for the West Riding.'[6]

Clegg believed in the education of the whole child, that education was not solely about academic achievement but about moral and social development, achieved through the arts. In 1952, he argued in a speech at Bretton College, absorbed by Leeds University in 2007, that the two aims of education, of equal priority, were 'what children need to know, and, as important, what sort of people they become'.[7] For Clegg, and I believe most of us who work in the arts, education is a moral issue and goes beyond knowledge and skills and academic progress. Clegg deemed the acquisition of skills and knowledge as 'morally neutral', unlike the arts, which he saw as a socialising agent that could develop the full potential of the child as a unique individual and thus benefit wider society.

Clegg articulated in a 1966 lecture to the Canadian Education Association what he felt should be the main aim of education:

'The intellect of each child should be as alert as we can make it, his imagination should be as sensitive as we can make it, he should grow up with a high respect for himself and a tender consideration for others, he should enjoy as fully as we can enable him to do so those great human activities designed to give pleasure, such as games, music and art.'[8]

This holistic view of education runs counter to today's knowledge-based curriculum and target driven culture. Clegg believed that an over-emphasis on knowledge would not only impoverish an individual's education but that 'concentration on knowledge and the examinable creates a failed group of children whose reaction in behavioural terms is damaging to society as well as a sign of distress in themselves'.[9]

Clegg described his philosophy of education through the analogy of 'pot-filling' and 'fire-lighting'; two antithetical approaches to learning. 'There are in England those who hold the view that knowledge should be used to stock the mind and turn out well-informed citizens. There are others who believe that it should be used to stimulate the mind and set it alight'.[10]

Clegg characterised 'pot-filling' as giving children facts and supporting them to acquire and practice taught skills, whereas 'fire-lighting' is finding ways of motivating children to learn what they need to know and to become whatever they are able to be. Clegg believed that the educational aim of creating happy, well-motivated and well-behaved children was closely associated with fire-lighting methods of teaching. Such methods had the capacity to affect all children as it required a child-centred approach to teaching, requiring teachers 'to think principally about

children rather than the bits and pieces, important as they are, which make up the curriculum'.[11]

In his address to the 1966 Convention of the Canadian Education Association in Vancouver, Clegg quoted from Herbert Spencer, 'Children should be led to make their own investigations and draw their own inferences. They should be told as little as possible and induced to discover as much as possible'.[12] Active, discovery-based, social, multi-sensory and creative pedagogies all sit within a 'fire-lighting' philosophy of education and are the touchstones of the education work at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and I imagine, the learning departments of most arts organisations.

'Children learn mostly from that which is around them, and from the use of the senses. These impressions so gained will depend a great deal on interests, which will vary considerably. If children are interested they listen more carefully, look more closely and touch more sensitively. With interest there is created the element of wonder, the most precious element of life.' [13]

Living in a pre-digital age, Clegg took children's artwork with him to international conventions. Describing a convention in Tasmania, fellow educationalist Terry Woodward recalled,

'One has a memory of the darkened interior of a school assembly hall…of a vibrant speaker, and of lines of paintings from the children of Yorkshire. The pictures were in the main swags of flowers in vases with great bursts of colour – fresh, subtle, accurately seen and deeply felt.' [14]

This description captures the depth of affective learning which had taken place, and why such paintings were used as exemplars of good pedagogical practice in the arts. Children's discovery and understanding of their subject, understanding of their material and application of skills, as well as articulation of their own imaginations, manifested

itself in these paintings. Children had been given time to craft these artworks, which were valued by the children, teachers and the wider educational establishment. By comparison to how art is being taught in today's schools and the limited time afforded to it, these paintings are remarkable.

Where to next?

Sir Alec Clegg's vision and realisation of a progressive education service for the West Riding seems the antithesis of the prevailing culture of education espoused by the current government in Britain. Are learning departments within arts organisations, free from the shackles of Ofsted and Department for Education (DfE) control, at liberty to provide a learning experience that builds on the educational philosophy made real by Clegg and his team of advisors? Clegg gave a speech at the Royal College of Art in 1960 in which he stated,

'There are those who say the main aim of education is not just to prepare for something that is coming in the future, but to promote healthy growth and development now. The best way of doing this is to place the child in a stimulating environment, give him a wealth of experience rather than a welter of facts, and let his training and technique come through the activities into which he is guided by a wise and sympathetic teacher.' [15]

The environment of YSP is our classroom; 500 acres of historic landscape – woodland, lakes and meadow – as well as five indoor galleries. Our changing exhibitions programme brings the best of

contemporary sculpture to within a few miles of some of the most deprived communities and the most challenging schools in West Yorkshire. Our outdoor sculpture collection, comprising works by artists including Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, James Turrell, Ai Weiwei and Magdalena Abakanowicz, provides an impressive accessible cultural resource which children can investigate and explore directly. Children ask questions and find

meanings in response to this rich stimulus, through the skilled facilitation of our team of artist-educators. Pupils bring their own understandings to the work, which are teased out and explored through group and shared activity.

'…people bring to visual work their own varied and valid knowledge. The important thing… is not to write expert interpretation panels, but to set up a direct relationship with the audience. It's how you disseminate information, how you interact with people. If work is over-explained, it can hamper engagement with work on the variety of levels which [the artist] would like to see it happen.' [16]

Outdoor, experiential learning is at the heart of YSP's learning programme. Artist-led programmes, such as our outdoor sculpture construction workshops support social and collaborative learning, creative experimentation, problem-solving and creative play which is physical, large-scale and child-led.

'Sir Alec saw the arts as a rich and complex educational medium through which the young child could relate to all aspects of his or her personal or shared environment – the world of people, ideas, places, objects and happenings which were not to be grasped by the intellect alone, but directly through the senses and through feeling.' [17]

It is remarkable how it is often the children who don't achieve within the classroom, who struggle with a knowledge-based curriculum and 'the welter of facts' thrust upon them, who are the ones who thrive when provided with a creative, visual and experiential pedagogy. Feedback from teachers visiting YSP with school groups highlights how 'less able' or disengaged learners have 'shown another side' or 'been fully immersed in the learning', illustrating perhaps the scarcity of creative learning opportunities in school.

YSP has just completed a year-long action research project, through CapeUK (**http://www.capeuk. org/#**) and the *Specialist Leaders in Cultural Learning (SLiCL)* programme. We partnered with a nursery and infant school situated within a strong Islamic community in Dewsbury, a few miles from YSP. The project investigated how the creative arts and the outdoors could develop children's speaking and listening skills to support attainment and progress in writing.

In 1966, Alec Clegg spoke, rather wryly, to a Canadian convention:

'There are still teachers in England who believe in the quaint idea that a child who can detect and name an adverbial clause is likely to write a better one than a child who has not mastered this esoteric skill.'[18]

It is quite alarming that in 2016 the current government concurs with this 'quaint idea' that children need to know the mechanics of language in order to be able to use it. At the school in Dewsbury, many children were not able to learn the English language through the compulsory Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPAG) lessons or 'pot-filling' teaching methods. They were not making progress, they were not engaging.

We were interested in how children used language to develop understanding, to ask questions and give explanations; how they were able to 'infer' and use language for open-ended thinking and speaking. Artist-led sessions at YSP and in school used visual and performing arts to take children on a creative learning journey, exploring character, storytelling and specific language learning which related to and enhanced the Key Stage 1 English and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.
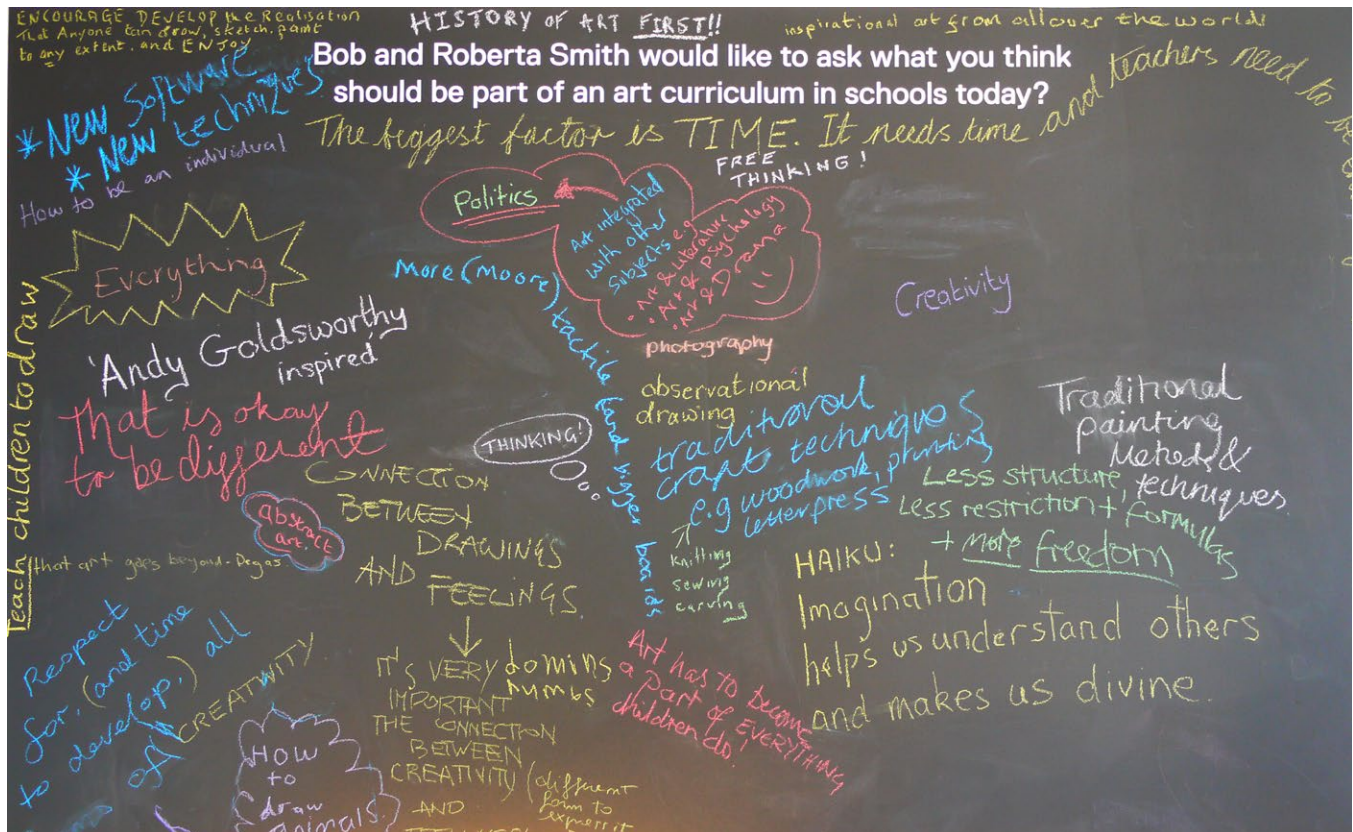
The impact of this work was remarkable; measured through focused observation of behaviour and language use as well as quantitative data that showed progress in literacy attainment. Children suddenly seemed to have a purpose for talk and a real desire to tell others about their experiences. The project gave them confidence – it gave them a voice. One of the noticeable difficulties for children at the school was the answering and asking of questions. As partnership work between YSP and the school developed, a real shift became apparent. Children developed an inner drive to question things and to dig for information; to make inferences from the

subject matter in front of them. Pupils moved from seeing the world in very concrete terms to drawing on their imaginations. This led to their use of descriptive language moving on in leaps and bounds.

In addition to this marked progress in speaking and listening and writing, empathy began to develop, which infused their relationships with each other. Children showed growing self-awareness and tolerance of new situations. Their characters developed into ones which are open to new ideas and have the ability to cope with situations and challenges that would previously have fazed them.

The project made tangible Clegg's philosophy; the power of the arts to develop the whole child, the power of 'fire-lighting' over 'pot-filling' and the capacity of art to elicit complex thought, imaginative thinking and individual expression. It also improved attainment in writing.

Art sits at the margins of the curriculum to the detriment of pupils who need a creative means of accessing knowledge and to engage with learning at all. Bob and Roberta's exhibition *Art for All* culminated in the question 'What should be in the art curriculum today?' inviting teachers and members of the public to respond with coloured chalks on a blackboard. The hunger to learn and hone skills was apparent, as was integration of art into the teaching across subjects. Teachers commented on the need for time and freedom and the reassertion of art for personal expression, increased self-esteem and individuality.

Sir Alec Clegg often told the story from his childhood of an aunt who had a sampler on her wall. The poem illustrates Clegg's view on education and the dynamic between hard knowledge and skills on the one hand, and creativity and the arts on the other.

'If thou of fortune be bereft
And of this earthly store hath left
Two loaves, sell one and with the dole,
Buy hyacinths to feed the soul.' [19]

In 1956 Clegg chaired a session at a conference for the Society for Education through Art at Bretton Hall. The conflict between these opposing views within art education met head on, highlighting concerns which are fundamental to the educational process and which are at the core of the crisis in educational policy today.

'When we over-emphasise the spirit and personality of the child, the cure is alleged to be more rote-learning, more distilled techniques, more obedience and more authority. When we eventually become

too rigid the cure is more self-expression and more 'finding out' – And so the pendulum swings and the swinging must be as old as education itself. It swings between mind and spirit, between intellect and personality, between the cognitive and affective, between obedience and self-realisation, between the 'loaves and hyacinths'.[20]

Where are we now in this cycle, within the momentum of the swinging pendulum? I believe we are at a tipping point which needs balancing by creative education once more gaining ascendance. Arts organisations, in partnership with schools, are in a position to advocate for a pedagogy, which gets results; which can improve attainment amongst all learners, not just the academic or 'more able'. Art can be another subject to be taught, which students can become knowledgeable about, skilled in and, like other subjects, assessed against prescribed success criteria. But this is an uncomfortable fit and sells art short. Art is a product of a way of thinking, an outcome from a process of open-ended exploration, physical experimentation and visual intelligence. This type of intelligence, the questioning of facts, exploration of possibilities and imaginative hypothesising as well as physical absorption in 'making' are needed by many children as an alternative 'way in' to the world, and a way into learning. A child in the 1970s, such as I was, is not so different from a child in 2016. Hyacinths need to grow on the window sills of schools once more, and maybe children can be given the time to look at them, smell them, paint and write about them and claim them as their own.

Notes

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17. NAEA (Trust) publication (date unknown) op.cit., p.7

18. Thistlewood, D (ed) op.cit., p.34

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Images

1. *Self portrait*, date unknown, Anonymous boy – ink on newspaper, 77cm X 54cm unframed. From the Sir Alec Clegg Collection. Courtesy of the National Arts Education Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

2. Anonymous, Flower painting (1953/4), class of children from South Kirkby, gouache on paper, 53cm x 35cm, unframed. From the Sir Alec Clegg collection, courtesy of the National Arts Education Archive at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

3. Bob and Roberta Smith, *Art for All* (installation view), 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Photo: Jonty Wilde (photos x 2)

4 & 5. Bob and Roberta Smith, *Art Makes Children Powerful*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist. Commissioned by Locws International for Art Across The City, Swansea. Photo: Jonty Wilde

6. Bob and Roberta Smith, *Art for All* visitor feedback. Photo: Damon Waldock for Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Picture thinking

The development of visual literacy in young children

Kate Noble

'Looking at art invites, rewards and encourages a thoughtful disposition, because works of art demand thoughtful attention to discover what they have to show and say.'[1]

In this article I explore the concept of visual literacy as a 'thoughtful disposition', as Perkins describes above, and discuss the collaborative and creative process of looking at art with young children. There is no fixed definition of the term 'visual literacy' and this may be because it means different things within different contexts. It would be impossible to be visually literate in every domain: the visual literacy of a craftsperson differs to that of an architect, a huntsman or a computer programmer.[2] My PhD focused on the development of visual literacy in young children, and since completing my research in 2007 I have furthered my understanding of what this means in practice through working as a gallery educator. Here I discuss the different dimensions of visual literacy, describe my research into how it develops in young children and then look at how this might be applied within a museum or gallery context.

Communicative	Decoding images and artworks to interpret and understand
Aesthetic	Responding to the affective dimension of visual experience
Artistic	Constructing personal visual responses and meanings

Figure 1. Three dimensions of visual literacy

What is visual literacy?

Boughton[3] identifies three aspects to visual literacy, as described in Figure 1.

In common with traditional notions of verbal literacy, visual literacy encompasses more than one level of skill.[4] At its most basic level, visual literacy can be understood as the ability to decode visual images, to pick out and identify the essential points that contain meaning. This is referred to by Boughton as 'communicative visual literacy'.[5] To achieve an understanding the viewer must make sense of what they see. This requires the ability to decode symbols, lines and shapes, to infer, to deduce and to make connections and associations. There are clear links here with approaches used to decode verbal texts. Within a museum or gallery context an educator might ask a group looking at an artwork to describe what they see and then begin to unpick the different visual elements such as scale, colour, line, form, context and materials.

However, describing visual literacy solely as the ability to decode and interpret artworks is a dangerous simplification. Arnheim reminds us that, 'Art fulfills other functions, which are often considered primary. It creates beauty, perfection, harmony, order. It makes things visible that are invisible or inaccessible or born of fantasy. It gives vent to pleasure or discontent'[6] This plea for the 'primary functions' of art brings us closer to 'aesthetic visual literacy' which is concerned with the affective dimension of visual experience.[7] One important feature of the aesthetic account is that it can be used to claim back the idiosyncrasies of visual media from a communicative account, which allies the visual so closely with the verbal. In a museum or gallery context, an educator might ask a group to draw upon personal experience and to build deeper layers of understanding by asking, 'Does it remind you of anything?' They might invite them to 'step through the frame' to discover what they can 'see, hear, touch and smell.' In so doing they begin to move towards the aesthetic dimension of visual literacy.

This links back to Perkins' statement at the start of this article, about looking at art and developing a

'thoughtful disposition'. There is an important connection here between aesthetic experience and general cognitive functioning. Arnheim argues that in order to be 'touched' by a work of art, visual thinking must be used. 'Aesthetic beauty is the isomorphic correspondence between what is said and how it is said'.[8] Winner makes a similar point when she describes how the sensual pleasure found within a work of art is intricately linked to the active stance required by the viewer and the cognitive demands it makes.[9] Dewey also explores this: 'What is intimated to my mind, is, that in both production and enjoyed perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed; it becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience.' [10]

These definitions of the aesthetic emphasise the affective appeal of the visual and the enjoyment of active engagement. Yet they also locate the viewer as an active participant within the process of making meaning, which brings us to the third dimension of visual literacy.

Making your own visual productions is described by Boughton as 'artistic visual literacy'.[11] In her detailed review of issues and debates surrounding the term, Raney states, 'Visual literacy is not simply to do with passively receiving the visual world which flows around us; we also make our own representations, produce our own visual meanings'.[12] Her statement resonates with the social constructivist emphasis on the active role of both viewer and maker. A visual experience demands a response true to its original form.[13, 14] Within a museum or gallery context, an artistic response can take many different forms. For example, a group might be given the opportunity to respond visually through drawing or gesture, perhaps using their fingers to trace the outline of a figure, a pencil to describe the flowing contours of a mountain or respond to colour and mood through the medium of dance or drama.

Researching the development of visual literacy

My doctoral research explored how visual literacy develops in young children by looking at the ways in which 24 young children aged five, seven and nine made sense of sophisticated picture books through talk, gesture and drawing.[15] The theoretical framework was provided by Vygotsky, who proposed that development is best evidenced by looking at process, in order to build a picture of changes within the individual.[16, 17] The decision to work with children grouped in the ages of five, seven and nine was taken in order to compare differences on either side of seven years, which is recognised as a crucial year in the artistic development of the young child.[18, 19, 20, 21] Vygotskian perspectives describe the use of external semiotic activity such as talk, drawing and gesture as powerful 'tools of thought'.The actions of the child create a link between perception and cognition and this process is rooted within a specific socio-cultural context. I used case studies to allow for the individual voices and perspectives

of the participants to be heard and used video cameras to record the many aspects of the children's responses. The lack of previous research in this area meant that the study was exploratory and deductive in nature. The analysis was grounded in the data itself, allowing details and patterns to emerge through meticulous and careful review and study. These patterns were then compared to existing developmental models and schemes taken from research into artistic and aesthetic development. [22, 23, 24, 25,26, 27, n1]
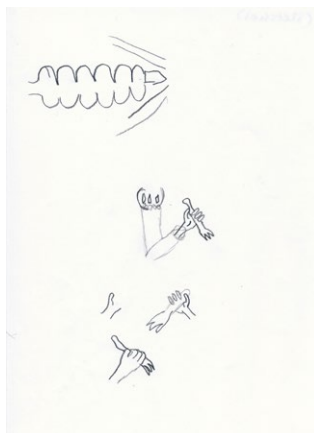
Development in visual literacy was found to be closely tied to meta-cognition; the processes by which the individual learns to control and regulate their thinking. Visual thinking was indivisible from other kinds of thinking. As they looked, talked and drew the children questioned, made deductions, inferences, comparisons, planned and monitored their own drawings, and imagined and experienced exhilarating new textual worlds. By recording verbal, physical and graphic responses, they had opportunities to express their thinking in many different ways. The older children were more aware of their own cognitive processes and so were increasingly able to control and regulate their thinking. This control manifested itself in different ways through the dual tasks of interpretation and production, but was particularly evident when the children made their own drawings. Young children's personal and aesthetic preferences, interests and motivations were found to impact upon their meaning making at every point.

Case study 1: Visual literacy in action and the young artist in control

Jessel, aged nine, was one of the most visually literate children I worked with during my research study. He was both a critical and reflective reader of visual images and a critical and reflective artist. He saw drawing as an extremely serious enterprise and when I asked what made a good artist he replied instantly, 'Time, skill and practice.' In his interviews he demonstrated an impressive knowledge of visual images from a wide range of different sources, which he employed whilst interpreting visual images and creating sophisticated drawings of his own.

