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Arts & Education

ISSUE 3 SUMMER/AUTUMN 2012

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Image by Elina Jokipii



Editorial Henry Ward

In 1826 the French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce produced the first permanent photograph. 186 years later we are inundated with photographic images. It is difficult to imagine a world without them. The explosion in social media in recent years has led to a profusion of photographs. We add and tag images everyday. Photography has grown to play an increasingly important role in education. Ten years ago cameras were still a rare tool in the art classroom. The developments in digital photography and the accessibility of the medium, through smartphones and image manipulation software, has begun to change the way we teach. Increasingly photographs are used to record processes, explore ideas and document ephemeral art.

This issue largely focuses on this relationship between photography and education. Rob Fairley writes about the role that the camera club, at Caol primary school, played in establishing Room 13. Joseph Cartwright explores the relationship between looking and photography, while Elina Jokipii explains how she uses photography in her practice to create very personal images based on her country's recent history. Keith Graham writes about the way in which photography has helped to engage the students he works with and Matt Daw talks about the work that PhotoVoice do with young people. Picking up from our last issue, with its focus on science and art, Vic Hazeldine describes a recent project utilising redundant Bioviewers borrowed from the science department in his school.

Elsewhere Andy Berriman addresses the government's seeming attack on what they perceive as 'soft subjects', with a call to arms to defend the virtues of the arts and their role in education. Andee Collard outlines his own approaches to practicing without a studio,

Sarah Stirling discusses the role her OCD has in the way she approaches teaching and Phil Scott writes about the issues of subjectivity in the classroom. The artist Simon Faithfull chooses to use his iPhone to draw with rather than as a camera and I present some of his work with an account of a conversation we had whilst on an artist's walk in Kings Cross.

Photography is extremely accessible. Almost everyone has use of one kind of camera or another. Most people take photographs. Everyone looks at them. There is little doubt that it is photography that is responsible for making us into the predominantly visual culture that we now are. Addressing the issues that this raises, encouraging young people to explore the medium, and, through it, to develop an understanding of how images work is essential.

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Imagining the Past – Finnish Civil War

Elina Jokipii

Reliving, re-enactment and remembering form is an important part of my personal work. I am well aware that re-enacting especially has become a familiar rhetoric from TV docu-dramas to much more ambitious projects, like the re-staging of the Battle of Orgreave organised by Jeremy Deller. My interest is in re-telling stories that have been passed down, giving importance to past events that I played no part in but feel a connection to through the experience of others. I often use staging and re-enactment to blur the boundaries of past and present.

In the series Finnish Civil War I have used models to stage imaginary scenes, trying to picture moments that might have happened but never got recorded in history. The aim of the project is to invoke the past and to examine ways of visually working through traumatic events in history.

When I was looking at archival photographs from the time of the Finnish Civil War in 1918 I found many studio portraits of soldiers, from both the Red and White side, posing with their rifles often with an uneasy smile and then several photographs of the aftermath of the war, piles of corpses and destroyed buildings. At the time photography was still a fairly cumbersome and slow medium, hence the lack of many action shots. In my images I wanted to concentrate on the small moments that might have happened in between these two extremes. Focusing on people caught in the middle of a conflict, rather than on the main action, it becomes harder for a viewer to take sides or to condemn the people involved. The scenes I am showing are clearly staged and do not necessarily follow historical fact. Susan Sontag in her book 'Regarding the Pain of Others' comes to the conclusion that an image which is purely fictional might show the reality of war better than a documentary photograph that might come with questions about its authenticity, intention and the possibility of being used for propaganda purposes. I am trying to create scenes that might have been but also sometimes leaving the signs of the present day into the frame, to show traces of the past as a kind of remembrance.

Although the subject matter is universal and not necessarily tied to a specific time and place it seems to have a special significance in Finland right now. This project appears to touch a nerve within my own generation with our coming to terms with a recent past that for our grandparents and even parents would have been an untouchable terrain.

Mentioning the Civil War in Finland still raises strong reactions in many people. Some say that this phase in Finnish history is long past and should not be discussed or researched any more as this will only open old wounds. Most people remember stories, whether fact or fiction, that they have heard or read, regarding the war. This led me to start interviewing people of different ages and backgrounds on their views and knowledge of the Civil War to try and find out when a traumatic event in the past becomes a list of names and dates, when the personal connection to history becomes diluted and is lost or abandoned. I have worked through my own connection to the war by staging an imaginary image of my grandfather, who was badly wounded as a 19-year old taking part in the siege of my hometown.

List of Works:

- 1: 'Untitled' from the Finnish Civil War series, C-type print
 - 2: 'Untitled' from the Finnish Civil War series, C-type print
- Cover Image: 'Grandad' from the Finnish Civil War series, C-type print





Snap to attention - The power of photography to engage young people

Matt Daw

Photos are everywhere, and whether we realise it or not they are affecting us all the time – where we click the mouse, what we buy, what news articles we watch or read and whether we think the news is important to us or not.

The prevalence of imagery in everyday life reflects a simple fact – it is an unparalleled tool of communication, able to prompt a reaction in the instant it takes for someone to catch sight of it, yet to convey a huge amount of information to someone who chooses to look closer.

Photography is not simply an art activity, but a language that can be used to inform, persuade, shock, amuse or intrigue. Powerful photographs can engage people of all ages, providing complex information in a way that makes sense to someone who might otherwise have no context for what they are learning about, and bypassing problems that someone may face in understanding something because of literacy levels or vocabulary. By using recorded elements of reality as their raw materials, photos prompt a reaction from the viewer regardless of their understanding or engagement with the style or world-view of the artist. Compare this with, for example, Picasso's paintings, which are richly rewarding either for those who the style strikes a chord with naturally, or who put the time in to analyse it. For those who do not fall into either category, however, the paintings can seem so divorced from experience of reality that they form a barrier to understanding the perspective and motives of the artist. With photography, a bridge is formed between the photographer and the moment he or she captures and the eventual audience. Their reaction or associations to a subject may differ from those of the photographer, but there is something to engage with at a level that means something to the viewer. This makes photography a far less frustrating art form to access for young people, and an ideal gateway to understanding how messages, stories and perspectives can be carried by visual art.

As an activity, photography ticks all the boxes as a way to engage young people. It is accessible and yields instant results. It has

the allure of gadgetry, and a clear relevance to real life. Children want to learn to take better photos, and it is a skill they are bound to practice out of school. The fact that you can learn a few simple techniques in less than an hour and instantly start getting photos you are happier ensures the process is rewarding. Photography offers more than a choice of art form that children are more likely to show enthusiasm for, however. Taking – and then comparing and discussing – photographs offers powerful opportunities to get beneath the skin of a topic, to develop strong and considered opinions on issues, and to get to grips with potentially confusing and complex subjects.

In taking a photograph one makes a series of choices, and this simple fact can make a relatively simple and fun exercise into a way of developing opinions and increasing understanding of a subject or concept. Before clicking the shutter release, anyone taking a photo has to choose what they are going to take the photo of, and why. They must then consider what they want to say about that subject, or using that subject, and therefore how they are going to take the photograph. This means deciding whether to take it from above, below, far away, close up, with flash, without, and so on. It also means deciding what to include in the frame, and what to leave out. Every decision affects what the photo says about the subject, as well as how interesting or attractive the photo is. While discussing the creative output of a fun and hands-on exercise, a young person will also be entering into a discussion about what they think about a subject, and how they have chosen to try and convey that through their photograph.

Understanding the choices made when taking a photograph, and how they affect the impact of the final image, is especially valuable and rewarding given how much we all come into contact with photos every day through the media, social networking, campaigns and adverts. Learning photography as an art form, or using it to explore a subject or issue, can help young people to gain critical skills and open up new levels of meaning and interest in the visual media they encounter every day.

Despite being extremely accessible and

easy to start practising, photography can be immensely satisfying. Young people who may struggle in other artistic mediums, or in creative writing, may find the camera the perfect tool to allow them to translate what is in their head into something they can share and present to others. They will learn that they have their own photographic style, and that when they take a photograph it is a unique representation of their perspective. This means that taking a photograph that prompts interest and praise from others is immensely rewarding and can be a huge boost to the self-esteem of a student who rarely excels.