As we looked at the illustrations in the picture books, Jessel admired the artist's skill, repeatedly saying, 'I like the way she has done the …' He noticed visual devices such as the artist's use of light and colour. 'He's made them look really like how they should be, so like the sun's coming going down there and you can see it just coming through the trees there'. His comments indicated a keen sensitivity to the challenges faced by an artist when depicting reality in two dimensions and demonstrated meta-cognitive awareness of the processes involved in making pictures. Taken in the context of Jessel's own self-awareness whilst drawing, they also indicate another clear link between communicative, aesthetic and artistic dimensions of visual literacy.

In addition to the sophisticated comments Jessel made whilst reading the picture books, his drawings

also demonstrated a high level of visual literacy and self-awareness, as he carefully planned and controlled every element of his drawing as he worked. As he drew, he talked at length about his personal repertoire, things he liked to draw and things he was particularly good at. His drawings revealed his talents as an artist with an acute attention to detail and highly developed personal style and repertoire. In the third interview Jessel chose to draw the princess eating from her plate under the watchful eye of the slimy frog (image 2). When I asked him why he had chosen to draw that part of the story he replied 'Because I thought I'm good at worried faces…cos I normally draw people like with swords and putting them up to people's throats and they are like (pulls a worried face)… (carries on drawing)'.

During the interviews he spoke with confidence about the process of drawing. He had difficulties drawing the princess's right hand holding the fork, 'I normally do it with the left hand but she's holding it in her right.' The detail from his practice sheet (image 3) demonstrates some of the visual problem solving he went through to find the right solution. He drew the hand from different directions and at different angles to try and visualise what it would look like. Jessel's awareness of his own artistic skill is enhanced by his desire to expand his personal drawing repertoire. His responses indicated a confident, self-aware and visually literate young artist.

In my final interview with Jessel he designed his own illustration for the story of the *Frog Prince* (image 4). He filled the whole picture space with colour and attempted to emulate the shading on the trees, which he had admired whilst reading *The Frog Prince Continued* by Jon Sciescka and Lane Smith. The Frog Prince is shown moving through time over the pond with a series of splashes, which Jessel explained:

'It's just like when you try to make something look like its moving (mimes an arc through the air with his arm) over you like do lots of them, (mimes arcs with hand across body) sort of like a jump, so what's happened there is there's this frog sitting here (points) and he's dived in the pond just to get the ball, got the ball back, slips out of his hand flies over hits this frog on the head, and the princess is going to be there (points)… And then his friend goes "I'll get it" and it slips out of his hand bangs him on the head, he's unhappy, you can't see his unhappy face anymore I've got to add it (makes a correction), and he has headed it all the way over

and the frog's gonna be here, grabbing the ball, so he's not giving it back.'

This extract reveals how the story of *The Frog Prince* underwent a process of transformation as Jessel added his own personal twists and embellishments. The references were taken from his knowledge of the communicative aspects of visual story telling but also from his personal experience. He chuckled to himself when he drew in the princess' clothes and explained that she is wearing trousers branded 'Angel' and instead of 'glass slippers' some trainers branded 'Darts'. The inclusion of these references from contemporary culture allowed a new dialogue to emerge in this retelling of the fairy story with the conversation between the princess and frog on the side of the pond:

'I've done her face like happy and sad (mimes up and down mouth with fingers) cos she's doing two conversations. Because one's a happy conversation and ones a sad conversation…one's not going to be good, not going to give it back, not gonna give it back and the other one,… the other one's gonna say um, "Where did you get your, where did you get you dress from princess?" and she's gonna go, "Matalan, 29 pound, fake dress"…He's saying, well this is a female frog going "Where did you get your dress from princess?" and she's going to go with that side which is her happy side, and she's got a happy eye and a shocked eye on this side of her face so she's having a sad conversation and a good conversation…And she goes "25 pounds for a fake dress" and the female frog goes "Bargain"'.

Jessel has transformed the original narrative and created new imaginative possibilities, connections and contexts. His passion for and enjoyment of drawing and image was clear and no doubt partly explains the sophistication, enthusiasm and creativity communicated through his own verbal and visual responses.

This case study demonstrates the rich visual world of the young child and showed how Jessel uses communicative, aesthetic and artistic dimensions to make sophisticated visual narratives of his own. Jessel was explicit about what it meant to be a good artist. His determination and understanding was evident in the serious and methodical ways in which he regulated his own drawing performance, but also in the ways in which he responded to and evaluated the work of other artists and illustrators. His talk, gesture and drawing demonstrated a clear link between the reception and production of visual

Within the study visual literacy was seen to develop through collaborative activity. By working alongside their peers, children encountered different points of view and were forced to interrogate and justify the meanings they were constructing, 'scaffolding' one another's learning.

images and showed an extremely visually literate young learner in action.

Visual literacy and collaboration

Within the study visual literacy was seen to develop through collaborative activity. By working alongside their peers, children encountered different points of view and were forced to interrogate and justify the meanings they were constructing, 'scaffolding' one another's learning.[28] The role of the teacher or 'expert' was also central to this process. The most visually literate children were those who had previous experience of a rich and diverse range of visual texts (which mostly consisted of picture books and films.) The research context itself and the questions they were asked deepened the participant's responses. Taking the time to talk and question provided valuable opportunities for learning as the group discussed, debated and reflected on what they were seeing and understanding.

This has considerable implications for the teaching of visual literacy both in school and in museums and galleries. Interactions between people and works of art are at the heart of teaching in an art gallery, as Burnham and Kai-Kee describe:

'The unique charge of museum teaching is to bring people and works of art together face-to-face so that conversation can take place. We invite people into an open-ended dialogue – with us, with one another, and above all, with the artwork – an inquiry whose objective is to find the right terms to express what we feel, see, and want to know about the work of art.' [29]

Within my own practice, I have found that I am continually educated and enriched through the infinite and individual interpretations of the groups with which I work. The dynamics and interactions within the group are vital to this process. My research has had a significant impact on my development as an educator both in the way I work with groups to guide and support their looking with careful prompts and questioning, but also in raising my awareness of the unique possibilities available through working collaboratively to discover, imagine

and construct meaning. I have observed other gallery educators work in a similar way, through both careful planning and skilled intuition.

Case study 2: Visual literacy in action in the art museum
April 2016 teacher trainees workshop at The National Gallery as part of the Initial Teacher Education *Take One Picture* Cultural Placement Programme.

This careful, dialogic approach to looking at artworks has been particularly successful as part of a partnership project between The Fitzwilliam Museum, The National Gallery and the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge.[2] The project supports a cross-curricular approach to looking at art through the *Take One Picture* programme, and offers a week long cultural placement for primary PGCE students. There are many positive outcomes to the placement, but showing primary school teachers and children how to look at artworks is at the heart of the project. Feedback indicates the way in which museum educators support the development of visual literacy by using talk to guide looking and understanding. This has a significant impact on the trainees' practice, as shown in this comment from one of the teacher mentors; 'The use of open ended questions to elicit ideas, extend thoughts and sequence and collaborate several pupils' opinions can be a powerful learning tool both for the pupils and the teacher'.[3] Over the course of the placement programme, through discussion, workshops and

teaching observations, the trainees discover how artworks can offer alternative ways of knowing, feeling and understanding. One of the trainees this year commented:

'I now see that art can be the key to open all aspects of learning across the curriculum; reasoning, investigation, imagination, looking, group work, skills behind researching and discussion skills… The importance of developing a sense of mystery, as sense of awe and intrigue and how invaluable it is to pupils learning.'

This feedback celebrates both the cognitive demands of reaching understanding and the journey from 'seeing' to 'knowing', whilst also acknowledging the importance of personal aesthetic experience, interpretation and response. Her words demonstrate the power of visual literacy to both stimulate thinking and allow for personal, creative and imaginative responses.

The same trainee brought her class of 10 year olds back to the museum as part of her placement in May 2016. Looking at Monet's *Springtime,* the group started with the communicative aspects of visual literacy by looking closely and talking about colour, texture and shape. As they looked, talked and drew she told them the name of the artist and how he liked working outdoors. After 15 minutes of close looking she asked, 'Why does the painting look like this?' asking them to compare it with a Victorian portrait they had just looked at. One of the group answered, 'It is not how we see the world

but it is how the artist sees the world' and the class embarked on deep philosophical discussion of the parallel role of artist and viewer. Other comments included, 'The artist is not here to tell us the right or wrong answer so we can create our own stories… Really it could be anything - just use your imagination.' These children are clearly extremely visually literate but they needed time and encouragement to look and think. The trainee's gentle but skillful guidance enabled the group to reach a very sophisticated understanding of the power of art to connect, inspire and transform.

Final thoughts
April 2015 Year 4 children looking at *Springtime* during their visit to the The Fitzwilliam Museum as part of the Take One Picture Cultural Placement Programme.

My research and practice as a gallery educator has demonstrated how visual literacy develops by looking closely together, decoding images to find meaning and making time for personal connections, interpretations and responses. As the case studies have demonstrated, looking at and making pictures are serious cognitive tasks that encourage and enable young children to hypothesise, make deductions, connections and comparisons, to imagine, to transform and to create.

In *The Intelligent Eye*, David Perkins describes four dispositions to looking at art:

Give looking time

Make looking broad and adventurous

Make looking broad and deep

Make looking organised[31]

Close looking requires time, commitment and discipline and this must lie at the heart of any educational programme that aims to support the development of visual literacy. The proliferation of images through the internet, film, television, printed media and advertising has meant that visual literacy has fast become a vital skill for everyone. At a time when there is concern that UK schools are not offering the broad cultural and creative education that young people are entitled to, it is all the more important to create opportunities to engage with works of art in this way.[32, 33, 34] Museums and galleries offer valuable spaces for people to take the time to look, to think and to question. Teachers and gallery educators play a crucial role in supporting the development of visual literacy by providing opportunities for young people to explore multiple ways of seeing, understanding and creating.

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Notes

n1. Noble, K. (2007) Picture Thinking: the Development of Visual Literacy in Young Children, PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.

n2. For information about the National Gallery *Take One Picture* Initial Teacher Education Cultural Placement Programme see **https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/initial-teacher-education/** and the Fitzwilliam Museum and Faculty of Education involvement **https://camunivmuseums.wordpress.com/2014/05/02/take-one-ite-cultural-placement-programme/**.

n3. For further exploration of the importance of dialogue with engagement in art see Yaun,Y. Stephenson, P. and Hickman, R. (2015) 'Museums as Alternative Settings for Initial Teacher Education: Implications of and Beyond the *Take One Picture Programme for Primary Art Education'* in *Visual Arts Research*, Volume 41, Summer 2015, pp.27-42.

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Images

1. April 2015 Year 4 class, visit to the the Fitzwilliam Museum as part of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) *Take One Picture* Cultural Placement Programme (photo credit Martin Bond).

2, 3 & 4. Drawings by Jessel, aged nine.

5. April 2016 teacher trainees workshop at The National Gallery as part of the Initial Teacher Education *Take One Picture* Cultural Placement Programme.

6. Monet, Claude, *Springtime*, 1886. Oil on canvas, 64.8 x 80.6 cm, the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

7. April 2015 Year 4 children looking at *Springtime* during their visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum as part of the *Take One Picture* Cultural Placement Programme (photo credit Martin Bond).

Max Reinhardt Literacy Award

How hosting the Max Reinhardt Literacy Award has encouraged English teachers into Manchester Art Gallery

Emma Carroll

What is the Max Reinhardt Literacy Award?
The Max Reinhardt Literacy Awards (MRLA)[1] ran as a pilot in 2014-15, when galleries, art museums and visual arts venues across England were invited to submit a proposal to host an award. Those selected would work with a creative writer and a school to produce a resource that demonstrated how the venue's collections, display or building could be accessed to stimulate creative writing and develop the range and quality of student's writing outcomes.

Why we applied
Manchester Art Gallery has a vibrant schools literacy programme for all age ranges, with primary schools regularly visiting us to meet fairytale characters, develop story structure and conjure up imaginative settings for stories. This work has been developed through testing a wide range of frameworks and approaches for over a decade. The secondary school offer was developed through a successful long term partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University's PGCE English course but still needed research and development to translate the training programme into visits by English teachers with their classes.

With the start of the introduction of new subject specific GCSE curriculums and examinations, from 2015, for 16 year olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland there was considerable change. Exam boards' sample papers for the English Language GCSE now included an image for students to respond to in order to produce an extended narrative or descriptive piece of writing. We were made aware of this development through a request to deliver training for a cluster of secondary schools that were looking for support with teaching this element. This looked like the perfect time to help teachers use the gallery's collection to respond to the new criteria.

However, one aspect was missing from our ability to support the process to create an extended piece of writing. We had developed systems for visual investigations of artworks and were experienced in encouraging students to look at, ask questions of and make personal connections with an artwork.

This had resulted in plenty of well-tested, successful approaches that generated ideas for writing, but no extended writing took place at the gallery. Through MRLA's support and funding we would be able to recruit a writer who would supply the final steps – the bridges into writing.

Using images to stimulate writing is one thing, but we wanted to demonstrate the benefits of coming into the gallery and seeing the real artwork. Particularly as the new GCSE curriculum provided the perfect hook to encourage teachers to engage with the collections and make the gallery an extension of their classroom. Through this project we were able to gather evidence that student's confidence grew and their writing could move from the expected to the truly imaginative in a gallery setting.
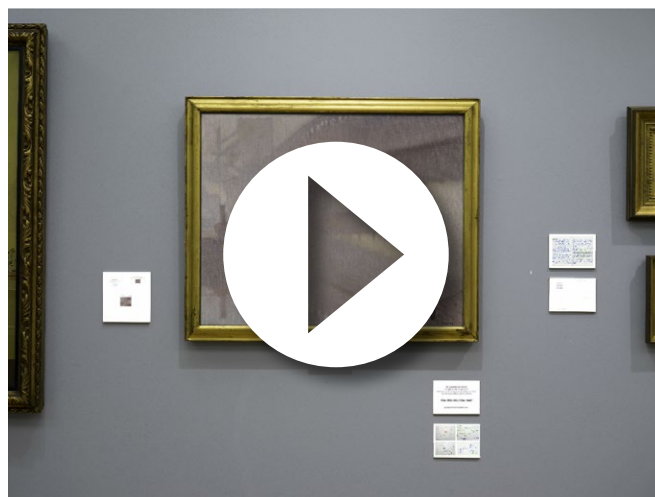
Working with Mike Garry, a Mancunian poet with a track record of working with motivating young people to express themselves, allowed us to explore what visual literacy is and how it works as a stimulus for extended writing. Frameworks and techniques were supplied by the writer, from word splurges, kennings and haikus, to first and third person narratives, which provided the scaffold to turn ideas into crafted pieces of writing.

Equally importantly though, as a performance poet, the writer shared some of his responses to the painting, which were often deeply personal. This gave him authority and he earned respect, while conveying the power of words. Through this sharing of his personal responses he encouraged students to do the same, and when they shared he validated their ideas, thoughts and writing – he championed their imaginations.

By working with a writer in a gallery we provided the students with the time to look, and increased confidence in their imaginations. This encouraged curiosity, prompting them to ask questions and letting stories develop.

'It was fun and I felt like I could be myself in the sessions through my writing.' Jack, Year 9

Link: **https://prezi.com/qnzvh2m-vjo4/ image-to-text/?utm_campaign=share&utm_ medium=copy#**

English Language GCSE
Responding to the exam board sample papers provided certain parameters that we had not considered when developing creative writing

sessions at the gallery before. We felt it was important to work with an image that was similar in content to the examples that had been provided, which had minimal characters and a setting which suggested something was about to happen. With this in mind we selected by Adolphe Vallette (1912) – maybe seen as initially dull, but full of intrigue – an artwork that needed to be carefully examined to discover all aspects.

It was unusual and challenging for us to work with only one painting and not make more of our rich environment. Was it possible to spend over five hours of direct teaching time only investigating one artwork? Would the students' interest hold for this amount of time? Multiple ways of looking and engaging enabled us to continually return to the painting and really get under the surface. We:

- used formal elements in art to follow line, observe shades, notice light and dark to slow down and really observe the painting

- engaged our senses to enter the painting

- asked and answered questions to imagine what could be happening

- worked on character building to develop three dimensional people

- moved beyond the frame to understand setting

- related the painting to other artforms to consider genre and style

- connected it to memories of places and events.

Under Windsor Bridge (1912) by Adolphe Vallette, courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery.

These techniques and more kept the painting fresh and ideas flowed, fostering a greater depth of writing, with students showing a marked increase in the quality of their narrative prose.

Teacher
We worked with Sarah Mullholland, Head of English at Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College. She had received training at the gallery as part of her PGCE at Manchester Metropolitan University and had approached the gallery for training support to respond to the new GCSE. We identified two classes of Year 9 (aged 14) students across the ability range to encourage differentiation within the activities. The school perspective focused us on how the gallery experience would complement learning in school, encouraging us to produce a resource that

maintained interest and provided approaches for unique extended writing. This confirmed our decision to use only one painting throughout the project and to provide material that responded to and developed ideas generated at the initial gallery visit. The result is a realistic model for schools to work with the gallery, when organising a visit is logistically challenging for teachers, and we cannot expect multiple visits over limited timeframes.

Working with a teacher also enabled us to measure the impact of this work on students' longer-term writing. Through baseline testing of writing before and after this intervention the majority of students had shown an improvement of at least one level in their writing. Attitudes towards writing from an image were also measured at the end of the project, with students reporting a far greater level of confidence when faced with the writing, citing that they had a variety of approaches to use and an understanding of how to approach the task.

'Students' enthusiasm and engagement with the tasks has had a really positive impact on their progress. They tell me they now have a 'toolkit' of approaches and feel much more confident.'
Sarah, Teacher

The Max Reinhardt Literacy Award
The partnerships inherent to the award, with engage and National Association of Writers in Education, encouraged clear outcomes and maximum impact. We were able to access training and skilled support and were provided with

We have produced a visually engaging resource that demonstrates how one image can supply a myriad of responses and shares the techniques we used to inspire them.

opportunities to work collaboratively and develop partnerships and networks. The project framework and funding also allowed us to build in time for reflection and sharing outside the immediate project group. Without the MRLA programme and the financial support of the grant we would not have been able to expand into this area of work, which was so perfectly timed to meet the needs of the new English curriculum.

Hosting allowed us to:

• **Develop a resource that acts as a hook into the gallery, not a replacement for visits.**

We have produced a visually engaging resource that demonstrates how one image can supply a myriad of responses and shares the techniques we used to inspire them. By working across the students' ability range we have offered avenues for differentiation that allow teachers to adapt to their students' specific needs.

As we documented the students' progress we can identify the building blocks to produce a variety of writing, from the description of a setting to the opening scene of a story or a compelling first person narrative. And we can demonstrate how students have responded.

Both teachers and students have reported that the variety and quality of responses produced in the gallery are greater then when similar techniques had been used at school. Our partner school in this project returned to the gallery this year over two days with their entire Year 9 cohort – that's over 170 students.

'The gallery space allowed students the opportunity to be creative, collaborative and reflective in an environment where they were more willing to share and try out ideas. While I had used artworks in my teaching, nothing compares to the real pieces when in the gallery space. This provided a multisensory and more kinaesthetic experience for students, and supported the generation of more compelling ideas.' English teacher

• **Create opportunities and space in a crowded curriculum to unlock students' imaginations and have their ideas valued**

Through regular feedback from users of our service we hear that working within the gallery environment removes barriers to imaginative learning. The space offers freedom to think and behave differently, encouraging experimentation and allowing for creative connections. Teachers

need support to do this and moving beyond the norms of the classroom and school expectations allows for different behaviours and expectations. To be able to demonstrate impact directly in a core subject such as English offers another voice within schools to champion the importance of learning outside the classroom and provide additional evidence of quality student outcomes.

- **Invite secondary schools to engage with the arts through a non-traditional subject and help develop visual literacy with secondary schools**

We recognise that in the current formal education framework, English is at the core of learning and holds a powerful position within the curriculum. It is a subject that does not readily use visual arts organisations as a resource. Since offering to schools a session based on developing creative writing in response to one image we have had take up from 12 secondary schools, which have paid for the workshop. We are providing memorable experiences for students, allowing techniques experienced to be more readily recalled and employed in the future, which we hope will be used across subjects and indeed outside the school and gallery environment and in every day use.

As Veronica Reinhardt, the instigator of the Max Reinhardt Literacy Award stated:

'Small interventions can have big impacts. The Literacy Awards are designed to encourage

teachers to liberate their students' imaginations by moving them out of the classroom, providing them with a different viewpoint and the space to develop confidence by believing in their own voice.'

To see the final resource please visit: **http://manchesterartgallery.org/learn/schools-and-colleges/resources-2/**

Notes

1. The Max Reinhardt Literacy Awards – In 2014 applications were invited for the inaugural Max Reinhardt Literacy Awards, funded by the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust. The programme was developed to enable galleries, art museums and visual arts venues to support a dedicated programme of creative writing and literacy work with schools. The awards are run in partnership by engage, the National Association for Gallery Education and the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE).

Photos Emma Carroll.

Visual Thinking Strategies and Central Model Senior School, Dublin 1

An action-research project

Lynn McGrane, with Liz Coman and Sheena Barrett

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is an educational curriculum and teaching method which is designed to enable students to develop aesthetic and language literacy and critical thinking skills. The method is the result of more than 15 years of collaboration between cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen, a Harvard trained educator and psychologist and veteran museum educator Philip Yenawine, and their colleagues.[1] It has been field tested since 1991 in longitudinal studies employing experimental and control groups in multiple sites in the United States and other countries. These studies have found that VTS builds critical thinking skills that students transfer to other settings and other subjects, including writing, maths, social studies, and science.