PhotoVoice exists as an organisation because of photography's power to engage and inform people around an issue, while providing people with a way of speaking out and expressing themselves in a new and accessible way. Our UK and international projects enable people affected by issues to become the ones documenting it through photography, representing themselves and commenting on the issue's causes, effects and potential solutions. Over half of PhotoVoice's work is in the UK, and although we are not restricted to a single age group, we find that well over half of our projects involve working with children and young people. We have worked successfully with homeless young people, NEET youth, autistic young people and those with physical and learning disabilities – including blindness. In all cases, photography provides an accessible way to engage and communicate for these young people, while allowing them to create something they can be proud of and share with family and friends. In most cases an exhibition rounds off a project, while in some cases books, postcards, posters and websites showcase the photographs and ensure the young people feel they have contributed to something exciting and professional.

PhotoVoice's recent work, in partnership with Action for Children, has focused on engaging young people in exploring and discussing the role of children's rights in their lives. The Rights! Cameras! Action! project involved young people from various demographics across the UK in workshops that supported them to represent children's rights through their photographs, and to discuss each others' photos to understand better how young people from different backgrounds

might experience different priorities. The resulting online multimedia resource – www.rightscamerasaction.org.uk – provides photographic content focusing on each of the first 42 articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A booklet summarising and illustrating these articles has also been produced to signpost this website and to act as a classroom resource. A section of the website provides suggestions for how teachers and youth workers can use the online content and downloadable resources to engage their young people around children's rights. There are also exercises and lesson plans that involve the young people taking their own photographs, for those with the resources to work with digital cameras.

PhotoVoice's Lookout project provides young people (under 25) with the opportunity, the skills and the support to feed their perspectives into the debate on gangs and knife crime issues through photography. The aim is to amplify the voices of young people in the discussion about the causes of and potential solutions to gang and knife crime issues, encourage other young people to speak out, and to encourage the media and public to consider their voices to be relevant and important in the debate.

This year Lookout is developing into a nationwide project, with more workshops in London but also workshops in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and possibly other cities around the UK. We are planning high profile campaign and media outputs designed by the young people themselves, and aimed at reaching and engaging young people while at the same time providing a platform for young people to become spokespeople for these issues in the media and politics. Youth-led conferences on these subjects will be held as part of the project in Liverpool and London in 2013.

For more information about this project visit www.photovoice.org/lookout

If you are intrigued and want more ideas for how you could use photography in the classroom, visit www.photovoice.org and access our free online resources, and sign up to our newsletter for details of projects, exhibitions and events.

“improving academic performance
in adolescents”.

Craig A. Johnston, Ph.D., Children's Nutrition Research
Center, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas



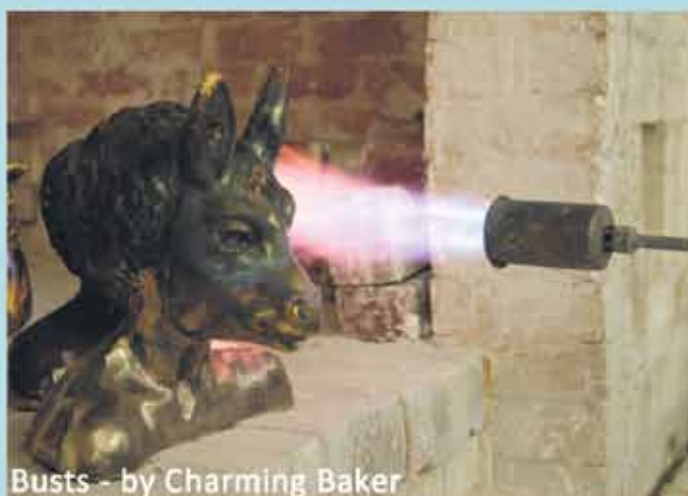
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I am a Bio-Viewer

Vic Hazledine

"Beauty should be shared for it enhances our joys. To explore its mystery is to venture towards the sublime."
Joseph Cornell

I am looking up at one of several deep shelves stacked with rows of small compact box files. My eyes scan the spines back and forth; the contents of each file is labeled for ease of identification: Animal Mitosis, Harmful & Helpful Bacteria, Pond Life, Insect Parts... each box cocoons a concertina of light brown envelopes. I open one and remove the contents.

I find a series of tiny circular transparent images encapsulated into a short acetate strip. I offer the strip up to the light. "This will help" says Zinat, the Science technician, gently handing me a black plastic object resembling a cartoon microscope. The object placed in front of me is called a Bioviewer and one simply inserts the strip of images through a slot below the lens to see the small mysteries magnified. I become a Bio-Viewer.

The principle, and apparatus, is joyfully

low-tech, simple and direct. I find myself connecting with nature's complexities much as I did when, as a boy, I owned a battery-powered Slide viewer which illuminated 35mm Agfa Transparencies.

I loved this way of seeing the world. I could place my eyes so close to the viewing screen that there could be no peripheral distractions. Just a wonderful picture, an intense visual intimacy, and me. The Bioviewer, the way it works, and its name, is equally captivating for similar reasons I find. But displaced from its usual surroundings – the Science Laboratory – and situated in an Art room, would it capture the imaginations of young artists? I leave the Science Department (a Wunderkammer) laden with as many Bioviewers and slide boxes as I can carry, to find out.

I am a Bioviewer

'The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.'
Albert Einstein

I work with 3 groups of Year 8 artists, numbering just over 60 girls, and I work

with each group for 1 hour a week. I intend to have all of them participate in a Printmaking project I have in mind. I set up the first session. The Bioviewers look slightly incongruous in the Art room and this is not unnoticed by the girls.

"Are we doing Science?" Possibly.
"Is there a difference?" Possibly not.
We will see.

We begin by talking about the beauty of tiny structures. We consider self-similarity. We consider the Hadron Collider. I invite the artists to explore the magnified images I have borrowed, to share them around, and make small thumbnail sketches of those they find the most intriguing. I want them to use the Bioviewers to become Bio-Viewers.

I discourage them from making detailed drawings (because they all, at this stage, naturally run towards the misplaced security of trying to document the detail.) I encourage them to just see, enjoy and draw the main structures and shapes instead.
"They look like jewels."
They are.

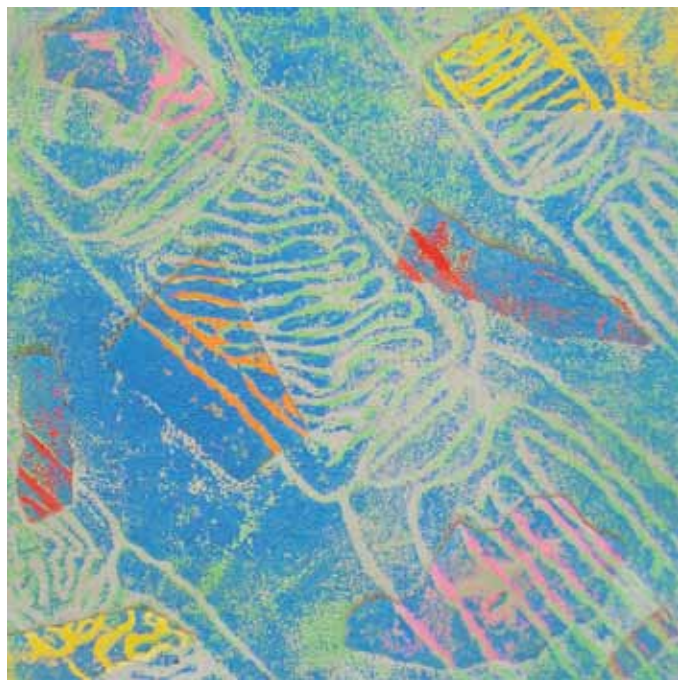
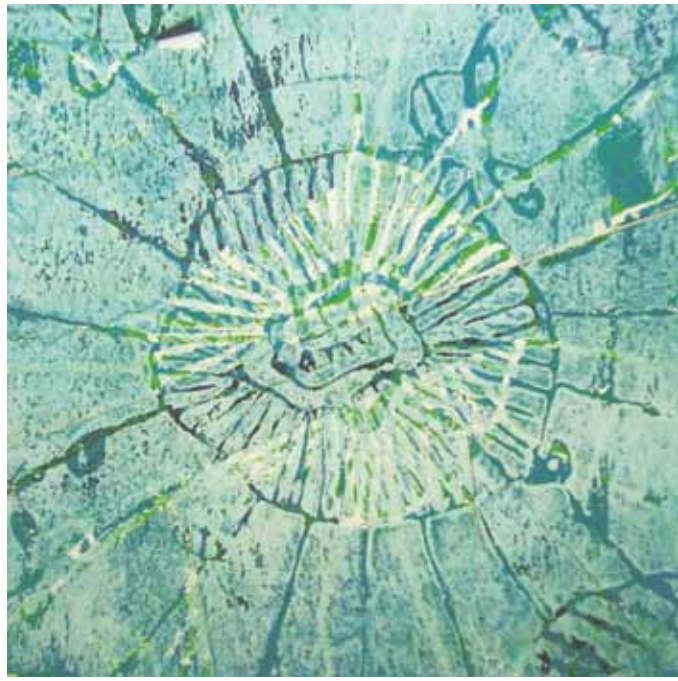
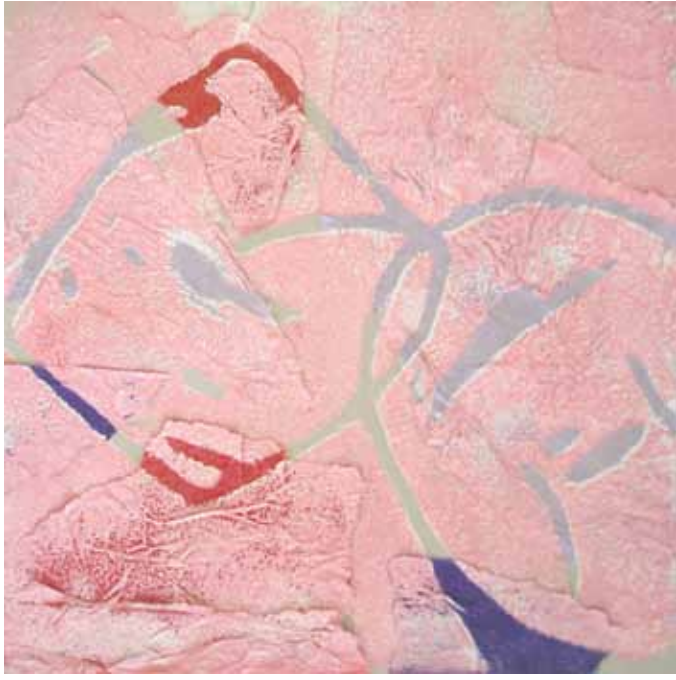
We spend subsequent sessions deciding which sketch would make the best design to translate to print. The girls make 4"x4" test