In 2013 I had been working as an educator in formal (post primary teaching and teaching at MA level at third level) and informal (museum and gallery education) for 15 years, with no space for dedicated reflection on my practice. Was what I was teaching or what I was programming reaching my audiences?

Was it having any effect? Was there another way of approaching things? I was introduced to VTS by Liz Coman who first encountered it while doing her Masters in Museum Studies at John F. Kennedy University, Berkeley, California. She had always been conscious of how loaded words like 'literacy' and 'visual literacy' are and of how over-claiming the benefits and/or transformative impact of visual art, by pointing to the interconnection between language development and visual literacy, can be precarious. Through discussion, we felt we could begin some action research in the area, and with the assistance of the Arts Council of Ireland I took part in a VTS Practicum for Beginners, which was held in Amsterdam in 2014. At this stage of training, the focus is on learning to use the three questions of VTS:

What's going on in this picture/artwork?

What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can we find?

Peer critique is embedded within the learning process for the trainee facilitators, which I found really useful because I had reached a stage in my career were I wasn't being critiqued anymore and feedback was a rarity. Hearing criticism, however constructive, was not easy in the beginning, but was a very worthwhile exercise which proved an essential catalyst for beginning to assess my own methodologies. When I returned from the Practicum, Liz and I approached a local school, Central Model Senior School, Dublin 1, to discuss working over a number of years with one set of students in order to test the efficacy of VTS. This project formed a key strand of what is *Project 20/20*.

The VTS and Central Model Senior School Project is one of a number of projects under the umbrella of *Project 20/20*.[2] *Project 20/20* is a visual literacy initiative with children living in Dublin 1 led by Sheena Barrett and Liz Coman, Dublin City Arts Office, using the LAB Gallery, Foley Street, Dublin 1, (**www.thelab.ie**). The LAB Gallery was established as a municipal arts hub in 2005 housing the Dublin City Council Arts Office, gallery, theatre rehearsal and incubation space. The LAB Gallery supports emerging artists and emerging ideas, encouraging more established artists to take risks in their practice. It encourages cross-disciplinary collaborations to support both artists and audience lines of enquiry. The ethos of supporting arts practice, research, respect and mutual learning in its relationship to its artists, extends to its public and academic programmes.

Project 20/20 at The LAB Gallery fosters a love, understanding, confidence and critical language in looking at visual art and how contemporary Irish artists make their work. Liz and Sheena commission contemporary visual artists to make original work for young audiences, and facilitate innovative mediation to support their experience of contemporary Irish artists' practice. The focus across the different visual art strands of *Project 20/20* is on unlocking the children's voices as people and viewers.[3] Learning to look slowly, offering 'permission to wonder',[4] fostering curiosity, getting to the stage of asking 'big questions', discussing these ideas as a group, accepting that art can be ambiguous and unresolved, understanding that every opinion is valid and knowing that gallery spaces are for all members of the public (albeit with particular and peculiar rules and histories that are sometimes invisible).

The notion of 'slow looking' is a growing movement for galleries and museums around the world.[5] It is also attracting the attention of contemporary art historians. Approaches and strategies in 'slow looking' offer the values of art history as a discipline and traditional techniques of curation and connoisseurship to a broader range of publics and opens up space for debate and discussion.[6]

VTS has a prescribed curriculum in the US, but we wanted to make it more relevant for our own environment and tailor it to the work that The LAB Gallery was doing. It is the children's local gallery, and we proposed to use contemporary Irish art as our resource for looking.

Deirdre Gartland, Vice-Principal at Central Model Senior School was open to the idea and was interested in how the methodology could work in improving visual literacy for the children.[7]

Our teachers for the first and second years of the project were Bridget Kildee and Edward Wrynn, brave and intrepid partners in unchartered territory in the Irish school system.

VTS purports to be able to effect measurable academic growth in students with varying ethnicities. In the school we are working with, over 60% of the children come from a non-native English speaking background, and our specific group of 30 children has 17 different nationalities, (our school is a band 1 DEIS School).[8] We wanted to look at these assertions and test them through action research with the same group over a long period of time (we are currently entering our third academic year working with the same set of children).

During VTS training, trainee facilitators are taught to improve their listening skills by practicing how to paraphrase all comments neutrally and to feed back these comments using more sophisticated language, which enables the students to widen the vocabulary at their disposal. During the Advanced Training Practicum, practical peer critique in front of artworks is used to develop the skill of linking and framing students' comments. Both Liz Coman and I took part in an Advanced Practicum held in Amsterdam in November 2015.

Back in the classroom or gallery space, our students were now taking a lot of time to look closely at the works they were seeing and talking about what they observed. And without the use of the second question (what do you see that makes you say that?) from the facilitator, they were automatically providing evidence for any theories they had, which was a skill that translated across the curriculum as a result of this project, according to their teacher.

Their teachers also noticed that they were now listening to each other speak and giving each other space and time to articulate their thoughts without being interrupted, something that did not happen before. They also noted that this type of speculative thinking, which is supposed to open up different possibilities, was really doing that, and in the classroom students would acknowledge what their classmate had said but then put forward their own ideas. This took some time as a process. In our first eight to ten sessions, the children did tend to follow the first comment given. For example, if the first comment built a narrative about the image being like a scene from a cartoon, the other children tended to go with that. However, after a number of months, through spending more and more time looking closely, they began to come up with multiple theories. In the second year, the students began to pepper their discussion with more formal language. For example there was no longer a barrier presented by language in describing something as being a sculpture or in grasping the idea that the work had a maker and that there were materials involved which, from what they had seen, could include things as diverse as rags, bronze and pure sound.

In the 1970s, Abigail Housen's research demonstrated that viewers understand works of art in predictable patterns called stages, of which there are five. Our students had moved from stage one (accountive) to stage two (constructive) viewers.[9]

They became more interested in the 'how' of the artwork: what mechanisms enabled the installation to move in a particular way? What materials the artist had used and why? What did this all mean?

They became more interested in the 'how' of the artwork: what mechanisms enabled the installation to move in a particular way? What materials the artist had used and why? What did this all mean? Things opened up for them and it denoted a milestone for the project: they were now comfortable viewers of artwork armed with the mechanism to decode anything for themselves.

Their teachers also reported that some students, whose first language was not English and who had been very reticent to speak out, now began to speak up in class. They believed this to be due to the confidence gained and the 'safe space' created during VTS classes, where all comments are treated neutrally and with equal respect, no matter what the comment is.

One of our participants, Fatima, illustrated the process which places the child centrally, as meaning maker in a collective, supportive setting: 'It's really fun to share our ideas together and we can get more ideas from each other and it's better than someone telling you because you're learning from yourself, you're guessing yourself'.

Our documentation and evaluation processes draw on The LAB Gallery values around pushing artistic practice, risk taking and experimentation. We have invested considerably in documenting processes via image, audio and film. We also employ processes for encouraging project creatives to be pro-active as reflective practitioners. Regular curatorial meetings, reflective practice sessional sheets and blogs have been practical tools to explore and assess the personal and public impact of *Project 20/20* on the development and strengthening of visual arts education practice. To learn more about this and other projects and to follow the progress of them please go to: **http://dublincityartsoffice.ie/ project2020/**

Our work with Visual Thinking Strategies in *Project 20/20* enjoyed a fruitful partnership with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in April 2016. A pilot training initiative aligned both organisations' objectives in building visual thinking and increasing access for children and young people to the arts in their local community. The NCCA are currently redesigning the Junior Cycle Art, Craft and Design curriculum within a larger curriculum reframing of Junior Cycle (for 15 year olds). The partnership invited Yoon Kang O'Higgins from VTS/USA to Dublin for two days to train a

range of professionals – art teachers, curators, artists, primary level teachers, administrators and community workers – in a two-day Beginners Practicum Training in Visual Thinking Strategies. Participating galleries included The LAB Gallery, Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, Oonagh Young Gallery and Artbox. This has widened the awareness of VTS in Ireland and ignited productive discussion about teaching methodologies for the visual arts.

Through the work done with Central Model Senior National School and other audiences, Sheena Barrett, Curator of The LAB Gallery, noted how all audiences responded to work when they have had the opportunity to really look and build an understanding of what they are seeing. The work in The LAB gallery is generally work being exhibited for the first time, fresh from the studio. The interpretations Sheena was observing did not have the pressure of conveying an agreed historical reading. In this particular context she found she gained a great deal from a curatorial perspective.

She says:

'Associations I might have thought were more obvious for visitors to make between works sometimes weren't clear, a failing curatorially rather than on the part of the viewer. In addition, I've really enjoyed the rich discussions resulting from the children's diverse cultural references they are bringing to the work. The classroom has so many different nationalities that can bring more relevant readings to work created in a global art context to a local gallery.'

Between May and December 2016, we will be working with the Office of Public Works and the DFP[10] as the children have been invited to select work themselves for an exhibition from the collections on either side of the Irish border. The resulting exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue and tour nationally. It's an exciting next step to build on their ability to look and communicate what they are seeing. The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue which outlines

some highlights of the VTS discussions around the works selected.

Over 60% of the students the primary schools in the neighbourhood of Dublin 1 are not born in Ireland. English is not their birth language, Irish art history or even western art history is not their history. Up to one year ago many of the children we work with in *Project 20/20* did not know The LAB Gallery, even though they may have walked by it everyday. Dublin City Council's objective is simple, for children to access quality artists and arts experiences that are present in their local neighbourhood. This aligns with the objectives set out in Dublin City Council Arts, Education and Learning Policy (to be published in October 2016). *Project 20/20* works within the context of a local authority which enables a community of arts, education and learning practice to develop slowly, within a specific neighbourhood, and allows us to be flexible around how relationships are built and resourced over time.

In *Project 20/20*, we have taken our lead from the children's voices and their understanding of what they are looking at and the meaning they are making. This is challenging for us, as adults, and as professionals. It is also a gift that allows us to enjoy a rich debate about visual literacy, contemporary art and children's experience of living in Dublin 1. We hope it will impact how our neighbourhood nurtures its young population and influence how we, as arts and cultural organisations, teachers, youth service workers, early childcare providers, artists and local government, make decisions.

Films about the project:

https://vimeo.com/127655342

https://vimeo.com/157296459

Find out more about the project:

http://dublincityartsoffice.ie/project2020/

Notes

1. **http://www.vtshome.org/what-is-vts/about-us** (Accessed 19 June 2016)

2. To find out more about the other projects, go to: **http://dublincityartsoffice.ie/project2020/**

3. The other strands are: Contemporary Art and Early Childhood and Art and Philosophy

4. Yenawine, P. (2013) *Visual Thinking Strategies Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines*. New Haven: Harvard University Press. Chapter one is entitled 'Permission to Wonder'.

5. **http://www.slowartday.com**

6. **http://harvardmagazine.com/2013/11/the-power-of-patience**

http://www.jameselkins.com/

7. The International Visual Literacy Association defines visual literacy as the ability to derive meaning from images of everything we see, to read and write visual language.

8. DEIS: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools is the Department of Education and Skills' policy

instrument to address educational disadvantage. The action plan focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years).

9. For more on Abigail Housen's stage theory, see: **http://www.vtshome.org/research/aesthetic-development**

10. Department of Finance and Personnel, Stormont.

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Images

1. A VTS session with Central Model Senior School students as part of Project 20/20 at Trinity College Dublin with the Irish Proclamation led by Lynn McGrane.

2. Students from Central Model Senior School looking at work in The LAB with Liz Coman.

3. A VTS session with students from Central Model Senior School at Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane led by Lynn McGrane.

4. Central Model Senior School on their visit to Stormont Castle to choose works from the collection.

Using visual literacy to help primary school children with story writing

A continuing professional development project

Claire Gunningham

As a primary school teacher I use visual literacy (VL) as a tool for learning. This derives from my previous work as a gallery educator, where I developed skills to help children become more visually literate with the aim of benefiting their general wellbeing and education. This grounding experience of working with children in galleries has persuaded me that we underestimate the understanding we gain from visual images.

As a new teacher, teaching in a small rural school in Devon, I was aware that a child in my Year 4 class, (aged 8-9 years) whom I will refer to as Jim (not his real name), struggled with every aspect of his learning. Jim progressed slowly and found writing difficult. When evaluating the Aztec pictogram writing system during a history lesson, Jim commented that he found this system better, 'because you draw what it is and then you look at it and you can see what it is'. I found it fascinating that this child, who found writing so inaccessible, could relate so successfully to a pictographic writing system.

Jim's ease of communication via images and my background in the visual arts led me to explore VL as a means of increasing achievement in conventional literacy. This coincided with a Master of Arts in Education module that required me to implement a continuing professional development project. I asked what I could do as a practioner to make my literacy lessons more enabling for children who find our writing and reading system highly challenging, and how I could achieve this within the setting of my school.

Working with a definition of VL
Debes' definition of VL as a set of visual competencies which, when combined with other modes of communication, allow us to make sense of and draw meaning from a variety of visual stimuli proved useful.[1] The 'modes of communication' typically include talking and writing and are described by Unsworth as 'meaning making intermodal interactions'.[2] It is this additional means of communication, powerfully encapsulated by Styles as 'the empty spaces between words and

pictures that are ripe to be filled with the imagination',[3] which I sought to explore as a way of helping Jim.

Jim's ability to find pictographic writing systems straightforward is understandable and is supported by research.[4] Children with dyslexia have been helped to write English in a school in Canada by simultaneously teaching them kanji symbols.[5] Evidence suggests that people with dyslexia absorb character-based languages more easily,[6] a view supported by renowned picture book author Anthony Browne who notes that, in his experience, below average readers of print are often very able readers of images.[7] This is supported by John Berger's assertion that 'Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak'.[8] Psychological research provides evidence that humans can identify complex visual imagery in a fraction of a second.[9] Indeed, one can chart our relationship with images and our ability to use them as a means of communication back to paintings on the caves of Lascaux some 17,000 years ago, pointing to a deep seated cognitive ability to gain meaning from images. Given this central status of visual information processing in human cognition, I hypothesised that when teaching literacy we risk underestimating the meaning gained from visual images, and that they could be used to help Jim.

Placing Jim within the context of the school community

The small rural school in Devon where I taught at the time was characterised by children who arrived with high levels of articulacy and competencies in reading, writing, maths and general knowledge. Parents were keenly involved in their children's education and had very high expectations. However, there was a resistance to using VL methods within the traditional and risk-adverse pedagogy of the school. Independent writing was the favoured approach and was clearly successful in most cases. It would have been foolhardy to change a system that was working for so many of the school's children, however, I questioned whether the approach that worked for the majority of the children in the school was working for Jim.

Designing the VL activity

Avgerinou et al.,[10] in their synthesis of VL studies over the last three decades, identify a convergence around the idea that VL skills are learnable, teachable and capable of development and improvement. Having worked as a gallery educator for engage's *enquire* project,[11] I recognise that children learn to be better able to interpret and talk about artworks during projects with artists and educators in galleries. It is my view that the apparent ease with which we interpret the visual world around us and gain understanding from it can result in an underestimation of quite how expert we are in this mode of information processing. In my opinion this is particularly true of children, who become highly sophisticated readers of images at a very young age, through the inevitable experience of being immersed in a visual world.[12] With this in mind I worked on the assumption that Jim and his

classmates were skilled in the interpretation of visual images, and I planned my project accordingly.

The project

The project began with an introductory lesson in school. Children were shown an image of a painting called *The Boyhood of Raleigh* (1870) by John Everett Millais[13] (**http://www.tate.org.uk/art/ artworks/millais-the-boyhood-of- raleigh-n01691**). This painting is set in a local town, familiar to many of the children in the class. Children were asked to work in pairs to unpick what they thought was happening in the painting. A whole class discussion followed to share ideas. This activity was followed by an independent task where children were asked to imagine that they were stood in the painting. They had to imagine what they could see, smell, hear and feel. They used this information to write a story using the painting as the inspiration. Children were encouraged to let their imaginations flow as well as to use ideas from the class discussion. The aim of this session was to introduce children to the idea of using a picture as the starting point of a story. I used literature on similar project work as a framework when planning this activity,[14] as well as ideas from the *Out of Art into Storytelling* project undertaken at the National Gallery, London.[15]

This activity was followed by a story writing task set when the children visited the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter a week later. I designed this in response to the children, who asked for larger pictures and more variety after the introductory lesson. I explained that I wanted the children to use a painting called *Troops Leaving for the Front* (attributed to Walter Bayes)[16] **http://artuk.org/ discover/artworks/victoria-station-london- troops-leaving-for-the-front-95893#** as the starting point for a story, in the same way as they had done in class the previous week. The painting is a very large and atmospheric oil painting of First World War soldiers and their families at a train station, preparing to part as the soldiers leave for battle. The children were encouraged to imagine that they were in the painting and to describe in a short story what they could see, hear, smell and feel.

Assessing the results of the activity

Due to the small scale of this project I could not claim that that the children's writing improved compared to previous writing. I decided to ask the children taking part for their opinions and to reflect on their experiences, and that I would look for noteworthy examples of changes in the children's writing. I set whole class questionnaires at the end of each of the two writing tasks, focussing on whether the children found it enjoyable and helpful to use a picture as the starting point of their writing. I found it useful to conduct whole class questionnaires where Jim was a focus child, so that Jim was seen in the context of his class. This was also consistent with my original aim of supporting children at school who do not necessarily fit with the dominant learning characteristics of their contemporaries.

Effects on the children

It was clear from the introductory lesson that all children in the class were engaged when using the

printed image of *The Boyhood of Raleigh* as the starting point of a story. The children came up with varied and original responses to the image and discussed their ideas with enthusiasm, including Jim. When asked after the activity whether they had enjoyed the task, all responded that they had. The children reported that they had found it easier to write a story using the painting because it gave them more ideas; it gave them an image in their mind to work from and they could see what they needed to write about. Several of the children commented that using the painting made them feel like they had a 'head start' when writing their story. Only three children in the class had opposing views. They felt that the painting gave them too much to think about, that they prefer to use their own imagination, and that they did not like the painting. When asked what the children would like to do differently if we did the same activity again, many of the children asked for a choice of paintings and more time, which I have ensured during subsequent visits.

Using a painting in a gallery seemed to stimulate extra excitement and engagement from the children. Children commented that it was better to use a painting in a gallery because 'you get a bigger image and get to look closer' and because 'it was big and it had lots of things in it so it helped me get lots of ideas for my story writing'. Others commented that using the painting in the gallery made them feel 'like you were there' and that it 'makes it more imaginable'. As before, a few of the children noted how using the painting made story

Using a painting in a gallery seemed to stimulate extra excitement and engagement from the children.

writing easier as it gave them the ideas for what to write. Looking at the stories the children produced showed that their stories varied in structure, style and content. There were only a few difficulties. Some children found it hard to write on the clipboards and in view of the public. Jim produced a significant amount of writing during each task, but needed support during the gallery activity to produce some writing. Jim often struggled with confidence when faced with new challenges, and this seemed to be the case on this occasion. He did, however, report that he enjoyed the activity.

Effects of the project on my development
From my point of view, the lessons were successful in terms of my own development and were enjoyable to teach. I felt very much in the 'state of flow'.[17] I believe that this was partly due to my prior knowledge and experience as a gallery educator, which enabled me to teach with confidence. Knowing that there was a clear research and theoretical base to what I was doing validated the activity. This gave me the confidence to implement my ideas within the context of my school, and

informed a way of working that enabled me to teach using a method that I knew was best for the children regardless of the more traditional style of teaching present in the school. I found the process of designing the activity in response to the children's own ideas - suggested after the introductory activity in class - valuable, and this has become part of my practice. I learnt that the children in my class could be my greatest asset in terms of opinions, ideas and insights into education. Their opinions proved to be as important in shaping my practice as theory, research and policy.

I used this project to reflect on my own practice in relation to the use of VL in my teaching and I believe that I helped Jim find a more enjoyable way to write. Knowing this has helped my practice and so, in turn, other children that I have gone on to teach. I continue to work closely with galleries such as Spacex in Exeter **http://spacex.org.uk** and The Thelma Hulbert Gallery in Honiton **http://thelmahulbert.com** to ensure that all the children I work with get the chance to come into contact with art and artists to help all aspects of their learning, including the development of their VL skills.

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Reading without words

Encouraging visual literacy among preschoolers through art

Glenna Barlow

Just recently the topic of children in museums became newsworthy when a three year-old posted a video with her impassioned plea to the *Neue Galerie*, which does not currently allow children into its museum. The story, [**https://news.artnet.com/people/neue-galerie-no-kids-455681**] made the rounds in art publications and sparked debate among museum professionals and museum-goers alike as to whether young children should have a place in art galleries. For me there was no debate; I know how much a three-year-old can get out of a museum visit because I see it for myself every month.

Every first Wednesday the Columbia Museum of Art (CMA) in Columbia, South Carolina, welcomes preschoolers (and their adults) to join us for what we call *Gladys' Gang*. The free programme is named after the museum's mascot, Gladys the Grasshopper, who has become the face of family-friendly programming at our institution. The morning starts in a quiet, carpeted room where children gather for a discussion of art and a story. Sometimes there's movement – acting like a scary statue, or a willowy tree – other times there are songs – for example repetitions of *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes* to help remember body parts. The picture books and discussions about art all relate to a central theme, of which caregivers are aware before they arrive. Then the magic happens as we venture into the galleries. I start out with conversations focusing on two or three works of art, then children and adults are left to explore the galleries and discover more works on their own. (I should mention that all of this happens before our museum officially opens to the public so those in the *Neue Galerie* camp can rest assured their visit will not be interrupted by the pattering of 30 or 40 little feet, and sometimes not-so-little voices.) From here we make our way into the studios where an art activity awaits – kids get to mould clay, push paint, cut, colour, paste and create. All as a way to reinforce all those visual concepts we discussed in the past half hour. The art projects always focus on process rather than product, the goal being to develop skills and express ideas rather than to create an aesthetically pleasing object.