drawings before committing. I try to intervene as little as possible because I want them all to take ownership of their work and to take responsibility for their own choices and creative decisions.

"I enjoyed observing and drawing the different types of bacteria and seeing the work come to life."

After some soul-searching, and some prevarication, decisions are gradually made, and the designs are immortalized into Styrofoam blocks. The ambitious etch directly into the delicate polystyrene with a variety of sharp instruments I find around the Art room (another Wunderkammer), and the cautious etch with Biro pens. The girls would prefer to transfer their designs using tracing paper but I urge them to work freely, to develop and adapt their ideas as they work. I want them to forget mechanical processes and begin to trust their eyes and intuition.

"The human imagination has great difficulty in living strictly within the confines of a materialist practice or philosophy. It dreams, like a dog in its basket, of hares in the open."
John Berger



Now the real fun begins. The girls have one session to strike test prints using primary colours. Many have not made prints before so they become familiar with the joy of the process, tools and materials; the sticky block inks, inking plates and the rollers. They also become rapidly aware of studio space: the need to consider the movement and needs of others in relation to personal space, the complexities of clearing, cleaning up and hanging wet prints; the making of space.

"I found it fascinating because we worked independently and the results looked amazing."

Printmaking is a joyful act of creativity. It is as mysterious, in its own way, as the images the girls have been working from. So much so, that this is perhaps why they seem to have already forgotten about the source of inspiration. And, released from the constraints of realistic representation, they are now free to imagine the other. And to have no concerns about success or failure. They begin to smile. And begin to see.

*Art is significant deformity.
Roger Fry*

The girls now overprint in different colours. They mix and share ink plates and thoughts. I encourage them to turn their square Styrofoam blocks 90 degrees every time they add a colour. They need little encouragement to try this out. I provide them with different coloured paper and place a box of brightly coloured translucent tissue paper scraps in the centre of the room, urging them to make an ink-print and paper-layered sandwich. "Why?" "Just to see what happens."

What did happen? The young artists, all of them, began to experiment prolifically, each producing sets of signature prints that all were proud of. Experiment. Experiment.

"Are we doing Science?" Possibly.
"Is there a difference?" Possibly not.

"I found that anything can be turned into beautiful art."



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In Defence of the Soft

Andy Berriman

'Are you afraid of a challenge?' This is a question posed in the recent guidance to A-Level students from Russell Group Universities (Oxbridge, UCL etc)^[1]. It is addressed to the student who might prefer to opt for Art, Photography, or any of the other so-called 'soft subjects'. The use of labels such as 'soft' and 'hard' implicitly undermines the value of these subjects. It suggests that their study requires substantially less intellectual rigour than other, more traditionally academic qualifications. In his drive to enlist more academically able students from poorer backgrounds to the most prestigious universities, Michael Gove, the current Education Secretary, has made it very clear that he subscribes to this perspective. This is governmental policy designed to reduce the numbers of students opting for 'soft subjects' and has already been seen to have had a direct impact; for example, a reduction in the number of students training to teach Media Studies.^[2] I find this stance misguided and insulting. It is completely short-sighted to denigrate some subjects in order to bolster the student uptake of others.
THE SOFT NEEDS TO FIGHT BACK!!

Russell Group Promotion

It is interesting to note that 'soft' and 'hard' are used instead of 'easy' and 'difficult' (clearly the implication). As well as being an elitist judgement against the creative subjects, it is also a quite naked form of self-aggrandisement on the part of the Russell Group itself. It is this aggressive self-promotion that is most offensive – particularly at a time of recession. This aggrandisement serves those in government as well as the Russell Group. Apart for a couple of exceptions (for example - Eric Pickles is a graduate of Leeds Polytechnic), all of the current coalition cabinet attended universities within the Russell Group. Michael Gove studied English at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Cameron would once have had us believe that we are "all in it together". The Russell Group advice effectively calls on students to "...join the lucky few of us who are up here together".

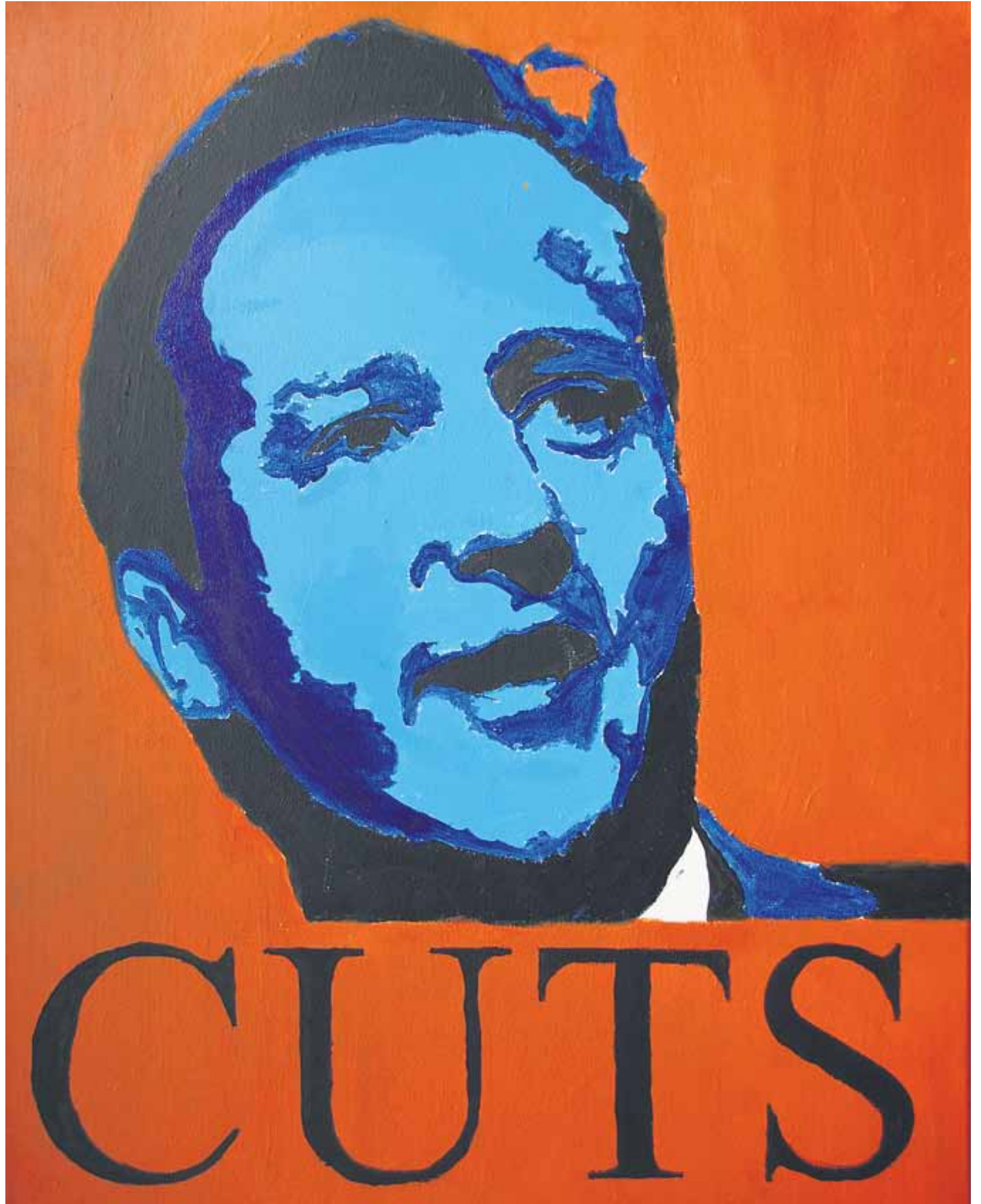
'Soft' Subjects and the growing 'Creative Industries'

I could continue to 'defend the soft' by arguing just how significantly the creative/cultural industries contribute to our economies. Employing around 6 million people within the EU alone, these industries generate a significant part of the continent's GDP.^[5] The government itself recognises the importance of this sector, noting it as a growth area and a significant source of exports.^[6] The study of 'soft subjects' can be a first step towards entering such careers. However, this justification feeds in to a view of education as a means of maximising earnings potential (maximising earners, not learners). Shouldn't education aspire to be more than a utilitarian skills factory? It is insecurity and panic that is leading us towards such 'sausage factory' education. As a student that opted for soft subjects I didn't want to be a sausage (does anyone want to be a sausage?!).

'Soft' Subjects lead to enlightenment

There is a strong argument that 'soft' subjects are essential in preparing students for an uncertain future. We live in an era characterised by an exponential growth in interactive culture. A key feature of this culture is that it is very easy to be swept along. The growth of social media is a powerful example of this, with millions surrendering their details in order to participate with little understanding of the possible ramifications.^[7]

In such an environment an awareness of hegemonic values, the power and significance of media institutions and the role representation plays in our culture would seem to be essential. These are the so-called 'soft' key concepts likely to be explored in Media Studies.^[8]



[3]

Images – the dominant form of communication!

A deeper understanding of the soft subjects is surely essential in decoding the sophisticated visual language of the 21st century. Today, more than ever, images reach us from across the globe. They arrive immediately and are shared fluidly. The internet has allowed us to see history unfolding in a chat-room. From 'Youtube' footage of the Arab Spring, to remixed, re-hashed 'Googled' images of everything. Photography is still a relatively new mode of communication, but it is ubiquitous and unavoidable. It is not surprising when we are told that images may be about to 'overtake' the written word^[9]. Despite being one of the most vilified 'soft subjects', an understanding and practical control of photography is simply an essential part of our everyday experience. Students who opt for this dynamic art form should feel excited by the possibilities of the medium. They should not be discouraged by guidance so clearly written out of intellectual snobbery and elitism.



[4]

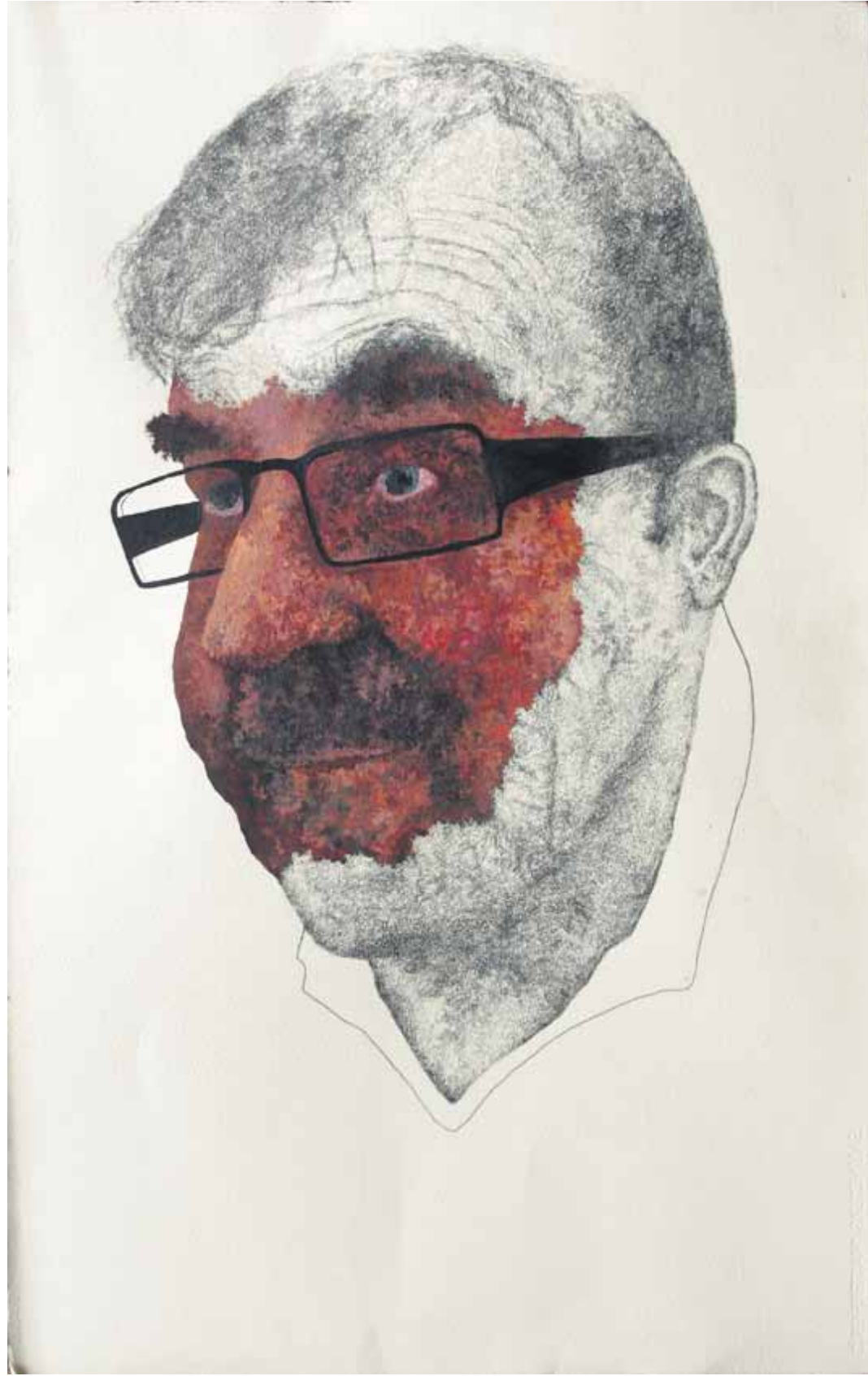
Consumers or Producers?

Art has always been a way of making sense of the world. This is true both in the way it is consumed, but also through the creative process itself. Making things is a fundamentally empowering activity. It demands a quality of engagement that involves active participation over passivity. All the 'creative' subjects involve a practical element that requires an ability to work independently. Young students that are confident enough to genuinely explore contemporary media are dynamic, adaptable, reflective and innovative. These are highly desirable qualities to promote. We should be encouraging our young people to engage in the world as engaged and critical makers rather than passive consumers.

Common Sense Argument

I will conclude by stating the obvious; different subjects are easier for some and harder for others, because people are different. An imagined reversal of the Russell Group advice reveals how arbitrary it is to pit one subject against another. In this parallel universe, the government would be encouraging scientists and mathematicians to take creative subjects. They would be warning students not to risk ignoring their own creative potential. This case can be made just as forcefully as the other. But should either case be made at the risk of attracting the wrong students to courses for reasons of prestige and conformity? Isn't this all ultimately common sense? Students choose to pursue subjects they're most interested and engaged in. They choose subjects they will enjoy. There is nothing wrong with finding something easy – whether it's Media Studies or Mathematics. I will not mince my words (because I don't want to be a sausage producer): Students – refuse to be patronised by the elite, TAKE THE EASY OPTION* - CHOOSE TO FOLLOW YOUR PASSION!!