To be sure, many of the children who come to these programmes have done some of these activities before. On the surface, there is nothing groundbreaking about reading a story, singing songs or making art. We do all of these different activities to engage with various types of learners, and there is value in each of them. But the real heart of the programme is its focus on visual literacy. While many of our participants are not yet able to read words, we are teaching them first to read images, which is, after all, the first way we begin processing information as soon as we are born. In our discussions of art, both in and out of the galleries, the focus is always on learning to break down and digest visual imagery. Assertions and inferences are followed up with questions like 'What clues do you see?', 'What do you see that makes you say that?' or 'How can you tell?' to further strengthen the connection between visual information and storytelling. We've also developed cards available for

visitors that outline ways to strengthen visual literacy skills, both for babies and older museum visitors.

The programme is designed to focus not only on the children's experience but the adults' as well. When leading discussions we are explicitly modeling behaviors and lines of questioning that we hope to see in our visitors. Adults do not necessarily need these ideas to be spelled out for them; after seeing the results of these types of questions they naturally use the same strategies on their own. This is evident as we (staff and volunteers) float in and out during the unstructured gallery time, observing and occasionally joining in conversations among children and adults. Becky, one of the volunteers who regularly assists with the programme, recently noted, 'You can really see a difference among the ones who have been coming again and again. They're asking questions like "What's going on here?" on their own. They're really taking the visual literacy thing to heart.' We deliberately structure the programme to allow time for children and adults to engage with one another while museum staff and volunteers are in the galleries to help facilitate discussions. The goal is not just to encourage children in their understanding of visual literacy but also to empower adults to feel comfortable discussing art (even art they may feel they themselves do not 'get') with their little ones.

So what impact has this instruction had among *Gladys' Gang* regulars? The most overt demonstration of the programme's effect that we see is the behaviours and interactions among participants during the unstructured gallery time. Increasingly we have noticed children pointing out aspects or elements among works of art, adults asking directed questions, and children creating stories based on the visual information they see. Beyond these observations we have discussed adults' impressions of their children's understanding. We are often surprised to learn that some of the quietest and most reserved children have really internalised the lessons' objectives. One mother

regularly attends with her two daughters, aged three and four, who are both so soft-spoken and shy they wordlessly turn down even the nametag offered to them at the start of each session. Yet their mother recently reported that they had visited the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the girls were using words like 'portrait' and relating what they saw to pieces they had seen at the CMA. On the other side of the spectrum we have a very energetic boy of three who likes to chime in (though not always exactly on topic) and who regularly keeps the gallery guards on their toes. His grandmother told us that she was 'surprised at how much he pays attention and gets into the art activities'. Even after the sessions are over, she noted, he makes reference to their time at the museum. Of one lesson she said, 'He looks at that cloud picture he made here all the time and will talk about the museum and what we see when we're here.'

Our goal with this programme is to make both children and adults more comfortable 'reading' pictures as well as discussing their ideas about art. We want to give caregivers the tools to be able to carry on these conversations anywhere – whether in an art museum, reading a book, or in a park. We're providing the problem-solving techniques that will help children be able to make meaning from the world around them. If that process of discovery and understanding happens in a museum, so much the better. We know that one of the biggest indicators of whether adults go to museums is whether they were taken by their guardians when they were

Our goal with this programme is to make both children and adults more comfortable 'reading' pictures as well as discussing their ideas about art.

children.[1] Our hope is that every child, and caregiver, feels they have a place where they feel welcome to learn, explore, and create. So far, it seems that message is getting across. The *Gladys' Gang* programme has become so well attended that we'll be adding a second session each month beginning this summer.

Notes

1. J. H. Falk & L. D. Dierkling (2000), *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, p.74

Images

All photos by Drew Baron.

A little less conversation

Exploring how choreographed gallery experiences can impact upon depth of engagement

Gill Hart, Head of Education, National Gallery, London
Based on a conversation with Kate Coyne, Programme Director, Siobhan Davies Dance,
and choreographer and dancer Lucy Suggate.

The following dialogue between Kate Coyne, Gill Hart and Lucy Suggate is based on the European Union funded project *Dancing Museums*, a two-year research project featuring five dance organisations, five choreographers and eight museums and galleries. The project comprises eight residencies, each lasting two weeks. Residencies include research time for the lead choreographer and a week of audience engagement.

The project was conceived to explore ways in which working together might result in more powerful interpretations or experiences of art – in the case of the National Gallery, paintings.

Choreographers create experiences using their bodies, communicating through a process of physical thought and movement. Visitor experiences in museums and galleries are often based on words; labels, audio guides or a dialogue facilitated by staff. A critical rationale for exploring what might be gained from working with choreographers was to test what James Elkins described in *Pictures and Tears:*

'…the piles of information smother our capacity to really feel. By imperceptible steps, art history gently drains away a painting's sheer wordless visceral force, turning it into an occasion for intellectual debate.' [1]

Might it be possible to challenge codified and accepted behaviours when one looks at, learns about and experiences art in a gallery? We set out to test this hypothesis, not in order to do away with language but by complementing it through movement, to explore the 'wordless, visceral force' of a painting.

Why place dance within the context of a museum or gallery?
KC: Dancing in a museum brings visitors closer to performers – its proximity to the perceived stillness of paintings or objects interrupts codes of gallery behaviour. It creates situations in which dance can be recognised as a physical model of thought, allowing non-verbal communication of the complexity of human movement, both in the live body and within a painting or object.

Dancing in a museum brings visitors closer to performers - its proximity to the perceived stillness of paintings or objects interrupts codes of gallery behaviour.

We, at Siobhan Davies Dance, have a lot of experience working in galleries. The opportunity to research (rather than build performances) and to look at dance through the lens of historical painting is a new one, chiming with the organisation's desire to continually investigate dance's place in culture. It has provided a platform to consider how dance and visual art education can work together, to an extent exploring what Karmen MacKendrick articulated in *Embodying Transgression*:

 '…literature forces us to confront what we cannot understand in language, the inexhaustibility, the impossible nonsensical excess, of "meaning", which turns out to be everywhere and absent; dance forces us to confront what our bodies alone can "understand", the inexhaustible joy and desire of spaces.' [2]

There is a convention where people watching dance stay for the duration – even when that was not intended. When we presented the durational work *Table of Contents* in galleries, dwell time significantly increased.[3] In *Dancing Museums*, we are testing whether we can encourage a similar licence to linger in front of a painting, encouraging visitors to look for longer whilst both engaging with the choreography and the collection.

Gathering evidence of dwell time is one of a range of methodologies used to record and evaluate *Dancing Museums*. Differing scales and types of organisation has necessitated varying approaches, including commissioning objective writers to document residencies by observing and interviewing staff, visitors and dance artists through to a full ethnographic evaluation study at the Louvre.[4] When the project concludes in March 2017, a rich body of evidence will exist across organisations whose objectives vary.

GH: At the National Gallery, a desired outcome of *Dancing Museums* is to test and learn from the proposition that we need not be dependent upon sophisticated verbal language to create meaningful, in-depth learning experiences that enhance visual literacy.

Performance is part of many museum and gallery programmes. This project is not about choreography as much as the artwork. It is about how obvious or explicit the relationship between performance and painting can be. Does that relationship 'speak' for itself and can it be readily understood? How can we resist the temptation to provide verbal interpretation to explain the performed interpretation?

The pursuit of other modes of communication in part connects with the historical fine art collection we have at the National Gallery and chimes with an idea put forward by Rika Burnham in *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. The 'coded, puzzle-like character of allegory in the grand manner threatens to bring out the worst in our teaching… Information floods in to alleviate our anxiety over the possibility of failing to make the artwork comprehensible.' [5] Working with choreographers felt like an appropriate way to test this. Whilst transmission model teaching (where knowledge or information is transmitted from teacher to student) is not our main staple, we are seeking to create situations where our participants can experience dialogues – not just with us, but directly with the paintings.

LS: Movement is my language of choice – as a choreographer when I encounter paintings, particularly historical ones, I am struck by the transformation of two-dimensional surfaces into three-dimensional worlds where illusion and reality coexist.

Performance spaces often insist on distance; fixed perspectives that somehow seem counter intuitive. If my work is about passing energy from one physical body to another why would I want you to be stuck still? In a gallery, paintings and the moving body are no longer separate – they are extensions of each other. Everything comes alive.

There are embedded expectations when watching a live performer; we enter cultural and communal spaces with a lot of coded behaviour. During the *Dancing Museums* residency at Arte Sella **http://www.artesella.it/en/chisiamo.html**, an outdoor exhibition of contemporary art in Italy, visitors stopped, looked and stayed – even if the work was not intended to be watched as a whole piece. There seemed to be a shift towards more conventional dynamics of performer as active, spectator as passive. In a large outdoors sculpture park I had been anticipating a wandering quality and natural desire to change perspective around a fixed object. *Dancing Museums* residencies highlight these issues: how do we, as dance artists, depart from more traditional paradigms of spectator/performer?

How does dance and movement add to the existing practice of educators and choreographers and lead to more in-depth engagement with our visitors?
'As human beings we all live in two worlds. There is the world that exists whether or not you exist… This is the world of objects, events and other people; it is the world around you. There is another world that exists only because you exist: the private world of your own thoughts, feelings and perceptions, the world within you… We only know the world around us through the world within us, through the senses by which we perceive it and the ideas by which we make sense of it.' [6]

GH: Museum and gallery partners approached *Dancing Museums* as an opportunity to address

ways in which embodied or procedural knowledge may not be well presented through verbal language alone. For the dance partners and choreographers it is an opportunity to consider the gallery environment as more than a mere backdrop for their performance.

All partners in the project have been motivated by the sentiment expressed (above) by Ken Robinson in considering the convergence of movement, words and pictures. Robinson continues, 'In western cultures we've become used to making firm distinctions between these two worlds, between thinking and feeling, objectivity and subjectivity, facts and values.' [7]

At the National Gallery our collaborations with choreographers have developed as part of a programme based upon experiences where there is a convergence between thinking and feeling. One catalyst for this enquiry was the exhibition *Vermeer and Music: The Art of Love and Leisure*, **http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/vermeer-and-music**, which featured live music in the exhibition and on the events programme.

Music provided a powerful, alternative experience and also a conundrum: Vermeer's paintings are among the most resoundingly quiet. Slowly an idea grew to create the conditions for visitors to experience one artwork in total silence. *Looking without Talking* events took place in the Dutch Galleries where, with minimal conversation, visitors were asked to take a seat on their own in front of a spot lit painting and,

at the sound of a bell, sit in silence – alone, with a picture.[8] By removing verbal interpretation, we concentrated instead on creating optimum conditions for visitors to stop, slow down, take notice and begin constructing individual responses.

Summative evaluation revealed that time alone and space to focus the mind and eye resulted in many participants developing a framework of meaning ordinarily teased out verbally, using questions. Some participants found the experience so powerful, they were moved to tears.[9]

This led to the development of experimental programming, complementing the more conventional approach one might expect from a guided tour or lecture. Diversifying our approach has created programmes where participants take control of how and what they absorb from a painting as they settle into an active looking experience. This is challenging behavioural conventions and our educational practice simultaneously – however, whilst much of what we do is based upon theories of multiple intelligence,[10] the inclusion of feeling, making or performing is likely to be couched in verbal prompts.

Movement, like silence, has also developed as a means by which to do this; *Dancing Museums* thus far has provided striking examples. For the *Museo Civico, Bassano del Grappa* in August 2015, Lucy Suggate and Tatiana Julien choreographed a 15 minute long experiential tour designed, through minimal verbal instruction, to encourage participants

to engage with a specific theme in one gallery, a colour in another and a hand gesture in the next. The cumulative impact of this approach was one of spatial awareness and heightened awareness of materials and emotions; participants used their own bodies to react to the art around them.

At the Louvre residency in March 2016, Connor Schumacher performed the equivalent of a preparatory sketch in the setting of a reconstructed ancient courtyard. A soundtrack written and recorded by Connor played as he moved across the friezes and the courtyard; the carefully selected words and movements combined to create an audio and visual rumination on frailty and conservation. The human body looked small and vulnerable against large stone artworks.

'From the moment these monuments were finished they began to die.

From the moment my body was built completely it began to die.'

'There are gaps in the history of these objects

Just like there are gaps in my teeth.'

'The object does not care that it is falling apart.

My body does not care that it is falling apart.

Only I do.'

The works themselves are in a 'constant state of conservation' as the soundtrack asked us 'who will conserve the idea of me?' [11]

KC: Our research interest for *Dancing Museums* is whether dance can surprise visitors out of following conventions, leading to a longer, more deeply personal, engagement with paintings.

However, dance work exists only in the moment, and each moment is unique depending on who is there to experience it. Watching a live body in movement can increase dwell time but what is interesting about *Dancing Museums* thus far is how increased dwell time has been directed *back* to the artworks. This has been recorded at *Arte Sella*, where average dwell time during the residency was doubled, and visitors to the site were recorded as being in less of a rush to 'finish the tour', and at the *Louvre* where Connor Shumacher's piece led to longer and more concentrated dwell time during and *after* the performance.

The partner museums and galleries in *Dancing Museums* vary; settings can be large, small, have free-standing displays or works only on walls. Some have low footfall and others high. This variation in visitor flow presents a challenge, making it imperative for the choreographers to be adaptable, mindful of their environment and sensitive to the visitor experience.

LS: I aspire for my work to be encountered in a similar way to how you might approach an object, a piece of sculpture, a strange creature or another human being. I'm curious to know what information the visitor receives by just passing a moving body in a gallery space. For me, the most important thing is that I am able to transmit energy and ideas from my body into space to be experienced by 'willing' spectators.

My artistic response to paintings has been to focus on time, space and colour, manipulating my body within these frameworks. The physical marks I make enable the public to read the body as a live and painted manifestation. Their reflections back to me always include reference to an aspect of the museum artwork as well as what I am doing. Occasionally I talk to visitors as I work – which is not always what they expect and can take them by surprise. One participant at the residency at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, described my work as being both Baroque and Sci-fi: I can, then, integrate these references into my material. Unlike the paintings, I can take on feedback and constantly alter the work at source.

What are we learning?
LS: Traditionally the dancer is so often used to being the centre of attention – a little bit like an altarpiece. I wonder if we can ever fully abstract performer from performance. This makes it difficult for a performer to be read like a painting or piece of sculpture. We will always be human, always be alive. There have been moments where we have all reverted to previous experiences or modes of

operation: the dancers keep on performing and the public watch the moving body as if it were in a theatre. Can we ever successfully integrate differing codes of cultural behaviour? Primarily it is a process of acclimatisation for all involved. We are learning to share the space with the public, the paintings – and a lot of different movements.

In *Dancing Museums* we are exploring a more subtle, integrated approach. Sometimes it is difficult to know how to behave: the stillness of the paintings command so much attention that any movement can appear insensitive, inappropriate.

What skills, or embodied knowledge, can I pass on to enhance or encourage new learning, seeing and thinking? I often think about the artist; the physical act of painting, mixing colour, transferring their imagination into marks. Having spent time with the paintings, I begin to see paint as their material as the body is my material. That's something I want to explore during the National Gallery residency in November 2016.

GH: There have been moments, or vignettes, within each residency, where flashes of physical and conceptual intelligence work in synchronicity – as John Dewey put it, 'Images and ideas come to

us not by set purpose but in flashes, and flashes are intense and illuminating, they set us on fire'.[12] They appear at their strongest when designed around an economy of carefully selected language combined with a physical intelligence. Connor Schumacher's soundtrack and movement in symbiosis with the artworks at the Louvre and Lucy Suggate's disruption of a movement with a word during the Vienna residency are such moments.

The disciplinary exchange between choreographer and educator demonstrates that a carefully designed experience can lead to extraordinarily powerful visual encounters for everyone involved. Verbal language alone can lock us into superficial analysis, whether formal or narrative. To encourage visual and visceral literacy – for an individual's experience to go deeper – we need to be a little less verbose ourselves.

Notes

1. Elkins, J. (2004) *Pictures and Tears*. New York: Routledge, p.92

2. Mackendrick, K. (2004) 'Embodying Trangression' in A. Lepecki (ed.), *Of The Presence of The Body, Essays on Dance and Performance Theory*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, p.150

3. *Table of Contents* is a six-hour long collaborative work. Evaluation at the Arnolfini cited 75% of visitors agreed that the work had changed their expectation of what they see in a gallery, 65% of people stayed up to 1 hour, 20% stayed 1-2 hours and 15% stayed 2-4 hours.

4. The Louvre evaluation will be available on the Dancing Museums website. Date to be confirmed. **http://dancingmuseums.com/**

5. R. Burnham and E. Kai-Kee (2011) *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, p.122

6. K. Robinson and L. Aronica (2015) *Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education*. Viking p.51

7. Ibid., p.51

8. This event format was in part inspired by an experiment described in the Boston Globe of the approach taken by Harvard Art History Professor Jennifer Roberts, who asks her students to stare at artworks for up to three hours. **https://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/health-wellness/2013/05/26/cure-for-distracted-mind-stare-painting-for-three-hours/rzIKob6JEBy0RlsQl1DSqN/story.html**

9. Feedback from this experience ranged from 'sitting in silence, I find my eyes to be extremely busy…' to 'relaxing', 'cathartic' and 'mindful'. One man reluctantly sat on the last available seat in front of a battle scene; later he explained he would not ordinarily have looked twice at this painting – time alone in silence had enabled him to search for details, discover relationships between figures and a growing wonder about how the artist had achieved the flourish of a cape or dramatic pictorial effect.

10. The theory of multiple intelligences was proposed by Howard Gardner in his 1983 book '*Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences'.* Gardner proposed eight criteria to be considered as intelligences in place of one general ability. These criteria included visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic and bodily-kinesthetic. At a later date, he proposed several additional criteria. For full details see Gardner, H. (1983), *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.* New York: Basic Books

11. Excerpts from Connor Schumacher's 'Everything Crumbles' performed in the Louvre on 18 March 2016

12. Dewey, J. (1934) *Art as Experience.* New York: Perigee Books, p.287

Endnotes

Video footage of some of the residencies can be viewed at **http://www.dancingmuseums.com/ artefacts.html**

Information about this project and the impact can be found at **http://www.dancingmuseums. com**. It is a work in progress and is very much the result of people working in different languages yet all trying to co-ordinate in English – which is interesting in itself given the aims. At this point there are various written accounts and surveys of different residencies, some of which are in need of translation. In due course these will all feature on the website.

Images

1 – 3. Connor Schumacher, *Everything Crumbles*, 2016, with fragments from the Palace of Sargon II, Louvre, department of near eastern antiquities, photos by Gill Hart.

4 – 6. Lucy Suggate performing in the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Lucy spoke with visitors whilst performing, challenging conventions of behaviour for both gallery goers and performance audiences, photos by Gill Hart.
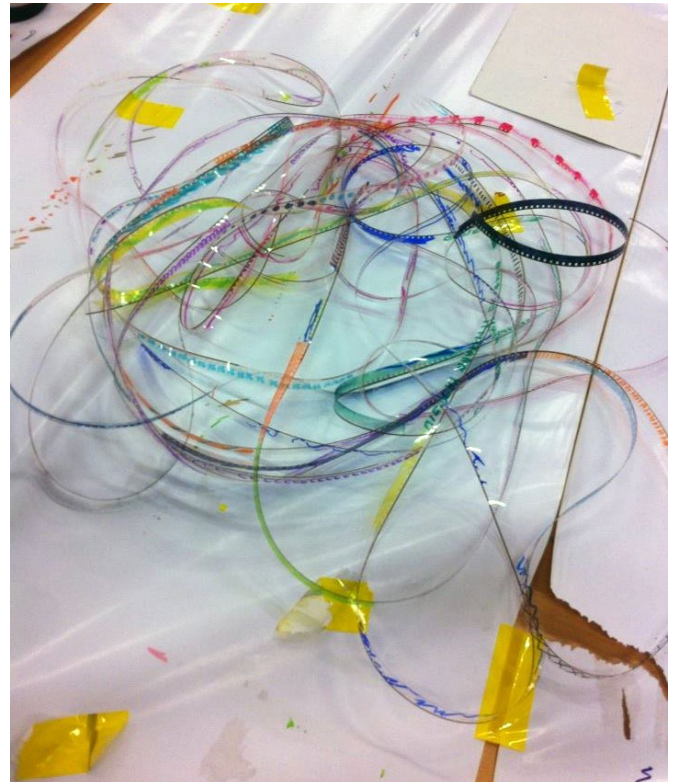
Choreographic Objects

Participatory workshops engaging alternative interactions with contemporary art

Sam Metz, Freelance artist for Circuit Partnership Strand

Choreographic Objects is a project developed at Nottingham Contemporary for *Circuit*, a national programme connecting 15-25 year olds to the arts in galleries and museums, led by Tate and funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation.[1] Crocus Fields, a respite centre for young people with disabilities, is a *Circuit* partner, and worked on a series of 10 workshops between April and June 2016, designed to engage with and promote sensorial interactions in the gallery. The workshops are run in collaboration with Collabor8 Collective, a young persons' group for young people aged 15-25 that actively engages with art and exhibitions at Nottingham Contemporary through peer-led work and advocacy. Collabor8 and Crocus Fields are working together across the workshops, finding opportunities to share work in unusual ways.

Young people from Collabor8 Collective have been invited individually to take part in Crocus Fields sessions. This presents an opportunity for Crocus Field young people to work with other young creatives.
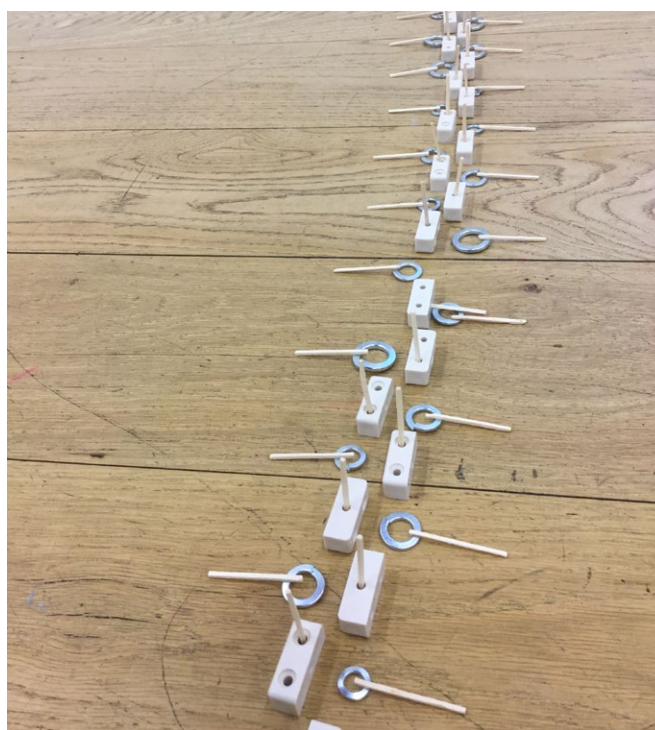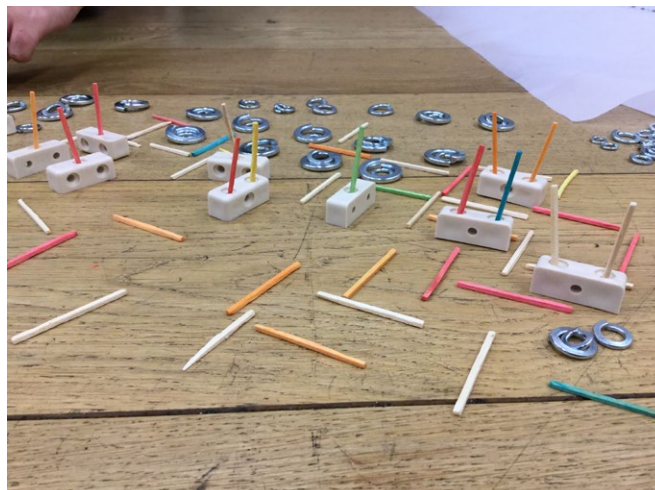

Participants have drawn on cine film which became a basis for experimenting with body movement and building soundscapes.

Choreographic Objects set out to describe the journey between initial readings of an art object and participants' multi-layered responses, which are often not limited to the visual, and explore diverse understanding of the ways that we might wish to encounter an artwork aside from a neurotypical one.[n2] Through a peer-led approach we hope to create a common platform for the multi-faceted encounters with artworks that I have shared with young people with autism.

These workshops aim to destabilise the privileging of visual and verbal responses to viewing art in an art gallery setting; instead they embrace alternative ways of exchanging conversations with the world. The intention is to encourage process-led work, and foster and develop the existing skills of participants. Some Crocus Fields participants have an existing artistic practice (developed in previous Crocus Fields contemporary art sessions with Crocus Fields worker Calum Watts and artist Sam Metz), some are non-verbal and some have autism. The workshops respond to the Simon Starling exhibition at Nottingham Contemporary and Backlit, and a key theme is the choice and use of materials in the making of artworks.

The workshops focus on the body because we as a group (of predominantly young people with autism) all 'make stuff'; we explore with our bodies – we touch we move, we test – and we rarely talk about what we are making or why. Crocus Fields sessions are often energetic and spontaneous; we respond and we make. The young people I work with are in

Crocus Fields participant, *Choreographic Objects,* making installations and testing arrangements.

constant conversation with the environment physically and not verbally; our workshops are about authoring creativity and allowing a space in which the young people can explore materials and value the process of exploration without having to respond to questioning or articulate these responses.

For a facilitator working with a group of primarily non-verbal participants, decentralising the role of verbal interaction simply makes sense. However, it is important to the success of our workshops that not only the didactic (pedagogic) element of speech is decentralised, but also that it is not prioritised within the making process itself as this would limit alternative (sensory) conversations. For example, in the first session we drew on cine film, then created soundtracks that responded to this film using the iPad app, Borderlands Granular.[3] We focused on responding physically to the movement of our film and the inspiration in the Simon Starling exhibition.

Using abstract film as a trigger for movement and sound exploration. Link: **https://vimeo.com/album/4247553/video/191023835**

Gifs created by a Crocus Fields *Choreographic Objects* participant exploring movement and image vibration. Participants explored the idea of pulsing sounds alongside their visuals. Link: **https://vimeo.com/album/4247553/video/191023837** and **https://vimeo.com/album/4247553/video/191023839**
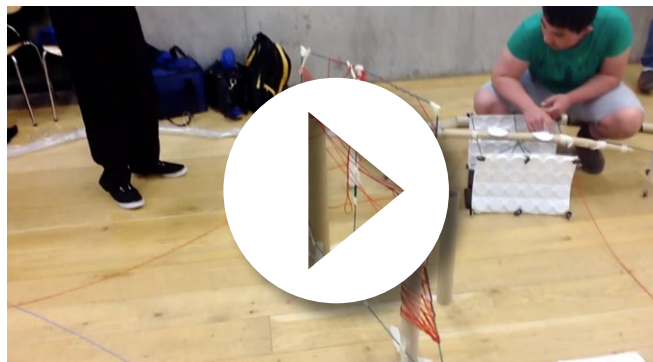
In the second session we looked at works in the gallery that were inspired by manufacturing and the textiles industry, before moving out of the gallery and into the city centre where the environment similarly reflected the idea of presence and absence in shapes and patterns. We took photographs and then immediately returned to the studio to make repetitive drawings and patterns that we converted into gifs using the app LoopVideo.[4] Many of the young people in the group were inspired by drawing quick repetitive patterns as their drawing already involves gestural repetition, which is often evidenced in artists with autism. One young participant often draws letters rapidly with strong gestures of the arm. By adding gif making we could experiment

with the natural vibrations of the lines in the drawings, adding movement. In this session another participant began to make sounds responding to the drawings, which we recorded.
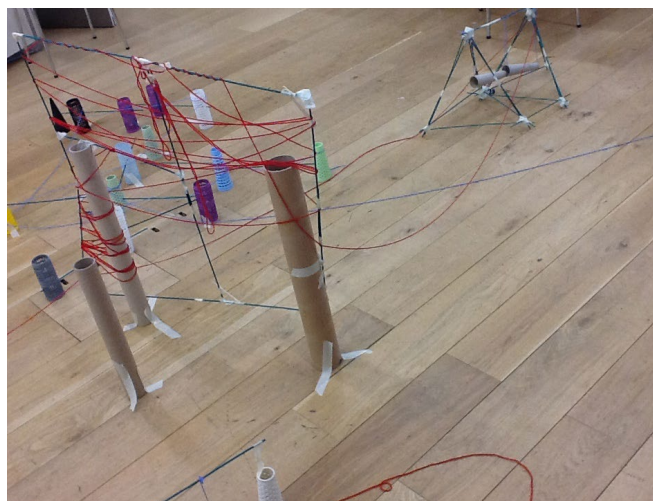
The importance of the body, the perceiving body and documenting processes of interaction
The workshops held at Nottingham Contemporary investigate the intertwining of contemporary visual practice and an interpretation of exhibition content, moving bodies that test through material resistance, a process akin to the real time practice required for dancers. *Choreographic Objects* understands dance as involving the whole body, taking into account the relationship of each moment and each interaction with materials and space.[1] Similarly when making art in response to exhibitions as a group we are involved in a bodily process, some of which is captured in our work.

A journey with materials is integral to Simon Starling's practice, where he invites audiences to question the journey and the narratives of materials through the processes he uses. Similarly, the work that Crocus Fields and Collabor8 have produced forms a journey of heuristic trial and error interactions, where the process of making 'play' leaves a trace for new audiences. For example, in our fourth session we made a floor based installation that involved moving objects and 'choreographing' them in the space. In session five, we built an installation in the studio that was inspired by the Starling film, *Red, Green, Blue, Loom Music* (2015-16). We experimented with lengths of plastic, cables,

Activating the installation. Link: **https://vimeo.com/album/4247553/video/191023832**

Machine installation.

Experimentation with materials. Link: **https://vimeo.com/album/4247553/video/191023840**

cardboard tubes, sticks and wool. We began to activate the piece like a dance, thinking about how we could respond to the materials, twisting, spreading, piling and moving materials until the installation made a form that we were happy with.

Reflecting on the workshops to date, I believe we have been successful in creating a space where creative bodily encounters with materials are deemed notable and worthwhile, playfully located as they are in embodied phenomenological engagement – testing, shaping and responding with respect to sensation. I choose, as a peer facilitator, to enable the space to be an active one, where all participants in a session are given the freedom to respond to making and creating with the full body in conversation with the process. However, I should question whether I have the right to make assumptions when presented with behaviours that are often autistic traits (namely bodies in conversations with materials, testing, generating

feedback and exploring) and to 'name' these as creative. I would argue that in the context of the studio, where creative encounters are encouraged and developed, all of the participants' interactions evidence an artistic practice that is significant.

Watching the group, it is evident that all the young people are engaged in decision-making, with each participant demonstrating the processes of interacting, testing, developing and refining that are essential in a reflective practitioner. In session six one participant stepped away from his painting and gestured 'finished'. Participants are making clear decisions about what materials they like, taking some and rejecting others. One, for example, often rejects new techniques that are introduced to return to large abstract drawing, but we can begin to see the impact that visiting the gallery and being exposed to the artworks there is having on his practice.

Animation created with a revolving cylinder in which a participant added layers of gestural and rhythmic drawing. Link: **https://vimeo.com/album/4247553/video/191023838**

Watching the group, it is evident that all the young people are engaged in decision-making, with each participant demonstrating the processes of interacting, testing, developing and refining that are essential in a reflective practitioner.

Within this intentional space of the studio, it is important to acknowledge refusal. The space that Calum Watts and I have created is not a school space; the young people are in a learning environment but everybody in that space is involved in creating, with support workers, staff and me making our own work as well as supporting young people. Within this space, a young person's wish not to engage with a new process or material must be acknowledged and respected. Enabling autonomy around creative decisions is the only way that we can ensure that we are helping a young person to develop their own practice and not simply imposing our own agendas.

One of the key dialogues between Crocus Fields and Collabor8 Collective happened in week six of the project, when objects produced by Crocus Fields became a trigger for creative response for the

collective, a shaping tool. The objects used were made in response to the jacquard cards (punch cards used for weaving) that feature in Simon Starling's film. As a group, Crocus Fields responded physically to the sounds in the gallery and were influenced by the film – moving, stretching and making sounds. In the studio, we made patterns that show this interaction.

Youth co-ordinator Alice Thickett and I asked the collective to spend time considering the objects and to respond in any medium they liked. This was an engaging collaboration between the groups, as the artwork became a vehicle for engendering conversation across two groups, one verbal and one non-verbal. This proved an effective approach as there was a common stimulus and there were no difficulties in sharing ideas. When collective members initially interacted in Crocus Fields sessions,

Crocus Fields Pattern Making.

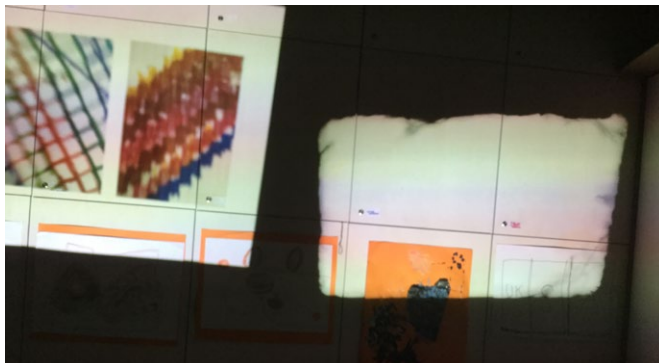Collabor8 Collective response to Crocus Fields Pattern Making. Link: **https://vimeo.com/ album/4247553/video/191023833**

Collabor8 Collective member response to Crocus Fields Pattern Making. Link: **https://vimeo.com/ album/4247553/video/191023834**
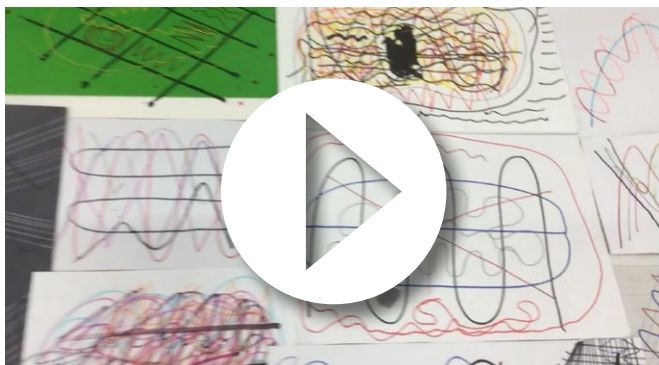
this was done individually, due to some behavioural needs. This was organised at the beginning, as there was a need to frame expectations for Crocus Fields and not raise unnecessary anxiety amongst the group. Later the collective and Crocus Fields will work together as whole group in the same space.

When individuals from Collabor8 Collective work with Crocus Fields they are participants. This is one of a number of conventions established to underpin an active creative space. For instance, it is now assumed that anyone entering the space is a participant. This has to be monitored and activities revised, especially when support workers used to working in learning environments are keen to ensure that the activity is followed and begin to take a teaching role. The teaching role is not relevant in this space; we use some elements of teaching where we model techniques but our role is primarily to participate and facilitate. The importance of making work alongside a young person with autism cannot be under-estimated. The ability to have a conversation through materials and approaches simply by engaging in creating artwork is a wonderful tool for encouraging others to work. It is also, importantly, not a verbal method, which could (for me, although not for support workers who sign) generate an unnecessary barrier.

We have worked across a number of media – animation, drawing, installation, filming, photography, assemblage - but maintained embodied practice within all of these encounters, the language of dance. Our drawings, for instance,

Audio visual display at the end of Crocus Fields sessions.

Crocus Fields drawing and interpretation.
Link: **https://vimeo.com/album/4247553/video/191023836**

are often driven by interacting with a space physically first. The intentional space of the studio is an active one, where there are few limitations to how we can respond to the materials in our processes. This can be different to formal education environments where it is expected that learners will engage seated throughout, and the lack of expectations of behaviour is what opens us up to experimentation and creativity.

The project concludes with an exhibition, when Crocus Fields members will curate the work created by the collective, emphasising the reciprocal relationship between the two groups. We are keen to provide as many opportunities for Crocus Fields to respond to the collective's work as possible, which will also serve to address any perceived power imbalance. Prior to that we have planned a joint session in a new arts organisation in Nottingham, Backlit, showing more work by Simon Starling. This may present some new difficulties around anxiety and behaviour but I believe the groups now have enough experience of working together and respect for each other. I am also encouraged that Collabor8 Collective has started to view the Crocus Fields young people as peer creative practitioners as well as young people with learning difficulties. I think a lot of expectations have been shifted.

Notes

1. Hay, D. (2016). *Using the Sky: A Dance.* London: Routledge.

Endnotes

n1. 1 *Circuit* is run by Tate and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Circuit is a four-year national programme connecting 15–25 year olds to the arts in galleries and museums working in partnership with the youth and cultural sector. Led by Tate and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, it provides opportunities for young people to steer their own learning and create cultural activity across art disciplines.

n2. *Choreographic Objects* looks to celebrate neurodiversity.

n3. This application enables users to explore, touch and transform sound and emphasises gestural interaction over knobs and sliders **http://www.borderlands-granular.com/app/**

n4. Application for iPad that plays videos on repeat ad infinitum **https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/loopvideoplayer-video-loop/id398897303?mt=8**

Say what you see

Claire Collison

Two years ago, teaching visual literacy for The Photographers' Gallery in London,[1] I took a group of thirteen year olds to the Taylor Wessing[2] exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, inviting them to each select their own winner and runner up, and to explain their choices. One girl had selected two very different portraits of women: a sexy Amy Winehouse lookalike in a black strapless bra, and *Sofia,* a seated woman, draped in a sari from the waist down, and naked from the waist up. She wore gold hoop earrings, and she stared directly out at the viewer. She had clearly had a mastectomy: next to her right breast was flatness, where her left breast had been smoothed into a faint scar that ran from her sternum to the shadow of her armpit.

'Why had she chosen these two?' I asked. 'The Amy' she'd liked 'Cos she's sexy'. 'OK, and the other?' 'I dunno, but aren't you supposed to get a false one if that happens? I like it cos she looks strong.' I'm paraphrasing, but this is what I remember: she admired the subject for not trying to hide what she had gone through.

Around this time, I had a routine mammogram, where I learned I had breast cancer. In the ensuing weeks, during the process of making decisions about my treatment, this chance conversation helped me decide not to have reconstructive surgery.

Whilst it was coincidental that I was teaching visual literacy when this conversation occurred, this event and its consequences are at the core of what I understand visual literacy to mean. They explain why I believe it is so critical, as an artist and an educator, and also as a woman – and I make no apology for criss-crossing between these frames of reference because they all inform how I read art, and how that art makes me feel.

Visual literacy begins with feeling (or not feeling) an emotion about an artwork: we feel first, and then we scrutinise, and eventually we understand what it is that has caused us to feel. It is like becoming intoxicated from a potion, and then learning what the ingredients are, only the ingredients are not simply what the artist has whisked up, they are also time and context – social, historical and cultural – and you, the beholder. The way we feel about the art can change, because we change. Meaning can accrue (a heartbreak song) or fall away (a film seen too often). I shall reflect on instances where ingredients have combined to shape how I feel and think.

Permission giving

Discovery starts with observation. We forget that. We rely on gallery notes and essays, and we fail to look – to actually look. The curator Jim Eade[3]

Discovery starts with observation. We forget that. We rely on gallery notes and essays, and we fail to look – to actually look.

understood this, and when he created Kettle's Yard, he displayed artworks without any accompanying notes. He put found objects next to Picasso maquettes; craft alongside fine art alongside his grandchildren's drawings. He included sunlight and shadows. Visitors had to work out what they felt all for themselves. And they did – and still do. Working with Kettle's Yard and Year 3 schoolchildren, aged seven and eight, from North Cambridge, as a recipient of a Max Reinhardt Literacy Award,[4] I was able to encourage children's innate ability to respond to art, and to help them use this to generate their own creative writing. These resources [**http://www. kettlesyard.co.uk/learn/resources/**] are fundamentally about giving permission.

Say what you see

In the television game show, *Catchphrase*, an animation illustrating a well-known saying is hidden behind panels. As the panels are removed and the animation revealed, contestants have to guess what the well-known saying is. 'Say what you see', the game show host implores. Sometimes the animation is so awful, or the catchphrase so obscure, that the

contestant doesn't stand a chance, but generally, the premise of the game is to enjoy watching someone struggle with the blindingly obvious: say what you see. The relationship between the visual and the verbal is a cornerstone of visual literacy; talking about what we see unlocks a latent and often emotional level of understanding, helping us understand *why* an image makes us feel the way we do. As Visual Arts Editor for Disability Arts Magazine, (DAM)[5] in the 1990s, part of my remit was to write an audio description for every image I had selected for the print edition. This would be recorded for inclusion on the cassette (cassette!) version of DAM, produced for subscribers with visual impairment. Radio journalists do this brilliantly, and it is worth listening to analyse how they make it seem so simple. There needs to be sufficient context (medium? Colour or black and white? Landscape or portrait?) and the level of detail has to be even handed: obsess on a corner of the page, and it skews the composition. And it has to be objective, allowing the listener space to create their opinion.
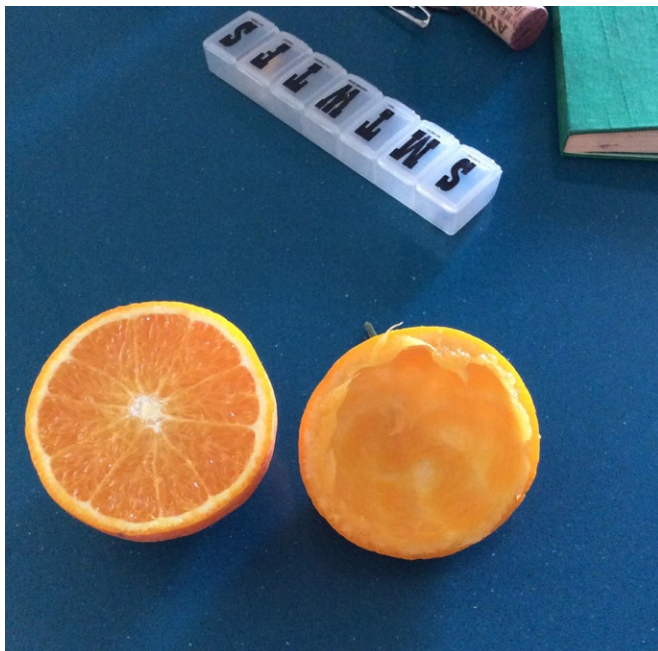
Occasionally, during this process of audio describing, I would realise what it was about that particular image that I had been attracted to, and why I had selected it above others. Something that, once I said it out loud, became obvious, but that had eluded the 'art editor' part of me.