(*whichever subject you feel is the 'softest' for you of course.)



[10]

1. <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/media/informed-choices/InformedChoices-latest.pdf>
2. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/9193116/Sharp-drop-in-staff-teaching-soft-subjects-figures-show.html>
3. Image: 'Cuts' – Acrylic on Canvas- Rohan Wilde – Yr 11 Fine Art Student – Rydens Enterprise School
4. Image: 'Untitled' – paint on colour print - Jack Painter – Yr 11 Fine Art Student - Rydens Enterprise School
5. "The cultural industries in Europe, including the audiovisual sector, make a significant contribution to the EU economy, creating about 3% EU GDP corresponding to an annual market value of 500 billion EUR and employing about 6 million employees" -Green Paper: 'On the online distribution of audiovisual works in the EU: opportunities and challenges towards a digital single market' – European Commission – 13.7.2011
6. "creative industries contributed 2.9% of the UK's Gross Value Added in 2009, this is an increase from 2.8% in 2008. 1.5 million people are employed in the creative industries or in creative roles in other industries, 5.1% of the UK's employment. Exports of services by the creative industries accounted for 10.6% of the UK's exports of services. There were an estimated 106,700 businesses in the creative industries on the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) in 2011, this represents 5.1% of all companies on the IDBR" - Figures on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport." – figures from Department for Culture, Media and Sport website.
7. "A vast majority of people have no idea what these things do and what they're for..." "...A dangerously high level of people..." [think] "Facebook is here to help me make friends. Of course we know that Facebook is here to monetise your social graph for Facebook's customers" "we are Facebook's products." "In the world ahead, if you do not know how to program, you do not know how to speak, you do not know how your world is being put together." -Transcription from excerpt of 'Seven on Seven 2012: Introductions and Keynote by Douglas Rushkoff' – Rhizome.org
8. In his Media Studies 2.0 article, David Gauntlett (<http://www.theory.org.uk/mediastudies2.htm>) proposes that the subject would do well to evolve even further. He argues that it should also reflect the 'rise of everyday creativity online' and respond more to the growing significance of independent and DIY media culture.
9. "Today, images" - "may even be surpassing text as the dominant form of communication." - Google Art Project statement
"This medium is rapidly becoming one that parallels the written word in many ways" - Aaron Schuman <http://seesawmagazine.com/whatsnextpages/whatsnext.html>
10. Image: 'Untitled' – mixed media on paper - Lottie Percival – AS Fine Art Student - Rydens Enterprise School

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A Question of Taste.

Phil Scott

How do we grade taste? As practitioners of the visual arts decisions of when to finish or rework visual ideas boil down to a question of taste. What happens when this question arises in a classroom by chance or by accident?

When teaching a GCSE student, she uncovered a series of magazines that she intended to use for a piece of contemporary collage. This began with the foundation of most good collage and appropriation art, by resourcing the material that would provide the subject matter for her work. As this investigation developed, the student eventually came to the conclusion that the work she wanted to use as her collage was not something that she would cut out with her scalpel, but a collection of images that had fallen upon one another to create an interesting composition.

This brings up an interesting discussion on the merits of art at GCSE level. Examination boards favour the idea that work should be created and developed by the student/artist and then developed towards a resolution within a body of work. This tends to be the conventional norm. Using the work as an influence, other students began to try and replicate the idea with limited success. Students painstakingly manipulated found pages from magazines in an attempt to strive towards a similar aesthetic to that of the original student's work.

I saw this as an ideal opportunity to discuss with the whole class collaged ready-mades throughout art history, beginning with Marcel Duchamp's L.H.O.O.Q (1919) and Joseph Beuys' Cosmos and Damien Polished (1974) leading onto to more contemporary examples like Thomas Hirschhorn's Ur-Collage A13 (2008) and John Stezaker's Mask Series (2008). Students are receptive to the concept of accident as art, but this leads me to the question of how this challenges the conventions of what we understand to be

good/bad taste within the art room.

This question, which has been prevalent in art since the "ready-mades", makes for uncomfortable ground in the art classroom. In terms of assessment it resuscitates the age-old debate that has pervaded the art classroom since teaching began, that of taste. How would you explain to a student that the presentation of one ready-made is superior to that of another, so that the student understood?

Art by its nature is subjective. This is what makes the subject so relevant to progressing and educating opinion and relevant ways of communicating ideas. The discussion of aesthetics and ideas should not have a fixed answer, and those who practice should always leave the possibility of having their own interpretation of art open to new suggestion, whether that comes from an experienced artist with a wealth of knowledge or a student/artist who has only begun to question ideas.

The danger of being an art teacher is to adapt to the easy premise of creating art that looks like art. Simply by rehashing versions of what you were taught in the art classroom or things that you have witnessed can lead to limited outcomes. Renowned 20th century art critic Clement Greenberg stated that his senses of aesthetics were that "good work hits you in your gut" and "that it establishes its quality and accordingly its importance within a context".

Reverting back to the original example of the student who "found" her collage, her appreciation of the work came within a set of circumstances. The work was found

in an art classroom, referencing the throw away nature of the discarded magazines and publications that litter most art rooms, whilst also showing the beauty of stumbling across visually arresting accidents. The art room has become the work. Her decision to capture a moment in a set of arranged artefacts communicate a time and place the student is in, and her decision to challenge the convention of making art in a more traditional form. The aesthetic appreciation that made her example work over that of others is a more complex issue.

The student challenged the concept of what she believed art was, whilst remaining within the boundary of accepted aesthetic. American art critic, theorist and teacher Bill Berkson once spoke of "educated taste." The idea that taste cannot be taught. There are no specific right and wrong answers, as there may be in other subject areas, there is only the reasoning behind the argument. Placed alongside other samples of similar ideas this student's concept/taste/work stood out.

The idea of education being that you start with no taste and instructors show you the way isn't the way art education should work. Instead we should provide scaffolding that informs decision-making. This then allows students to educate and develop their own taste.

To direct a student's taste is partly counter-cultural. Every generation must discover what they believe to be interesting or aesthetically appealing, then the art classroom must guide and inform the decision making within a context. If we want to be a part of the future of new aesthetic ideals we must first of all accept it, and then find a place to inform, compare and contrast this with elements of art history and context.

This form of teaching opens up a number

of interesting conundrums. When I first began as an art teacher, I was intrigued by the idea that if I was to offer students purely contemporary resources what sort of foundation would this provide a student with 10 years on from that starting point, when they were in Art College or other routes of further education? Like the student in question we must challenge our own ideas on what constitutes "good/bad taste" or what is a right way or wrong way of working.

Simply by not falling back on the concept of producing "art that looks like art" we begin to challenge new contemporary aesthetics half way, and at the same time allow the students to input their own ideas of what makes good/bad art. Greenberg also commented that good art shouldn't "meet your taste more than half way." Art needs to be half recognizable and half contesting. As recognised practitioners we know what art was and possibly what art is, but do we know what art will become? This is the role of the student and the challenge for the contemporary art teacher is to allow this free thought to develop without stifling it, but supporting its growth and encourage the break from what we recognise as "art that looks like art".

Photography = Looking



Joseph Cartwright

Photographic images are generally perceived to be real. They're not of course, but appear to be because they remind us of so much. This reminding, with its layers and links to shared memories and similar experiences, plays a huge part in photography and how we engage with it. However, photography is primarily about looking, and looking is fundamental to photography (and visual art in general) as it informs both the making and reading of images, and it's this idea of looking that I find most pertinent to the creative process.