When teaching visual literacy, I ask students to describe a picture into a dictaphone (radio journalist) or, working in pairs, to take turns at audio describing to their blindfolded partner, then asking their partner to feed back. This not only develops students' facility to articulate, it also legitimises *how* they notice what they notice – the language use, the context and references and associations – which brings them closer to what they feel.

Can you see me?

When I was told I had breast cancer, I was asked to decide whether to have reconstructive surgery during my mastectomy, or later. Not if, when. I find this extraordinary: I had a life-threatening illness, and yet I was being asked to make a decision about something that would make everyone else feel better – even, possibly, to the detriment of treating the cancer. But breast cancer treatment, I learned, is as much about the way women feel – about our breasts, and the way they are perceived – as it is about what we are experiencing in a medical sense. The only other time I had seen a woman with a mastectomy had been 30 years earlier, in the changing rooms at Hampstead Ladies' Pond. (I have even begun to wonder if she was a ghost from my future). I admit, I had not been looking then, but even when I began, the representation was scarce. I asked the hospital and was given access to a passworded site, where I could see anonymous examples (specimens) of women's scarred chests. On Facebook, tattooed *trompe l'oeil* celebratory survivor pictures – also anonymous and headless – might float unbidden into my newsfeed. Even now, when I have met scores of women who I know are like me, we remain invisible to each other. From the outset, treatments focus on disguise
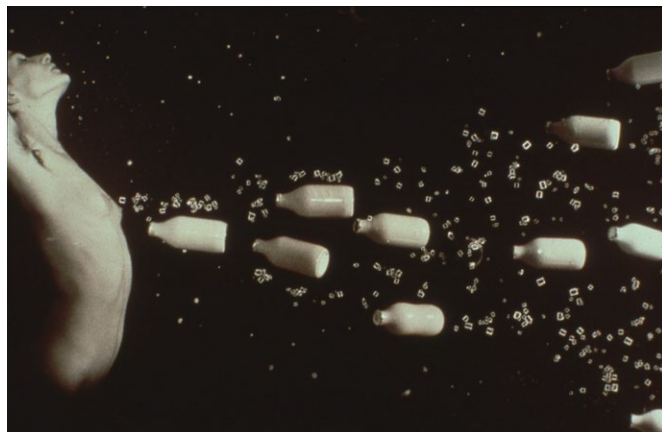
(wigs for chemotherapy hair loss and prostheses for mastectomy).

Why are we so hidden? What anxieties do we share as a society, where disguise is regarded as important as treatment? And what are the implications of such a lack of visibility? Audre Lorde wrote, 'When other one-breasted women hide behind the mask of prosthesis or reconstruction, I find little support in the broader female environment for my rejection for what feels like a cosmetic sham.' [6] It takes courage to reject that 'cosmetic sham'. Most women just want to get back to 'normal', to how things were, even if that isn't really possible (in support groups, we talk of the 'new normal'). I understand and respect this but wonder how women can make an informed choice about what treatment they really want when there is so little representation of viable options within mainstream culture? Can I do anything to address this visual illiteracy?

Having used my body in my art practice, and made work around women, health and identity for the past thirty years, I am in a rare position to explore this. As Artist in Residence at the Women's Art Library (WAL)[7] I am revisiting my own archive, as well as looking at the work of other women, to see what chimes and what I can learn in terms of how to represent my current experience. Are there models that I can develop (or reject)? I am searching for clues.

Meaning accrues
My early work drew on archetypes, exploding them to create new identities that I felt fitted me better.

Milky Way, commissioned for Camerawork's *Imaging the Future* in 1988, resonates now in a way I could not have known, half a lifetime ago. Some of my photos then were made through a process of play, and I would not really understand until I began to print them what it was I was trying to achieve. With *Milky Way*, I remember, I had a very definite idea: I drew the set and realised it (pre-Photoshop) exactly as planned. When I revisit this image now I am flabbergasted. My rationale then was to stage a treatise on the 'virgin and mother double standards' and the 'fiction of science'. Now this image speaks to me about how deeply rooted the mythologising of our flesh is, and the resulting pressures on women to conform. Breasts are the property of society; we transgress at our peril.

Meaning is fluid
'I make no bones about having cancer (unlike millions of others who are whispered about), which has empowered me to run the gauntlet of the medical orthodoxy, using my camera to campaign against their inadequacies.' Jo Spence, *Woman in Secret, What Can A Woman Do With A Camera?*[8]

When I first saw the iconic image of Jo Spence with a cross over her breast I felt sick. Jo and I were friends. We admired each other's work. I understood how to 'read' the image; Jo was using tropes I recognised and identified with – direct gaze, artful staging of a scene re-enacted from an experienced moment. Like anyone else who had not been through that experience, it seemed to me an immensely brutal act. It made me feel outrage on Jo's behalf and, as she intended, it provoked me to question the power dynamic that existed between patient and the medical profession. Whose body was this? These readings and their accompanying feelings remain, but then on the morning of my mastectomy the surgeon came and marked me up. He drew a series of lines on my breast, marking where he was to cut, and then he drew a cross – the 'X-marks-the-spot' iconic cross – and I felt relief. They would be getting rid of the cancer, there would be no mistakes. Now, when I see Jo's photo, I understand what she was feeling, but there is an overlay of my own very different experience, that superimposes itself onto the image and my understanding of it.

Policing art
Does it matter what an artist's intentions are? Can an artist control how their work is received, and should they try? Néstor Díaz, the photographer of the Taylor Wessing portrait, *Sofia,* is delighted his photograph helped me, as this had been his hope. 'And in that train of thought, many of the women

environments, directing them to look directly at the camera, and adopt a neutral expression – 'without any pose, no smiles nor distracting "masks"' in order to reveal the 'authenticity and honesty on each face.'

Did this work? I think so, even though it was not the photograph itself that helped me so much as the effect that it had on that girl. That was achieved through the strategies Diaz describes, and then by the opportunity to select and the permission to feel and articulate.

The photographs were not shown as Díaz originally intended, and there is a very different reading when encountering a portrait in isolation that began life as part of a series: how does this shift our understanding? Díaz also provided testimonies from each of the women, telling their own stories, and intended to be displayed with the photographs. I have now seen Sofia's testimonial, and I find it incredibly moving. It enriches my appreciation of the portrait, but the girl who liked it didn't have that statement.

Spirited bodies

Whilst the girl at the Taylor Wessing had no formal feminist learning and was blissfully able to straddle what might be perceived as conflicting theory, I am steeped in it, and in the implication of the gaze. I spent years working as a life model, which shaped how I went on to make work myself, and so was interested in revisiting this as part of my WAL residency. Esther Bunting created *Spirited Bodies*, a space where models are encouraged to speak (and even sing) and where participation is fluid –

felt a positive change of attitude in regard of their own bodies, only by the fact of letting themselves be portrayed'.

Díaz had very specific intentions: 'the idea was for the public to get to a state of deep emotion and reflection, attained by the uncomfortableness of being face to face to a reality they usually don't want to see.'[9]

He employed strategies to that end, photographing the women (this is a series of 24) in their own

artists can model and models can draw.[10] I have life modelled at two sessions – most recently as part of the Women of the World festival at The Southbank. Both sessions were women-only, and included a variety of women models who were not classically proportioned. And so I exposed myself to this process of being looked at, that I knew was also a way of understanding, and when I saw the work that they had produced I saw myself reflected back and it was healing. I saw that they had not drawn a woman with a breast missing; they had drawn a woman complete and whole, made up of all kinds of planes and surfaces, muscle and skin.

I hope to use my residency at the WAL exploring my 'new normal', and expanding the range of ways that I see myself reflected back in the world. I'm not ruling anything out: sometimes an ordinary activity such as using public changing rooms can feel like an artwork. I have just delivered *An Intimate Tour of Breasts*, as part of the Walking Women festival.[11] A guided tour through central London, taking in Tintoretto at the National Gallery, and the lap dancing clubs of Soho, along with all the ubiquitous bare-breasted statuary *en route*, unravels how the mythologising and commodification of breasts through history impacts on the way we feel about our own breasts. As a strategy for addressing our visual literacy around representations of breasts, this was extremely effective, with participants volunteering intimate testimony of their own. I am really excited about this as a model for future work. Walking and talking and responding to art, with

prompts providing opportunities to interact, shifts the focus onto the participant's response. It is a way of making art that has a solid history within feminist art practice that I can riff on – and one that could engage with an audience from both sides of the healthcare experience, opening up a dialogue that I believe is critical and timely.

Notes

1. *Seeing More Things* is a visual literacy programme involving, and learning from, young people studying at four secondary schools in Barnet, Brent, Camden and Westminster over a three-year period. During a series of photography-focused gallery visits and in-class work, pupils will work with a photographer or writer to measure, develop and extend their

visual literacy skills – stretching their ability to read, understand and analyse images.'

http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk/ seeingmorethings

2. Taylor Wessing 13 Annual Photographic Portrait Prize at the National Portrait Gallery, London http:// www.npg.org.uk/photoprize1/site13/

3. Between 1958 and 1973 Kettle's Yard was the home of Jim and Helen Ede. In the 1920s and 1930s Jim had been a curator at the Tate Gallery in London. Thanks to his friendships with artists and other like-minded people, over the years he gathered a remarkable collection. At Kettle's Yard Jim carefully positioned these artworks alongside furniture, glass, ceramics and natural objects, with the aim of creating a harmonic whole. His vision was of a place that should not be:

'...an art gallery or museum, nor … simply a collection of works of art reflecting my taste or the taste of a given period. It is, rather, a continuing way of life from these last fifty years, in which stray objects, stones, glass, pictures, sculpture, in light and in space, have been used to make manifest the underlying stability'.

http://www.kettlesyard.co.uk

4. The Max Reinhardt Literacy Award (MRLA) is an initiative funded by the Max Reinhardt Charitable Trust, run in partnership by the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) and engage (National Association for Gallery Education).

It first ran in 2014-15 as a pilot programme. Three awards were made – to Falmouth Art Gallery, Kettle's Yard and Manchester Art Gallery. Claire Collison worked with Kettle's Yard and Year 3 pupils from The Grove Primary School, developing a series of gallery workshops and classroom sessions, which would provide the basis for a digital and physical resource, now available as a download. **http://www.kettlesyard.co.uk/learn/ resources/**

5. Disability Arts Magazine, (DAM) This quarterly magazine was published from 1990 until 1995. Claire Collison was Visual Arts Editor from 1992.

6. Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco (30 January 2007)

7. Claire Collison is Artist in Residence at the Women's Art Library (WAL) Goldsmiths College, University of London, **http://www.gold.ac.uk/ make/**

8. Spence, J. (1995) *Woman in Secret, What Can A Woman Do With A Camera?* Scarlet Press

9. Email correspondence between Néstor Díaz and Claire Collison, May 2016

10 Spirited Bodies **http://www.spiritedbodies. com/**

11. Walking Women **http://www. walkingartistsnetwork.org/walking-women- at-somerset-house/**

Images

1. Néstor Díaz, *Sofía.* Buenos Aires, Argentina 2013
© Néstor Díaz, **www.nestordiaz.net**

2. Claire Collison, *Reading Audre Lorde: not easy, but necessary,* 2015. Colour photograph with Instagram caption.

3. Claire Collison, *Negative Spaces: Handling prostheses in Golden Square,* July 2016. Documentation from *An Intimate Tour of Breasts;* Claire Collison's walk as part of the Walking Women festival at Somerset House, London. Photo credit: Amy Sharrocks.

4. Claire Collison, *Milky Way,* 1988. Photogram combined with black and white photograph, commissioned for Camerawork's *Imaging the Future exhibition.*

5. *Gabriela*, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2014
© Néstor Díaz

6. Dorothea Bohlius, photographs of sketches made as part of Spirited Bodies' *Women's Life Modelling and Drawing* at The Bargehouse, Southbank, London, November 2015.

SmART Voters

Teens explore American art through the lens of politics

Janelle Redlaczyk

Crystal Bridges' Teen Council recently launched a new series of gallery conversations called *SmART Voter*, inviting high school students to explore works of art in the galleries, consider the social and political contexts in which they were created, and discuss the works in relation to issues at the forefront of the current U.S. presidential election season.

Crystal Bridges **http://www.crystalbridges.org** opened its doors to the public on 11 November 2011, as the first world class art museum in the region. Since its opening, the museum, located in Bentonville, Arkansas, has welcomed more than 2,000,000 guests and more than 240,000 visitors per year utilise the museum's 3.5 miles of walking trails. Crystal Bridges' permanent collection spans five centuries of American masterworks ranging from the colonial era to the present. Included within the collection are iconic images such as Asher B. Durand's *Kindred Spirits* (1849), Norman Rockwell's *Rosie the Riveter* (1943), and Andy Warhol's *Coca-Cola* (1962) [3], as well as major works by modern and contemporary American artists, including

Georgia O'Keeffe, John Baldessari, and James Turrell. The collection is on view year-round and is enhanced by an array of temporary exhibitions.

While the museum has been well received by the entire community, Crystal Bridges devoted staffing and resources toward growing its teen audience, and established a Teen Council. The museum's Teen Council is a volunteer group of approximately 40 students attending various high schools in Northwest Arkansas. Council members work with staff from our Public Programs department to plan and promote programs for their peers throughout the year. Through their participation in the program, teens have opportunities to meet with museum staff, learn about exhibitions and artwork from our curators, and engage in art-making as a group during weekly meetings.

Our council creates two major events per year – *Teen Nights* held in October and April, which have featured murder mysteries, dance and theatre performances in the galleries, collaborative art projects, live music and dancing. Throughout the

year, they are creative in coming up with new programming to encourage high school students to visit and engage with the museum in a variety of ways. We approach these as 'pop-up' events, and market them primarily through social media – the teens' own Instagram and Twitter postings. Past events have included swing, hip-hop and salsa dance instruction, a *Flashback Friday Studio* featuring art supplies remembered from childhood, a *Hammock Hang* on our grounds, and *BYOBB (Bring Your Own Bean Bag) Movie Nights.*

Teens who are drawn to participate as council members are typically students with a wide range of interests, from drama and music to athletics and student government, and as the U.S. presidential election process began in early 2016, we discovered that most had a strong interest in politics. Many were turning 18 just in time to register to vote in the Arkansas primary, or would be of age by the general election in November. Casual conversations during meetings often turned toward politics, which led to the idea for the *SmART Voter* gallery talk series.

Initially, our teens wanted to know about artists whose work was specifically influenced by the politics of the day, or was created to directly express a political point of view. We broadened the scope of the discussion, and they began to realise that many different topics addressed by artists can be become important points of discussion during an election. We explored the permanent collection galleries as a group, considering a growing list of topics – racism, immigration, wealth, poverty, war, welfare,

By careful and extended looking we hoped to guide teens to better understand and interpret works of art, and to appreciate paintings in new ways as they recognised connections between the paintings and their own lives, concerns and political views.

women's rights, and environmental issues – and selected works to feature during the initial *SmART Voter* program.

For our first *SmART Voter* program senior educators from our School Programs department facilitated our gallery discussions. These educators lead school visits for over 40,000 K-12 students annually, and use a dialogic model of teaching during their tours. While our teens are quite interested in developing teen-led tours for their peers and the general public – and we support that goal – we felt that modelling by experienced gallery educators would provide them with a successful initial tour experience from which they could learn as they plan future programs.

Our goals for the discussion were rooted in the principles of visual literacy. We have not used a particular visual literacy framework as ours is a young department which has seen tremendous growth over the last few years, and a change in leadership. We are working toward a shared vocabulary and philosophy of gallery teaching for all of Education, and visual literacy will be a part of that. By careful and extended looking we hoped to guide teens to better understand and interpret works of art, and to appreciate paintings in new ways as they recognised connections between the paintings and their own lives, concerns and political views. In addition, we made clear that we encouraged and welcomed all points of view, and incorporated a 'call to action' following their time in the gallery.

There follow portions of conversations from the programme (paraphrased), which provide examples of the participants achieving the programme's goals. (The gallery talk lasted approximately an hour, so much is left out.)

Educator: 'We're going to start our conversation about political topics today with an issue that we can see in Richard Caton Woodville's *War News from Mexico,* which is more than 100 years old. Let's take a moment, and tell me what you see.'

Teen, indicating the woman at the right side of the image: 'The woman in the picture is kind of in the dark.'

Educator: 'So we have a woman on the edge of the picture, she's in the dark, she's trying to listen in.'

Another teen points out the African American man and girl in the lower right corner of the painting.

Educator: 'Ok, so you think their position in the composition is important. The man sits on the step, the girl stands in the dirt.'

Teen: 'It reflects their position and their marginalisation.'

Educator: 'So, these people are marginalised. What does it mean to be marginalised?'

Teens: 'People at the edge of society.' 'People who are ignored.'

Educator: 'If you're marginalised, your voice is not heard.'

Teen: 'Or it's much more difficult for your voice to be heard.'

Educator: 'We're thinking about this woman who in 1848 can't own property, and has no legal identity. And these people who don't even exist as people; they're chattel. The only people that matter are these guys (indicated the white men in the centre of the painting), and so that's the focus of our attention. Is that true today? Is it still these guys that matter?'

Teen: 'I would say so. Recently in the news there was the interruption of Hillary Clinton at a private banquet by Black Lives Matter activists. And that for me is kind of representative of the position that these marginalised people find themselves in, and it's comparable to the position marginalised people find themselves in today. They have to take such drastic steps and measures in order for their message to be represented.'

Educator: 'Let's talk about facial expressions and poses in this painting. Is there anything in particular that makes you notice them, makes you aware of them?'

Teens: 'They are very surprised.' 'The white man in the middle who is holding the newspaper is very surprised – shocked!'

Educator: 'He's clearly reading the news out loud. Are you consumers of news and current events? What have you heard lately that gave you that kind of (shocked) face?'

This question led to a discussion of recent political endorsements and presidential candidates.

Educator: 'If we are thinking about, say, Donald Trump, or even Bernie Sanders, in the context of appealing to marginalised voters, what do you think is the secret of their appeal?'

There followed a discussion of voter frustration and anger, and a teen added: 'I agree, it's kind of like the picture. The shock factor and shock value get people's interest, and it sort of like politics as entertainment.'

Teens: 'They (the white men) are surprised on the steps, but the marginalised people don't look as affected by it.' 'They understand their position, and they're not content but they just know that's how it is.' 'Maybe they don't know – they're "in the dark."'

Educator: 'Let's look at these faces. Are these faces of knowledge, of curiosity, of ignorance? How would you read those faces?'

Teen: 'It could be that they don't understand, but it could also be they know their position will probably stay insignificant no matter what's happening.'

Educator: 'Ok, so decisions are being made about my life by people who don't allow me a say.'

Teen: 'The context behind *War News* is the extension of slavery into other territories in Texas. It's sort of like the African American people would be severely affected but they're not the ones making the decisions.'

Educator: 'How many of you are 18? How many of you who are 18 are registered to vote? Because, voting's the only way you have a voice, right? Donald Trump was here this morning, Marco Rubio is here today, Ted Cruz will be here tomorrow; are these people courting you and your votes? What is your sense of their degree of interest in issues that affect you? If you guys are voiceless, if you are feeling marginalised – what's the answer to marginalisation and under-representation?'

Teen: 'You have to get your story out there, you have to let people know how you feel.'

This led to a discussion of various topics, including of the lack of diversity in this year's Oscar award nominees, the under-representation of women in the U.S. congress, school policies regarding gender, and the responsibilities of church and family.

Educator: 'So, if you're tired of being marginalised, then you need to vote.'

Teen: 'It's not just the obligation of those that are marginalised to make a difference. If you recognise an inconsistency or disparity, everyone needs to speak up.'

Educator: 'You've raised some interesting and provocative questions, and obviously we are not going to answer those today. But these are issues you are going to need to think about as you register to vote, as you get older, as you participate in the body politic.'

The group next moved to another gallery where a second educator led the discussion *The Refugees*, painted by George W. Pettit in 1865.

Educator: 'Let's look at what we have going on in this work.'

Teens: 'A man with a gun – he's in charge.' 'What strikes me is the diversity of the people in the picture. It's an interesting party, it makes me curious about their relationships.'

Educator: 'The title of this work is *The Union Refugees*. What does the word refugee mean to you?'

Teens: 'Homeless.' 'Fleeing from something.'

Educator: 'What are some things refugees flee from?'

Teens: 'War.' 'Natural disaster.' 'Oppression.'

Educator: 'Look at what they're carrying with them – what do you notice?'

Teens: 'Very sparse. Very little.' 'They seem to be on a journey.'

Educator: 'What do we see that makes us feel like they are on a journey?'

Teens: 'They're moving forward as a party.' 'They look kind of weary.' 'They're not centred in the painting, so they're more to the right which is a sign of progress.'

Educator: 'Ok, so you get that sense of motion from where they are placed on the canvas. When we look at this group of people set in the Civil War time period, which side of the conflict do we think they're on?'

Teens: 'I think they're on the Union side, because the black man seems to be with the family as an equal part of their party, not as a servant or a slave.' 'He looks like he has an active role.' 'He's at the front of the group.'

Educator: 'So let's think about refugees in our modern context. What are some situations in current events where you are hearing about refugees?'

There followed a discussion of Syrian refugees, border control, security concerns, terrorist

organisations, refugee camps, placement and legislation, the history of immigration in America, Mexico and 'the wall'.

The group moved on to discuss the topic of war as they considered Norman Rockwell's 1943 *Rosie the Riveter* and *Hiroshima*, painted by Janet Sobel c.1948. As the discussion concluded, teens were invited to register to vote, and voter registration forms were provided, to end the programme with a call to action.

The Teen Council has another *SmART Voter* discussion planned featuring works by African American artists Kara Walker and Faith Ringgold, to be followed by a studio painting session in response to the artwork and conversations. Though very new, *SmART Voter* shows great promise as a foundation for cultivating teen visual literacy skills by connecting works of art to their growing interest in politics and current events, and we plan to continue the series as we head toward the November 2016 election.

Images

1. Richard Caton Woodville , *War News from Mexico*, 1848. Oil on canvas. 27in. x 25in. (68.6cm x 63.5cm). Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2010.74. Photography by The Walters Art Museum, Susan Tobin.

2. George W. Pettit, *Union Refugees*, 1865. Oil on canvas. 45 . 54 in. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2011.21. Photography by Edward C. Robison III.

The valence of the visible

Remediating images

Miranda Baxter

Recently, I was told a story about a group of graduate students who decided that looking at a digitised image of a painting on their smartphones was the same as the actual painting they were viewing. This painting happened to be *The Hay Wain* (1821) by nineteenth century British painter John Constable at the National Gallery, London. Rewind to 1839, when photography became a recognised medium and every subsequent arts and cultural institution would develop alongside the photographic image.[1] Eighteen years after Constable set brush to canvas, the 'promise and the threat'[2] of photography was already inspiring a great deal of head-scratching over its ability to convey a different sort of verisimilitude and what to do with it.[3] Exploration of the relationship between the imaging technologies of painting and photography, and the concept of the original[4] and its reproductions continues today.[5]

A journalist recently demanded 'Stop telling us to switch off – we live in a digital culture now… Being connected is our lifeline'.[6] As a gallery educator I am passionate about the material object and the gallery experience. While my ambivalence around digital technology is shared[7] I also believe in what digital imaging and networking offers, such as the democratisation of our collections and the practicality of teaching from reproductions and taking the art to - for example - children at hospital schools. It is no surprise that education in art and cultural institutions and their use of image reproductions is as long as their relationship to the photograph.[8]

Remediation: a medium begets a medium
At the core of this tension is mediation, by which something is given presence and visibility, value and meaning. Mediation can be so seamless and engaging that it goes unnoticed. Painting, photography, the museum, and conversation are media through which social, material and technical practices radiate. These practices can be described as remediation, cultivating access to different temporalities[9] and the co-creation of meaning and difference to our experiences in the world. Nothing

is prior to or outside media because mediation[10] is how we discover, interact with, learn about and assert our inner and outer realities and selves, and create collective understanding of what is real and what is not. Because media are 'socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualised collocation of different people on the same mental map, sharing or engaged with popular ontologies of representation',[11] then recognising media as contributing factors to broader realisations of identity and subjectivity is crucial.

Remediation is how a culture (re) configures, (re) interprets, (re) forms and innovates another medium.[12] I adopt this term to unite the experience of and the value of teaching and learning from an original artwork and its digitised versions. Remediation bridges how we use and understand painting and the digital image by acknowledging their shared media boundaries. For example, painting is distinct from other media, such as photography. A remediated painting is one in which it is represented in another medium, such as the digital image. Both gain further distinction as contrasting media through remediation in a digital representation. Through remediation we can rethink the use of the image in the context of gallery education by exploring the construction of visibility, difference and immediacy.

Some familiar examples of remediation include the gradual succession of digital over analogue photography.[13] Another is the transcription of a painting or print reproduction into conventional linear perspective drawing, in which a new medium is invoked into an older, historical medium.[14] Remediation encompasses cross curricular and transcription activities, which frequently recreate or reinterpret of an art work in different media than the original, in gallery learning contexts. Merging personal experience and creative, active learning, these are vital to nurturing a sense of ownership and embodied meaning making. To further this notion, gallery learning is understood as interacting with and cultivating an experience with an art object. This process reflects the cognitive processes that transform thinking in a gallery context because as viewers of paintings we are co-creators of meaning[15] in which social and semiotic consensus and institutional co-optation demarcate a painting's status of being real, visible and having meaning in the world. Gallery learning is therefore a form of remediation in which 'talk' about a medium is the medium in dialogic gallery practices.[16] In order to co-create meaning we must be able to share an experience of an art work, such as a singular image, which means that we need to be in the same place as the image. This image must also be in the same place as us, or we the viewers must have an alternative means of sharing it. How can a singular artwork straddle many locations and be seen by multiple viewers at once? It can become a networked image.

Rendering Visibility

An artwork reduced to an image, if it wasn't already, enables it to be conveyed in manifold contexts, therefore ensuring its permanency.[17] This is demonstrated by the presence of Georges Seurat's *Bathers at Asnières* (1884), for example, in a digitised collection,[18] and other online learning platforms like Smarthistory[19] and the parody of Olympic Park construction and security workers in 2012.[20] The image remains visually stable in order to be recognised, modified and applied across varying digital platforms.[21] Other examples are Tom Hunter's photography, such as *Murder-Two Men Wanted* (2012) inspired by Piero di Cosimo's *Satyr with a Nymph* (c.1495)[22] or the more recent commission of well-known Instagrammers by French museums to interpret paintings in their collections to broaden their audiences.[23] Thinking about a painting and its digital surrogates in this manner helps us to understand the potential of a remediated, networked painting. A digital image can travel through time and space, whereas the original painting is anchored in the gallery. The proliferation of digital platforms optimises the social life and accessibility of, and idea sharing about paintings. In these contexts does a painting surrender its quiddity and ability to stir the viewer?

Walter Benjamin addresses the opposition between the original work of art and its reproductions in the essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1931). He draws out the political potential of film and photography in particular, and

The remediated image performs several roles as a social and pedagogical object that reciprocally reconfigures and creates new visibilities in itself and in the original.

describes how mechanical reproduction has shattered the aura, that mysterious and magical quality of singular presence in time and space in the original work of art.[24] While I am interested in the original art object, I am equally enthralled about how the expatriation to other media draws out new meaning. Benjamin describes the ways that these technologies enable access to the masses and create new visibilities.[25] The remediated image performs several roles as a social and pedagogical object that reciprocally reconfigures and creates new visibilities in itself and in the original. Proximity, in other words, a closed time-space gap between medium and mediation, is directly related to the visibility and value granted an artwork. This closed time-space gap is essential to building a relationship with an artwork, which can be achieved through an image.

The ongoing national programme *Take One Picture* (TOP) characterises how a viewer brings their experiences and subjectivities to the medium, effectively drawing from it and articulating the visible. For over 20 years children in British primary

schools here and abroad have – and will continue to be - engaged with one painting as a launch pad to exploring cross curricular topics and create personal and shared experiences with art from the National Gallery collection. Teaching professionals are invited to a one-day course to explore ways of employing the TOP methodology in their classrooms and in the broader community. They receive a printed reproduction of the painting and '[t]he challenge is then for schools to use the image imaginatively in the classroom, both as a stimulus for artwork, and for work in more unexpected curriculum areas'.[26] Exemplary work chosen by National Gallery Education is selected for display at the gallery and on the website.

It is of interest that the image is offered as a 'stimulus' because it suggests that a meaningful experience can be had with a substitute for the original painting. It is also clear that the children, schools and communities involved draw immense meaning and value from the scheme. The British Embassy School in Ankara, Turkey, participated in 2013, inspired by Wilhem Kalf's *Still Life with Drinking-Horn* (1653). Their work was guided by the question: 'How might Salvador Dalí have reacted to Kalf's painting?' and was selected for display at the National Gallery in London.[27] The pupils, aged eight to ten, visited a local art exhibition to view a collection of paintings by Salvador Dali, which the children linked to Kalf's painting. Taking further inspiration from *Dali Atomicus,* a photograph by Philippe Halsman, and prompted by Dali's portraits,

they made their own photographs. The children 'recreated the image, incorporating elements of Kalf's still life'[28] and Halsman's photograph, producing their own images reflecting both works of art and impersonating Dali.[29] In the image of the boy jumping, a reproduction of Halsman's smaller image sits on an easel on the floor to the left behind the boy. A larger reproduction of Kalf's painting is on an easel on the right. The boy wears a Dali-like moustache and jumps explosively between both images while holding a drinking horn inspired by the Kalf painting. Water splashes in stage right as if the contents of the drinking glasses and horn, and the boiled lobster in Kalf's painting have been unleashed in the third dimension, and then compressed to two in the digital photograph. Animating Kalf's still life is a mode of exploring and remixing the boundaries of media and painting genres. Role-playing Dali in the pupils' transcriptions marries the Kalf and Halsman images, embodying the art objects in their remediated forms.

The art coordinator of this school travelled to the opening of the display, however the participating pupils never visited the gallery to see the original painting. Proximity in this instance was established through reproductions. Not viewing the original painting did not hinder meaningful engagement. Vladimir Nowak, a pupil from the school, said, '[P]aintings can be like a building that you walk past every day. You think that you know what it looks like, but when you have been inside and walked around the rooms then you see it differently'.[30]

This passage demonstrates that in the absence of a hands-on encounter in the gallery, a digital image can inspire a relationship with visual resources and institutions. It also shows how the simplest physical adjustments changes perspective, which is crucial to bringing about new structural formations that de-familiarise visual experience and enable new conceptualisations.[31]

The embodiment and mediation of an image can change the way we see and experience the world, and determine how and what is given presence. Should the opportunity to see the original painting arise, the children would bring their experience of reimaging it in their own way. Seeing something for the first time, we never see it the same way again. The experience of remediating Kalf's still life will be invoked in the experience of seeing the image again, or seeing the original artwork in the future.[32]

Because remediation is a process that establishes presence and visibility, the relationship between the object and the learner/viewer is secured and given meaning. A painting is seen and worth looking at because it gains visibility, thus its value is demonstrated by its visibility. Engaging in remediating practices is way of drawing out awareness of what makes a medium distinct from other media. A medium achieves its singularity in contrast to, or superimposed with other media. By actively investigating a painting and reinterpreting it into a digital image for example, or through exploring a painting through the digital surrogate, the qualities ascribed to the definition of 'painting'

are reinforced and reformed. Awareness of media borders, in other words, what constitutes a medium, are explored through this process. The tension between an original painting or experience, and a digital surrogate or virtual experience is about the retention of categories and keeping media and the experience of media, distinct. The challenge and paradox of maintaining categories as such is that media share borders that reinforce their singularity, but in the creation, new media have overlapping boundaries, for example digitised painting, a virtual artefact which is no less real than an original painting. A digitised painting is a hybrid artefact and the awareness of its hybridity is created through a suspension of immediacy, the ability of communing or being immersed in the experience of an artwork. This also occurs meta-cognitively in which awareness about that process and thinking about thinking about media are exposed. Knowing and understanding what is there and recognising what is not there, or what to ignore, are strategies that we as viewers employ when engaging in the museum. By understanding that remediation by digital imaging creates visibility by both normalising and de-familiarising, we can engage in a critique of media.

Immediacy and Difference

In the absence of the original painting why would a remediated image be validated as a substitute? The remediated and original artworks share two important traits: both close a time-space gap, and both rely on their mutually defining borders for immediacy, visibility and media consciousness.

The aura of an original object such as a painting is related to its singular presence. This quality of mediated communion can be understood as 'immediacy' [33] in which medium awareness disappears and immersion takes hold. This is a mediating strategy that produces an authentic interaction with the physical or virtual art object. In actively engaging with a physical or virtual work of art the boundaries between viewer and medium appear to dissolve because time and space are conjoined. A paradoxical disruption in this relationship is marked when a painting is remediated, exposing media boundaries and producing media awareness.[34]

Within contexts such as the school at Ankara, investigating a painting through remediation is a method of differentiating one medium from the other by re-contextualising the original object. Parry writes that, '[…] museums' staff and audiences have colluded over many centuries to develop a subtle visual literacy that has always managed to distinguish the authentic. Intangibility, virtuality and simulacra are all part of what a museum has been and continues to be[…]' [35] In the above anecdotes about the graduate students and the primary pupils it is important to recognise that they can and do differentiate between media. The students exemplified thinking about how the media are different, and expressed that the visual information that they accessed met their learning needs in stating that the digitised version was equivalent to the original *Hay Wain* painting.

According digital photography's shared lineage with analogue enlightens our acceptance of the photographic image as substitute for a painting (or other work of art).[36] The reproduction of the work of art serves as evidence and 'visual fact' [37] in which the viewer suspends disbelief that the image is the object for the sake of argument or idea. Presenting digital images as painting presents a contradiction: it reinforces uniqueness and authenticity, and also indefinite reproducibility. The establishment of authenticity and a *real* experience with an original or remediated object is hinged on this notion of proximity. In this framework, the utility of the reprographic image in representing the absent original, and the threat to the original and its aura, are understood.

Conclusion: a reproduction is real too
A remediated work of art enables sharing ideas, and equally reinforces the concept of the original by making it more visible and accessible. It is the unalterable singularity of an art object that enables its reproduction in the first place. Remediation facilitates an interpretive journey that allows its singularity to travel across different media, producing a blended learning experience that allows a deeper exploration of the original. The pedagogic value is in this process in which the remediated original, like the viewer, is transformed. In these terms, Benjamin's proposal about the reproduction stripping the aura from a work of art, and displacing its specificity and singularity, becomes less interesting.

Several queries related to gallery learning arise when considering the function of the original object and its photographic surrogates. Is it essential to a meaningful interaction with a work of art that it be with the original? Is a stop-you-in-your-tracks moment required to have a meaningful experience? Who is to say what a meaningful experience is? Can a digital photograph engender a stop-you-in-your tracks moment? Were the students above using the same visual toolbox to interrogate a painting and a digital image? How did a *tête-à-tête* with Constable's painting, or any other in the gallery, such as Seurat's very large *Bathers at Asnières* differ from the tiny version on their screens? What happens if both media, painting and handheld, are used simultaneously? How does the transcription from original to digitised image change both objects and their pedagogical value? To what conceptualisation of fidelity are the digitised images bound and what do they do that paintings do not? These are questions for further research.

The process of engaging with originals and their remediations, and cultivating visibility and value through the experience of media difference and immediacy enables the construction of personal and shared narratives. The digitisation of paintings such as *The Hay Wain* or *Bathers at Asnières* merge historical and contemporary media into an experience through which defamiliarisation and visibility are produced. I caution against any hierarchy between which is more meaningful and real because of accessibility and the implied elitism of authentic cultural capital. I know from experience of working with a diverse range of learners that a reproduced print or projected website image can incite wonder and transport the viewer. Equally, a surrogate image facilitates seeing things that would be impossible or difficult to see in an original, such as a tiny brushstroke viewed on a digital zoom function. Possessing visual literacy skills and the ability to navigate and recognise the visible makes other media literacies possible. Without knowing how to produce visibilities, the ability to innovate and remediate is impossible.

Notes

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4. I use *original* to reference Benjamin, W [1931] 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in J. A. Underwood (trans.) (2009) *One Way Street and Other Writings*. London: Penguin, p.232

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8. Walsh (2010) op.cit., pp.23-25

9. Henning, M. (2006) 'New Media' in Macdonald, S. (ed) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp.302-318; and R. Bolter and J. D. Grusin (1999) *Remediation: Understanding New Media.* Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, pp.58-59

10. Bolter and Grusin (1999), op.cit., p.58

11. Gitelman, L. (2006), *Always Already New: Media, History and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, p.7

12. Bolter and Grusin, op.cit., pp.56-60, p.65

13. Henning, M. (2007) 'New lamps for old: photography, obsolescence and social change' in C. Acland (ed.) *Residual Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.49-50

14. Ibid. On how an inscription accumulates time, see Latour, B. (1986) 'Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together' in Kuklick, H. (ed.) *Knowledge and Society Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*. Jai Press vol. 6, (pp.1-40, p.10 (Accessed at http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/21-DRAWING-THINGS-TOGETHER-GB.pdf **on 5 June 2016)**; Chakravorty, S. 'Mediation' n.d. **https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/mediation/ (Accessed 5 June 2016)**

15. Dewey, J. ([1934] 2005) *Art as Experience*. London and New York: Perigree, The Penguin Group, pp.45-47, 56-57, 45-47; Burnham, R and Kai-Kee, E. Teaching in the Art Museum:

Interpretation as Experience. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, pp.46, 64-65

16. Gallery learning is never unmediated.

17. Latour (1986) op.cit., pp.2-12, especially pp.3 and 6

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24. Underwood / Benjamin (2009), op.cit., pp.231-

235, 243, 251-255

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26. 'About Take One Picture', The National Gallery, **http://www.takeonepicture.org/about/index.html** (Accessed 5 June 2016)

27. Take One Picture, 'How might Salvador Dalí have reacted to Kalf's painting?' The National Gallery, **http://www.takeonepicture.org/ exhibition/2013/2013_ex3.html** (Accessed 5 June 2016)

28. Ibid.

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30. **http://www.takeonepicture.org/ exhibition/2013/2013_ex3.html**

31. Underwood / Benjamin (2009), op.cit., pp. 251-255

33. Bolter and Grusin (1999), pp.5-6, 21-30, 59, 70-73

34. See Legacy Russell's description of this disruption as 'the rainbowed spinning wheel, the pixelated hiccup, the frozen screen, or the buffering signal that acts as a fissure, that jars us into recognition of the separation of our physical selves from the body that immerses itself […]'in '**Digital Dualism And The Glitch Feminism Manifesto**' in *The Society Pages,* December 10, 2012, **https://thesocietypages.org/ cyborgology/2012/12/10/digital-dualism-and-**

the-glitch-feminism-manifesto/ (Accessed 5 June 2016)

35. Parry (2007) p.76

36. Because the photograph is created directly from the object it represents it attained objective status. Geimer, P. (2007), 'Image as trace: Speculations about an Undead Paradigm' in *Differences*, 18:1, pp. 7-28

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1215.today

Embracing young people's digital and physical experiences with art

Sophia Kyprianou

It is hard to deny the ubiquity of the online world in today's society. There is a plethora of platforms through which we can collect information, develop our voice, express ourselves and share data in all formats, and it is not surprising that the arts are increasingly including and embracing the technological environments we all use on a daily basis. Further, this creation and curation of data has become an artform in itself, as writer and psychologist Nathalie Nathai suggests in a podcast entitled *Art in the age of the internet*,

'In some ways the internet has made artists of us all. We don't just document our lives we illustrate them; the visual has become the currency of the web.' [1]

Considering this impact in relation to the younger generation, we might ask whether the internet is changing the way in which young people engage with the arts, with its emphasis on digital interaction and less on a physical engagement with art. Most young people's art programmes such as Circuit [**https://circuit.tate.org.uk**] the National Art and Design Saturday Club [**http://saturday-club.org/ our-vision/**] and Collabor-8 [**http://www. nottinghamcontemporary.org/advocates- and-collabor-8-collective**] encourage young people's self-expression and are now embracing the introduction of digital forms of interaction with art through a variety of platforms. However, as Libby Anson argues, an important aspect of young people's interactions is the first-hand engagement with original works of art in the museums or gallery context which, she suggests, has a positive impact on young people's learning that cannot take place online.[2] But would it not be more productive to consider the ways that online and actual engagement work together to produce even greater impact? Ruth Catlow of the collective Furtherfield [**http://www. furtherfield.org**] argues that blending digital and physical experiences is important, stating that as well as having online presence:

'We need this wide bandwidth of real life; we understand artworks better when we stand in spaces together and are able to talk in a more broad way…' [3]

As a curator-educator, I am always interested in the interactions people have with art and ways in which art can be made accessible. I am continually looking for new ways to increase people's individual connections with the arts that is meaningful to them. So when I began working with *1215.today*, I was intrigued to see and support how young people got involved digitally and physically with the project and how this might impact upon them now and in the future.

1215.today [**http://1215today.com**] is an Arts Council England funded project that brings digital and physical engagement strategies together to empower and provoke young people to explore themes associated with Magna Carta - such as justice, power and conflict - through art. The project is anchored in Lincoln, but aims to connect with young people nationally and internationally. It facilitates interactions through social media, 'digital takeovers' of the main online platform and face-to-face interaction through 'innovation labs'. The lab model brings young people together to collaborate with artists and technologists to discuss themed provocations and create new work. So *1215.today* embraces the digital and physical experiences young people can have with the arts, current themes and issues. This article explores how effective these types of interactions have been to date in terms of engaging young people with art and the theme of rights.

According to Steven Kirsh, young people utilise digital media for a number of reasons: to establish identity, to immerse themselves in a particular interest and as a form of escapism.[4] Tynes further suggests that young people, particularly teenagers, are learning about cultural practices online.[5] South London Gallery's young people's programme The Art Assassins and their recent Instagram takeover #AllinSouthLondon [**https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/allinsouthlondon/**], which investigates how people catalogue their daily lives, supports these views. This programme highlights young people's knowledge and engagement with social media in a creative capacity that results in the making of digital art. A further example is Circuit's #WhyArt campaign, which invites young people to participate through Twitter in research the organisation is undertaking on young people's perceptions of art (see image 1). Circuit issued an online invitation to young people to express their opinions whilst contributing to new research, engaging young people with art but as an audience.
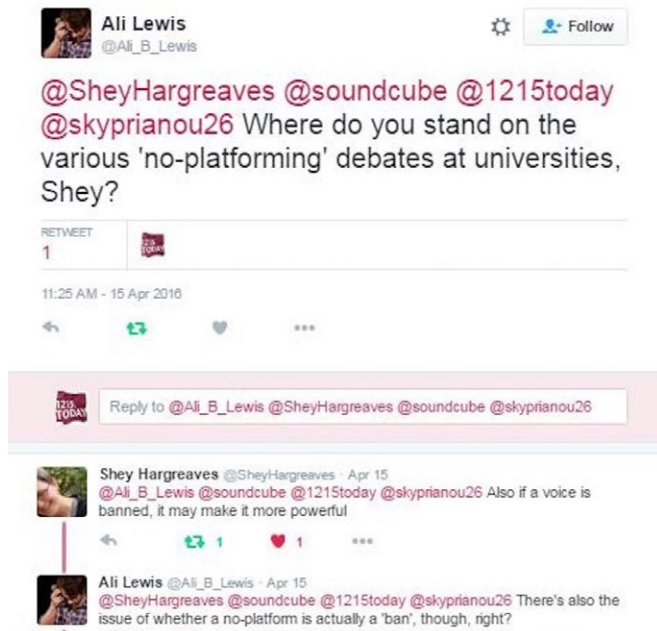

Circuit programme @CircuitPHF · May 28
We're doing some research into young people's perceptions of art... follow hashtag #WhyArt ow.ly/XfJe300G8r4

1215.today is different from the above examples as it aims to use digital technology to expand thought about issues of rights through art, as well as to develop the creative practice of artists through digital and physical experiences and through collaboration with young people. For example, in April this year the project hosted a Twitter Q&A session with *Digital Poet in Residence*, Shey Hargreaves on the theme of 'freedom of speech' in everyday life and art. The Q&A turned into a complex discussion with 12 people on an array of issues and debates in relation to the topic. In image 2, one participant refers to 'no platforming debates at universities', showcasing freedom of speech on a personal level for the participant, which then Hargreaves responded to.