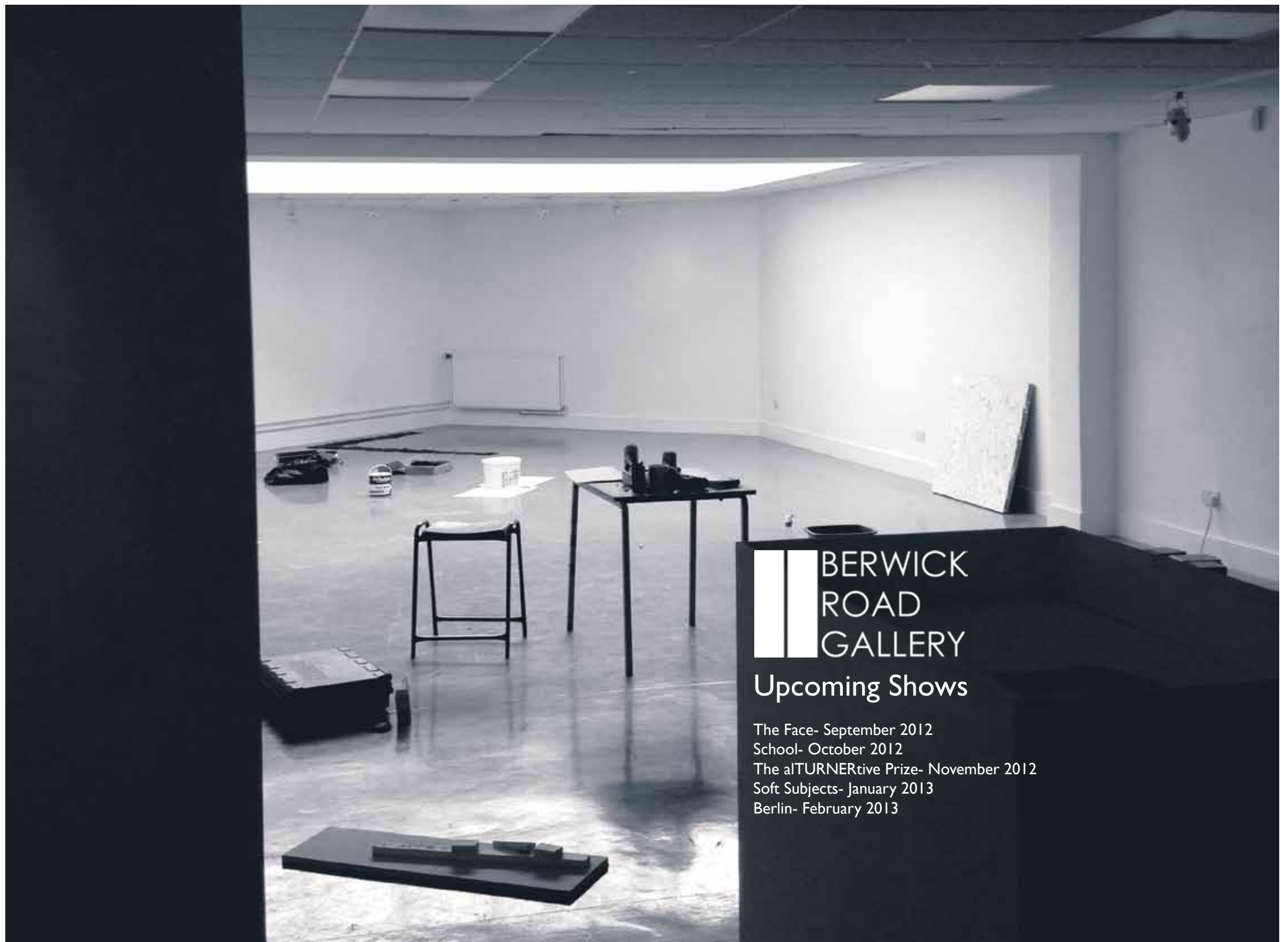
Looking is profoundly different from seeing. As we move through our daily lives we barely look at anything yet are bombarded with visual imagery. We see loads of 'stuff'. We take note of this 'stuff', compartmentalise it and recognise it, but how often do we actually look? The act of looking is an act of enquiry, and I think that this is where photography naturally fits in and is really exciting, especially in an educational setting; it helps to make sense of what's around us by bringing our attention to it. By its very nature the act of looking slows things down. We are made to consider what it is we are looking at and why we are looking at it. This slowing down process, to take stock and look, is vital in this age of immediacy and instant access. If you engage in the practice of photography you automatically engage in the practicalities of looking.

So what do we look at? Where does our enquiry lead? More importantly, what do we want to show? Susan Sontag, in her book

'On Photography' stated that 'photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have the right to observe'. Because of the ubiquitous, democratic nature of, and access to, the making of images, photography has been instrumental in dismantling the hierarchies of acceptable subject matter. Everyone is empowered to make photographic images and, because we all understand the mechanics of how to take a photograph, we are all qualified to make such images. This immediate and relatively easy access to taking photographs is a great way to come to terms with the vocabulary of constructing considered, meaningful images. Due to the nature of the process substantial bodies of work are built up relatively quickly, which is great as the more photographs being made, the more looking is going on. And the more looking that is going on the more sophisticated the outcomes, and the more easily accessed are the triggers and connections of visual literacy.

Photography gives us permission to extend the period of looking. It encourages students to scrutinise their environments and to elevate the mundane by constructing meaningful images of their everyday visual experiences. These can then be presented through extended enquiry as resolutions. To encourage students in this process is a fantastic basis on which to build a practice based on looking.

The real experience of photography is in the act of looking.



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Upcoming Shows

The Face- September 2012
School- October 2012
The aTURNERtive Prize- November 2012
Soft Subjects- January 2013
Berlin- February 2013

Birthday Party



Henry Ward

A Collaboration between the artist Harold Offeh, artist educators Nicky Field, Becky Heaton and Henry Ward, and students from Welling School; Ben Campbell, Jessica Comber, Holly Gibson, Charlotte Singleton and Jessica To.

In the autumn of 2011 the Schools and Teachers Team at Tate Modern approached me to propose a collaborative project with the artist Harold Offeh. The project was extremely open ended. The initial idea was to investigate the work of the seminal performance artist, Vito Acconci and use his ideas as a starting point to work together with students from Welling School to create a collaborative performance at the Tate Modern.

Conversations ensued between staff at the Tate, Harold and me. Harold came to Welling School to meet the students and took part in a crit of their work. In January a group of students visited the Tate Modern, with me and Becky Heaton, Head of Faculty of Visual Arts at Welling School, as well as Nicky Field, an ex-student of Welling who was undertaking work experience in the faculty at the time. Harold gave a talk about his own work and the influences of Acconci on him. The group also visited the display of Acconci's work and a discussion took place about how the project might develop.

The following week a smaller group of five students were decided upon and another trip was arranged. The group visited the archive at Tate Britain and were privileged to see some of the incredible objects housed there, including Turner's paint box. They were given a box of material relating to Acconci and spent a while discussing the way in which performative work, such as his, is archived and evidenced. They then travelled to the Tate Modern and spent the afternoon experimenting with responses to the work of Acconci and the contemporary artist Erwin Wurm before coming up with their own idea inspired by these which involved following unsuspecting members of the public around the museum, being taken to see whatever works they were going to.

Over the following weeks the group visited the Tate twice more. Each time exploring ways of performing within the space. They played a game of tag in the turbine hall, encouraging school children on a trip to join in. They rolled down the slope in the turbine hall. They queued for video pieces, leading to members of the public joining the queue too, and they contemplated discarded objects in the gallery space. All the time, discussions continued about how the project might manifest itself.

The intention had become to produce a performance at the Tate Modern. Something that, whilst inspired by looking at the Acconci work, and also by Harold's practice, was a genuine collaboration between the different people involved. Harold had, early on, expressed his interest in the climate that the crit he had observed at Welling School had taken place in. He talked about the notion of the art salon, a place where ideas and theories were discussed. Several of the students had expressed a desire to do something unusual in the gallery space and had fixated on the notion of some sort of party. The group agreed that some sort of public discussion, a sharing of ideas, would be the best way forward. Slowly an idea began to form, and when it became known that Nicky's actual birthday happened to be the day the performance was planned for the idea of a birthday party was suggested.

It was agreed that each participant would bring along a gift of some kind. Nicky would unwrap each gift in turn and we would then use the following quarter of an hour to discuss whatever had been given, whether this be an object, a work of art, a set of instructions, a piece of text or something else. Alongside this performance we would display ephemera related to the past couple of months and the development of the project.

Friday the 9th March arrived. Nicky and I accompanied the students to the Tate Modern, Becky was intending to join us later in the day, where they met Harold and Sarah. The gallery space was organised and the students spent some of the morning handing out invitations to unsuspecting members of the public, interrupted briefly by a fire alarm going off!

At 2pm the doors to the gallery opened and the performance began. Throughout the two hours the event was witnessed by a continual crowd. Some people hovered at the doors experiencing the spectacle from a distance, others entered the space, made notes and drawings. On two occasions people interacted with us, most dramatically when a Dutch man joined the party and explained that he knew Nicky and had been invited, something which turned out to be an invention of his own.