Interactions such as this on social media do not result immediately in the creation of new work, but the work itself provoked the discussions, and these feed back into the work of the artist. As Hargreaves states with regard to her experience with the *1215. today* project and her practice as a writer:

'As an artist, online debate is a brilliant tool because it allows you to tap straight into what all sorts of different people are thinking with regard to current affairs and creative practice.' [6]
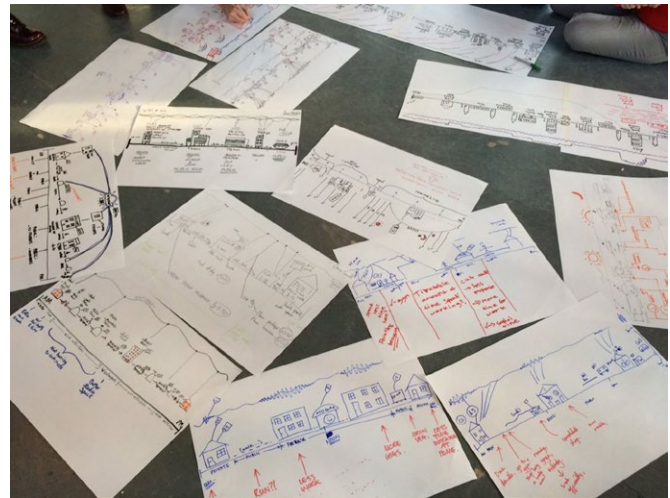
These are examples of various types of engagement for young people, and all offer ways for them to explore, to be creative and voice opinions through art - illustrating Jeni Walwin's standpoint on the current, contemporary significance of the way in which audiences interact, participate and communicate with art.[7] As Hazel Gardiner and Charlie Gere propose, digital media can carry many different kinds of content, and can be used for many purposes.[8] *1215.today* aims to advocate this range of opportunities by encouraging multiple styles of engagement for young people, achieved primarily through digital formats, but also encompassing in-person collaborations among young people, with artists and technologists. From my perspective as a curator-educator, this is what makes *1215.today* innovative and exciting. The synergy of digital and physical embraces what George Hein describes as a constructivist approach, where 'learners' construct knowledge individually, which inevitably provides opportunities to a) interact with sensory data, and b) construct their own world.[9]

The format of *1215.today's* innovation lab is distinctive, and focuses on a 'provocation' set by an artist, and connected to a theme of 'rights'. The aim of the lab is for young people to respond to this provocation with a creative, digital idea and to work with an artist and technologist who will translate their ideas. As digital engagement specialist and *1215.today* innovation lab facilitator Abhay Adhikari describes:

'We use the lab to build multidisciplinary participation – the artist, technologists and the young people bringing their unique skills. One could say such collaboration is not uncommon in the arts, but what sets our pathway apart is that the outcome is unknown.' [10]

This collaborative model allows for what Emily Pringle describes as the empowerment of young people, seeing them as 'active agents' in this process and providing them with a creative experience through a variety of media.[11]

In January 2016, at the first innovation lab in Leeds, a group of young people were invited to collaborate with artist Kathrin Böhm and a group of technologists to influence work around the theme of *Space.* Böhm's provocation 'How much space do you need for your future?' served as a catalyst over the course of the day for a process of co-production through online and in person conversations between all the participants. The lab structure helped to cultivate the artistic outcome and allowed for an open and critical approach towards ideas, solutions and points of interest.[12] (See images 3 and 4.)

Images 3 and 4 show participants physically 'mapping' their use of private and public space to explore the provocation, and hands-on interaction became an important line of enquiry in the lab.[13] This then led to further online discussion around 'empty space' (see image 5a and 5b).

The integrated digital and physical co-production format of the day impacted upon the experience and breadth of engagement the young participants had with the lab in a multitude of ways.

'*The lab gave me the opportunity to work creatively as a team, to build a meaningful concept* which everyone could see come to life through the work of the technologists and the artist.'

'*I found working with technologists very refreshing, as a technologist myself, as I find that aspect of work is often considered uncreative, but the lab proved that this is not the case, with the collaborative process benefiting from the structure of a technologist's skill-set. I also found the ideas of 'public space' highly interesting, as I had never really considered its importance in society until then.'* [14]

For artist Kathrin Böhm, the combination of digital and physical experiences was crucial to the development of her concept in terms of linking the experience of physical spaces in our lives to the possibilities of digital tools and strategies.

'*It is important to read the digital in relation to the physical and vice versa, especially if it comes to understanding the public spaces we use and want. One of the dangers of the dominance of digital platforms is that the architectonics, the actual spaces seem to lose importance, but they are crucial tools and must stay on our radar as much as digital spaces.'* [15]

It is apparent that the integration of physical and digital experiences has significant and distinctive impact on the creative process as well as on the discussion of the core concepts. As Wanda Wieczorek expresses, we all experience, reflect on and see art differently, so allowing for that open discussion in the lab brings those different ideas to

It is apparent that the integration of physical and digital experiences have significant and distinctive impact on the creative process as well as on the discussion of the core concepts.

the fore.[16] For Adhikari, the lab supports collaboration to develop the basis of an idea and introducing collaboration at an early stage makes the lab social, and an effective process of creativity and engagement with young people.[17] It brings together what Pringle describes as personal, sociocultural and physical contexts which create an encompassing experience that highlights collaborative practice with others, an expression of beliefs and choices and a chance for personal and creative expression.[18] In this lab model the digital provides the potential to work across the boundaries between method and meaning and to enhance experiences within the arts.[19] **Pringle and De Witt** suggest that enabling this form of engagement with multiple processes of art making builds deep and authentic connections with art and the extensive themes and contexts that influence it.[20]

Engaging young people with and through the arts is complex, especially when combining these digital and physical realms. Stokes and Reading suggest that we are presently in the midst of a 'digital maelstrom', which is reshaping communication and engagement.[21] It is therefore crucial, albeit challenging, to support digital and physical engagement simultaneously.

A further challenge is also evaluating this digital and physical process. As a continuously developing project, *1215.today* aims to utilise a number of evaluative methods to continue its relationship with young people, develop methods of engagement and also expand the project. However, this is something I have not always found easy to determine, particularly in relation to the digital and social media aspects of the project. Data can be gathered from digital platforms to establish levels of engagement, though it is difficult to determine whether the demographic of this data is specifically young people whom we aim to engage with and therefore it is not clear if we are engaging our target audience effectively all the time. Consequently, *1215.today* is looking to explore new ways to evaluate young people's engagement as part of its ongoing development. In the future we are looking to explore using specific social media platforms and in person discussion groups where young people are invited to share their views on the project in order to listen to the young voices at the heart of the project.

1215.today will continue to explore the effects of the integration of digital and physical forms of engagement and to question how both kinds of interaction can encourage young people to 'discover,

debate and create'. This, I believe, will be achieved through the continuation of playful, creative and ever adapting methods, which draw on new technology, physical space and tap into young people's interests. As Barend van Heusden and Pascal Gielen state: 'Art mirrors not the world, but our experience of it, giving it palpable, perceivable form.'[22]

1215.today will continue to run for the next eighteen months, with a further innovation lab and a series of digital takeovers. The project will be building up to its finale at Lincoln's digital art festival, *Frequency* in 2017 to coincide with the eight hundredth anniversary of the Charter of the Forest – bringing all the elements of physical and online interventions, artistic practice and rights-based issues that remain relevant today.

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Agent of Change

In art, design and environmental education

The saying goes that 'the personal is political'; in the case of Eileen Adams, it's educational too. Her new publication is a fascinating mix of autobiography and text book, as Adams maps her interest in art, design and the environment from her earliest childhood memories, and then charts her subsequent 45-year portfolio career, demonstrating how her formative passions have informed her ongoing commitment to improving formal education. Writing in the first person, Adams's narrative flows with an immediacy and energy that carries the reader along and makes projects from 1975 feel as fresh as those conducted in 2015. There is also an unflinching honesty to her description of projects where opportunities were missed and difficult lessons were learned. In no way is her account sugar-coated.

Following teacher training in the late 1960s, Adams embarked on her career at Priory Park School in London, moving to Pimlico School, a large comprehensive, a couple of years later. Pimlico was the site of her first research project, *Front Door* (1974-76), which made use of the local environment

to study design and architecture. It was run in partnership with the Royal College of Art (RCA) as part of their broader research into *Design in General Education.* Off the back of this project, Adams was seconded to work again with the RCA on a national curriculum development project, *Art and the Built Environment* (1976-1982). A follow-up project, *The Design Dimension of the Curriculum* (1982-85), run by the Design Education Unit at RCA, was cut short, launching Adams into a freelance career as much out of necessity as choice. She appears to have been in constant demand ever since.

Adams's career illustrates a range of working practices that bridge formal education and the arts. She discusses larger projects and research in depth, such as *Learning through Landscapes* (1980s) which promoted the learning potential of outdoor spaces surrounding classrooms and aimed to improve school grounds; and Public Art, including a series of commissioned reports, exploring the education value for schools as well as broader trends in urban regeneration. Adams has: shaped PGCE courses at

Middlesex Polytechnic (1990-91) and Bretton Hall College (1998-99); worked as a Research Fellow at South Bank University, first in the School of Education and Politics (1994-98), then the Department of Arts Management (1999-2000); and she has been an external examiner for a number of universities. In 1990, Adams was appointed Deputy Chief Examiner for Art/Design for the International Baccalaureate (IB) and she contributed as an IB examiner until 2005. More recently, she has done an enormous amount of work for *The Campaign for Drawing*, leading the *Power Drawing* strand of activity, which aims to 'research and develop the use of drawing as a medium for learning'. This work has included creating several publications and delivering hundreds of hours of continuing professional development to teachers and arts educators.

The structure of the book is clear and intuitive. The first chapters are chronological and then segue into thematic sections as Adams freelances on different projects over the same period. Each large project concludes with a 'Reflection' and I liked these parts in particular as Adams muses on her own learning and brings in broader contextual issues. 'Related Work' has also been collected and summarised in the relevant sections. Due to their number and brevity, I found this additional information detracted from the impact of the in-depth coverage of larger projects. This would be less of an issue for the reader who is dipping in and out, and it makes for an impressive catalogue *raisonn*é, but it slowed down the momentum for those reading from cover-to-cover.

I felt at once removed from Adams's core audience of teachers and formal education specialists as I work in gallery and museum education. Having said that, I learnt a lot about projects relevant to working with schools and there is plenty of overlap, especially around *The Campaign for Drawing* and research into *Art and Design in the Built Environment*. In fact, I'm shocked by how much I still have to learn. Like the small child who assumes her parents' lives began the day she was born, my understanding of arts education roughly dates to when I entered the sector in 2002; my pre-2002 knowledge is woefully inadequate. I could happily wax lyrical about *Creative Partnerships* and *Renaissance in the Regions* because I was there; Adams's book has stretched my timeline back to the 1970s and I now have a much better understanding of how these noughties projects relate to earlier practice.

This brings me on to my next point - those who don't learn from history are cursed to repeat it. It's frankly depressing that we are still having the same arguments about the role of art and design in education, and Adams provides numerous quotes that show a repeated failure of governments to learn from research and practice. For example, it pains me that:

'In February 2005 the government's education and skills select committee published its enquiry into education outside the classroom [remember that one!]. The findings recognise a compelling argument for the educational value of the built environment.' [1]

And if that doesn't hurt enough, consider the words of Maurice Plaskow, Curriculum Officer at the Schools Council, dating all the way back to 1995:

'Students must… be given access to the language of critical thought and the tools of analysis, enquiry and reflection. A national curriculum which emphasises content at the expense of process is anti-educational; and is training for conformity and compliance…' [2]

But take heart, Adams concludes her book with very useful policy recommendations, cannily drawing on research from the early 1990s onwards to suggest 10 ways in which arts education can progress. In her words:

'This chapter argues for policy that takes a strategic and long-term view. This requires us to re-think how we conceive of education for a changing world, how we create learning environments, what we deem to be relevant knowledge, how we view visual literacy in the school curriculum, how we manage relationships between learning and teaching, and how we shape educators' roles in their training and professional development'. [3]

This is a timely and essential book and it has given me ample food for thought. I don't want arts education (in schools, galleries or museums) to be stuck in a revolving wheel of proving the same things over and over again. I want us to benefit from, and build on, the rich experience of practitioners such as Adams and then venture into new, unexplored areas. Or to put it another way,

let's learn from our history and be less hamster, more explorer.

Sarah Campbell
Head of Schools, Families and Young People
Victoria & Albert Museum

Notes

1. Quoting Eileen Adams, *'Getting Out There… Art and Design Local Safari Guide; a Teachers' Guide to Using the Local Built Environment at Key Stages 3 and 4'* (2006) Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, p.84, **http://webarchive. nationalarchives.gov.uk**

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Contributors' details

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Glenna Barlow is Manager of Engagement at Columbia Museum of Art. She has a Master's of Science in Elementary Education from the University of Mary Washington, as well as a Master's of Art in Art History from Virginia Commonwealth University. She is certified to teach elementary students and has years of experience teaching children of all ages, and in various museums and classroom settings throughout the Eastern U.S. She is responsible for developing and managing all programmes that engage families and young children at the Columbia Museum of Art.

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Miranda Baxter is a museum and gallery educator who previously managed and programmed education provision at Dulwich Picture Gallery and the National Gallery, London. She gained an MA in the History of Art from University College London in 2013 and an MA in Museums and Galleries in Education from the Institute of Education in 2009. Her research interests include the intersections of technology and representation; the body, photography and theories of knowledge; and the history and theory of education in museums.

Emma Carroll

Emma Carroll has worked at Manchester Art Galley for 11 years and manages programmes in art and design, creative writing and historical enquiry for 3-19 year olds and through teacher training. Using artworks to generate creative writing outcomes has been a long held interest and area of work.

Claire Collison

Claire Collison is an artist, writer and freelance educator. She is currently Artist in Residence at the Women's Art Library, Goldsmiths, University of London. Claire teaches creative writing at the Mary Ward Centre, London, and designs bespoke out-and-about writing and image making safaris – Writing the City – **writingbloomsbury.wordpress.com**. She has taught visual literacy for The Photographers' Gallery, and was one of the first recipients of the Max Reinhardt Literacy Award at Kettle's Yard.

Claire Gunningham

Claire Gunningham is a primary school teacher, arts specialist and Master of Arts in Education student at Exeter University. Currently working at St Martin's Church of England Nursery and Primary School in Devon, her practice is shaped by her previous career as a gallery educator and animation workshop leader. Her current research is interested in the benefits to children of using sketchbooks as spaces for experimentation, play and self-discovery.

Gill Hart

Gill started her career in an adult learning role at the National Gallery in London. Following roles at Glasgow Museums and The Fitzwilliam Museum she was the MLA Museums Fellow on the Clore Leadership programme between 2009 and 2011. During that time she conducted research on visual art interpretation and completed a secondment with Modern Art Oxford.

Gill returned to the National Gallery in 2011 as Head of Adult Learning Programmes and became Head of Education in 2014. Gill is an experienced teacher and creative programmer, committed to creating life-long and life-wide learning experiences that meet the needs of a broad range of audiences.

Sophia Kyprianou

Sophia Kyprianou is a freelance curator-educator, and the former Social Media Manager and Youth Engagement Coordinator for *1215.today.*

Lynn McGrane

Lynn McGrane is a Visual Arts Educator and Visual Thinking Strategies Facilitator.

Sam Metz

Sam practices within performance, both as a performer and someone who designs performance within gallery spaces with a strong conceptual and research element. Their interests lie in experimenting with the body in relation to the built environment. Their work will often examine movement, perception and architecture. Sam Metz has trained in physical theatre and has a Masters in Architecture and Critical Theory from The University of Nottingham. Recent commissions include participatory performance at the National centre for Craft and Design (2016), participatory performance for InDialogue Conference (upcoming 2016), participatory workshops within contemporary art at Nottingham Contemporary (2016) and conceptual visualisations of movement for York St John's University (2015). Sam was previously an Associate Artist at Nottingham Contemporary and now works as an artist, educator and researcher in museums and galleries within the East Midlands. They are part of the artist collective *Guerrilla Art Lab*, a Nottingham-based live art and performance collective.

Kate Noble

Kate Noble has worked as gallery educator for 15 years with families, schools, teachers and trainee teachers. Her primary research interest is in the development of visual literacy in young children and she has led a number of studies on behalf of the

University of Cambridge Museums, which include an evaluation of the *Thresholds* poets in residence project, *The Big Draw on Tour* project and an exploration of the use of digital technologies in school. Kate currently works as Education Officer at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and Education Researcher at the National Gallery, London.

Janelle Redlaczyk

Janelle Redlaczyk is the Head of Public Programs at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas. Janelle has worked in the museum education field for over 20 years. She has a BFA in Visual Arts from the University of North Dakota and a MA.Ed. in Museum Education from The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

Ernst Wagner

Ernst Wagner has a PhD in art history from the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. He is now employed at the academy, where his responsibilities include teacher training, and as the UNESCO-Chair in Arts and Culture in Education at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (as researcher and executive coordinator). He is an adjunct professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. He has been chairing the European Network for Visual Literacy (ENViL) since 2013.

Kathryn Welford

Kathryn trained in Fine Art at the Ruskin School of Fine Art and Drawing, Oxford University, and completed her Masters: Education in Galleries and Museums at Institute of Education, London University in the late 1990s. She has worked in gallery education most of her career and was Manchester/Salford Area Coordinator for Creative Partnerships, the Labour Government's flagship schools and cultural learning partnership programme. As well as working in the cultural sector, Kathryn has been Widening Participation Manager for the School of Arts and New Media, University of Hull and qualified as a Primary school teacher in 2012. Kathryn is currently Formal Learning Coordinator at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

engage Journals

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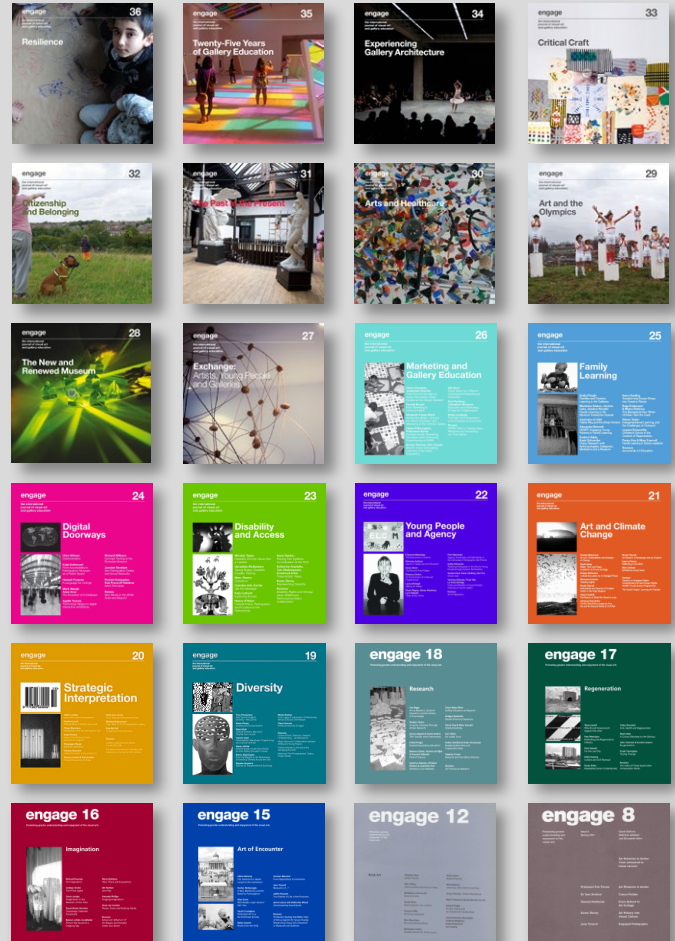

engage 37: Time and Place: Hosting and commissioning artists
Editor: Barbara Dougan

This issue of the engage Journal investigates the relationships between organisations, audiences and the artists who are invited to develop their practice and/or make new work in a specific context and for a defined purpose.

The projects embrace placements, residencies, community initiatives, collaborative projects, regeneration and commissions. Consequently these projects demand shared objectives, negotiation, empathy and sensitivity to the ideas and ambitions of all involved. The public-facing nature of most projects poses challenges, including the different objectives of arts and non-arts partners. Increasingly, artists are invited to work for an organisation with a participation agenda, with the requirement for the artist to work with or collaborate with audiences.

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engage is the lead professional association promoting understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts through gallery education. As well as the engage journal, engage's programme includes innovative projects, conferences and seminars, training and networking programmes, and advocacy to governments and funding bodies. engage has a membership of around 900, including galleries, museums and arts centres across the UK and in more than 20 countries worldwide.

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