The experience of performing in this way was incredible. There were times when the fact that we were in front of an audience was palpable, we felt self-conscious and incredibly aware of what we were saying and doing. There were awkward pauses, uncomfortable silences and stilted dialogues. But for much of the time we felt blissfully unaware that we were being watched. The

conversations flowed naturally and there were many incidents of fantastic coincidence. Though none of us had spoken about the gifts we were bringing, they led to interesting connections and everything 'made sense'.

The project continues. The team at the Tate were overwhelmingly pleased with what had happened. During a de-brief meeting a few weeks later, members of the Schools and Teachers Team expressed their excitement at how the event had become a work of art that existed within the gallery on a par with the collection. The project had worked in a different way to other artist/schools projects. I think the key element was trust. Harold and I struck up a good relationship immediately, made all the more fruitful by his interest in what our students were doing when visiting the school. But we had ended up being trusted

to create something that wasn't a derivative response to existing art-work, or a pale shadow of the "artist's" work. Instead we had genuinely co-authored something new. As we left the Tate Modern after the performance one of the students asked, "So can I call myself an artist now?" Whatever we began the project as; artists, teachers, ex-students, students; we had completed it as equally responsible for what we had produced; as co-authors.

Because of its success we are extending it and will be returning to the Tate Modern in September, as part of the Tanks events (the oil tanks that once fed the power station are being turned into performance and film spaces), to enact another performance in collaboration with Harold.





Ben Campbell

This year I, and a group of other Welling School students and staff, got involved in a collaborative project with artist Harold Offeh in the Tate Modern, and it ended up being one of the greatest experiences of my life. We travelled to the Tate on a weekly basis and for the first few weeks undertook different performance orientated tasks around the gallery as a sort of physical brain storming exercise to determine what we would do for our actual live performance.

Our ideas evolved over the weeks and we decided to put on a live dinner party in a gallery space open to the public. We then found out that Nicky – a returning ex-Welling student and another of the participants – had his birthday on the very same day of our performance. The dinner party then became the Birthday party; and we were all to bring a secret gift to the table, which would spark conversation for exactly 15 minutes.

The performance went seamlessly. Hundreds of people passed through the gallery. They seemed to be intrigued and baffled, but extremely interested in what we were doing. Some seemed not to understand, but most people seemed genuinely amazed by it. People stayed for far longer than I expected, wanting to know what the next gift would be and how our group would react to it. We had a cake, cards, games and seemingly random but interesting gifts, like a pin art toy. People even interacted with us as a group – something I wanted to happen but didn't expect that it actually would. One of the people who joined in was also celebrating his birthday that very day. He declined the cake but sat down with us for a few minutes regardless.

This project at the Tate Modern Gallery was an absolute success and was an experience I shall never forget.

Jessica To

At first we were all apprehensive about being apart of this Tate project as we didn't know what to expect, but as we began to develop our ideas we all realised what an amazing experience it was. We worked with an artist named Harold Offeh and the Tate. Building up towards the final performance we experimented with various different activities which were mainly inspired by the work of Vito Acconci and other performance artists. From 30 second sculptures, inspired by the artist Erwin Wurm's work, to following strangers around the gallery, which was slightly strange but the stories after were quite amusing. It also gave us an insight into what it was like to do a piece of performance art. After seeing some children playing games we decided to do the same. After playing 'it' we did something that I personally will never forget: We all rolled down the Turbine Hall in the Tate. The picture of that moment was eventually used on the invitations for our performance on the last day.

We also visited Tate Britain where we were able to look through their archive which was quite fascinating; especially as we would not usually have been able to access as members of the public. We learnt about how the archive is maintained and we got to see a few incredible items such as Turner's paint box and some rare pattern books. Throughout the process we documented our conversations and ideas through various methods. We thought of different topics which we could use as a base for our plan. Such as having a dinner party which later evolved into the final idea of the birthday party; as the dates were changed and landed on Nicky's birthday. Nicky is an ex-student who was also involved in the project. It was an amazing experience to work as a team to create something with the Tate.

My favourite part of the project was the final day. We all dressed smartly in white shirts and bow-ties. Then we gave out our invitations for the birthday party. Each person brought a gift and we then discussed each one for around 15 minutes each. We took turns to stand at the door as many people began to gather. The public were intrigued with our project and were able to walk around us as the performance was in progress as well as being able to listen to our conversations and to see some of our documentation. The performance lasted for 2 hours. The project overall has been such an amazing experience. I know I won't forget any part of what we have done. I'm really looking forward to continuing the project with everyone and it will be exciting to see what we will create next.

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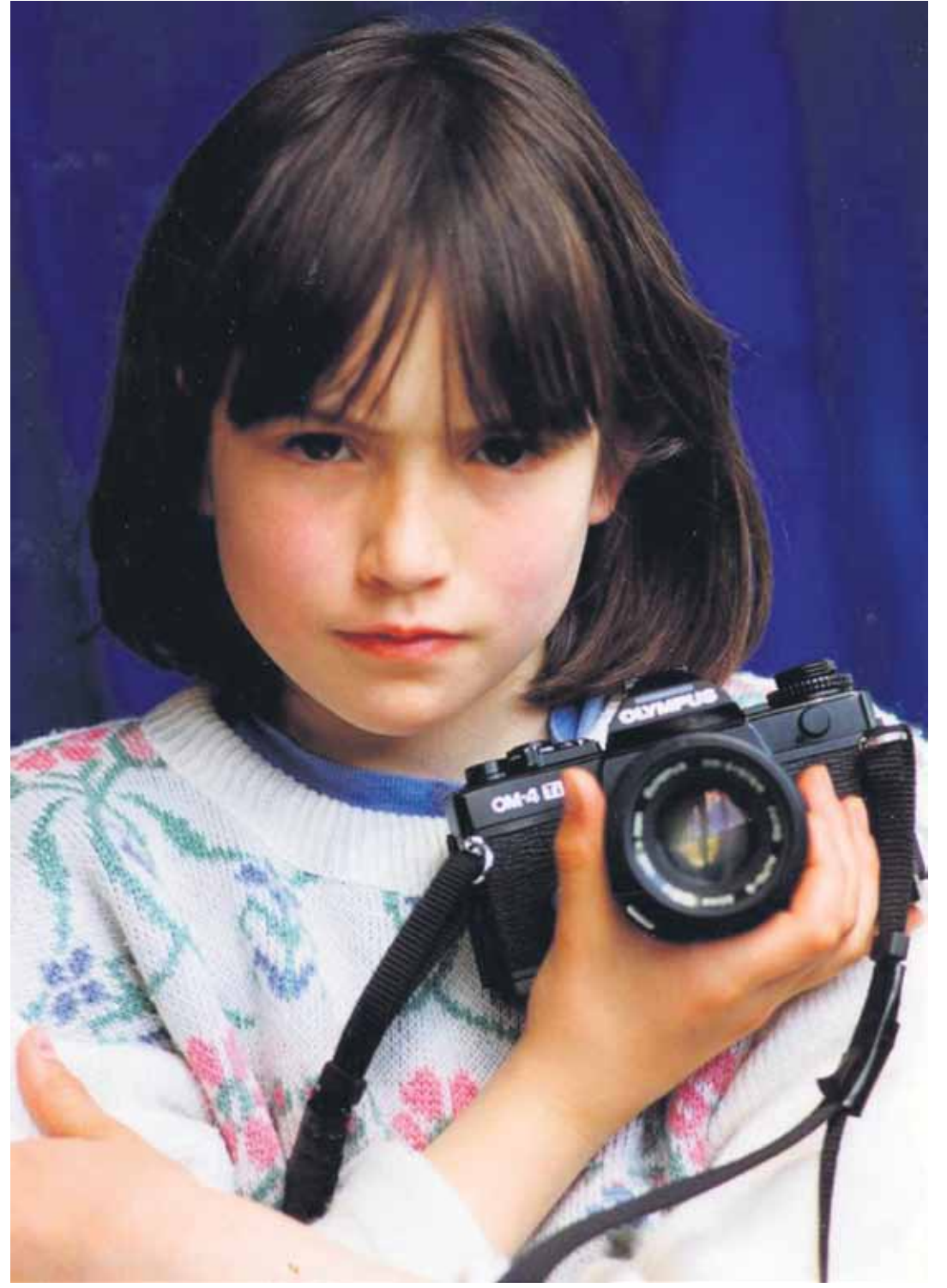
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Caol Camera Club

Rob Fairley

"What's your favourite animal Mr Fairley?" I looked round to find 11 year old Susie standing behind me. "An armadillo" I replied. Her face fell. "What's that?" "Well ... they come from South America they belong to a family of animals called Pampatheriidae and they live in burrows". "What do they look like?" "Well, a bit like a cross between a mouse faced rabbit and a brazil nut". She grinned. "Don't be silly now I know you are joking!" "Go and look them up on Google Images." She crossed to the computer and seconds later a delighted "Oh they are sooo cute!" rang across the studio.

The use of images in classrooms and studios has changed radically in the last decade. In my day a picture of an armadillo might have been found with a trip to the school library, which in my case that was not even in the same building! Now images are readily available and precede nearly every aspect of education. In the space of half a life-time, cameras have moved from being the tools of the professional, through the playthings of the enthusiastic amateur to becoming something everyone has and uses. Strangely with the ready availability of the medium has come an extraordinary decline in knowledge of how to make a picture (witness the millions of out of focus poorly composed pictures on Facebook) and an intriguing drop in what is expected from cameras. Many photographers would

argue that the height of technical excellence in picture quality was achieved around 1870 and has declined proportionally with the increase in the medium's popularity.

18 years ago I reluctantly found myself as Artist in Residence in Caol Primary School on the outskirts of Fort William. Reluctantly, because at that time Caol Primary was a very unhappy school in an 'undesirable' area. In this troubled environment, trying to engage nine to twelve year olds in making pictures, or indeed anything, proved hard.

I discovered that if I asked a group of six or seven year olds to draw, say, a pair of elephants tap dancing lightly over a bowl of eggs they might ask what colour would I like the elephants or whether it was permissible to make the eggs chocolate ones. However the same subject given to an eight or nine year old would elicit a blunt "I can't draw eggs". To circumvent this negativity I introduced a number of disposable cameras and taught them about picture making with a picture-making tool. Students roamed the school in pairs and were allowed half the film in the camera each. The results were almost immediately startling and provided a fascinating and disturbing insight into the school at that time. The fact that each student was restricted in the number of pictures they could make, and that the results could not be seen for a couple of days (or maybe even until the following week) provided a rigour and discipline that was important. After a couple of weeks, the students were hooked.

Eventually the school term and my tenure

came to an end. I was accosted by one particularly enthusiastic pair: "Will you come back next term Mr Fairley?" Now, there was no way I wanted to go back but I did not have it in my heart to say a blunt 'no' to a ten year old. I explained that I had been paid by the local authority to be there but that that had now ended. "If you can pay me I will come back" I said brightly.

During the Easter holiday I received a telephone call from one of the kids.

"Can we borrow your camera?"

"Why?"

"Well, if we can find a camera we are going to do the school photographs and then when we have sold them we can pay you to come back."

It all seemed very unlikely. However I lent them a camera and the results were extraordinary. Colab (a processing company based in Coventry) sent a letter along with the first batch of prints pointing out that they had a professional department and that perhaps next time we should consider using this. The youngsters took great delight in writing back and pointing out that they couldn't afford that, and that they were only ten years old.

The financial rewards from this venture were substantial and I suggested that instead of paying me they bought a camera of their own. The Parent's Council were also mightily impressed by the school photographs, and decided to purchase a small darkroom kit by way of encouragement. The students then commandeered a cupboard in which to use it and I was inveigled into returning, as

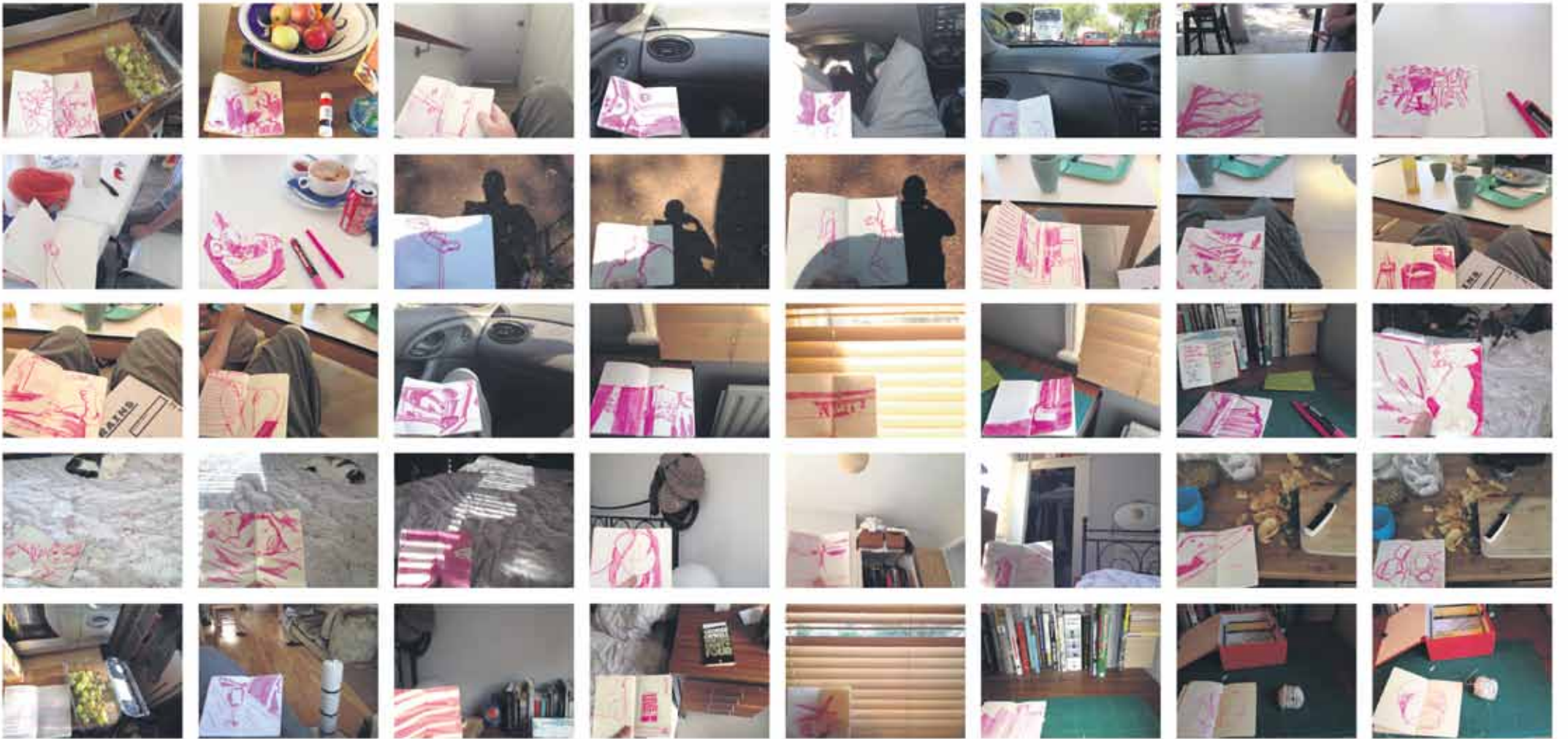
a volunteer, to teach darkroom skills. Caol Camera Club was duly formed.

It wasn't long before Caol Camera Club began to explore other visual art forms and were given first a cupboard, and then a room to call their own. From Room 13 in Caol Primary School, grew a worldwide network of student-managed studios who share the creative and entrepreneurial spirit embodied by the original group of children.

Over the years that followed, their skills improved even further and the photographic work became more experimental. During one memorable craze for large pinhole cameras, one photo was taken using a wheelie bin and large sheet film. The skulls (rabbits) were added to the mix in the darkroom and the final image coloured using 'sweetie' wrappers and finally copied onto 35mm colour film. This craze stopped when the school neighbours objected to their wheelie bins being "borrowed" and adapted!

In more recent years the studio has evolved towards the use of digital equipment and for creative work, a high degree of skill in using Photoshop has emerged.

To this day the students of Caol Primary School take and sell their own school photos. For almost 20 years, the necessary skills have passed on from one photographic team to another in what might be the longest running school enterprise project in the world!



Daily Practice

Andee Collard

"I don't make pictures just to make money. I make money to make more pictures."
Walt Disney

Structures and scheduling define our existence; When did you last brush your teeth? Was it the same time as yesterday? You are what you habitually do. As part of his daily practice the novelist John Cheever would dress in a suit as if he were about to go to a 9 to 5 job and take the elevator to a maid's room in the basement, where he stripped to his boxer shorts and wrote until lunchtime. Whilst stripping down to your underwear is a strictly optional element of daily practice, embedding rigorous systems and sticking to them are not. I believe that a creative practice is a series of positive habits built up over time. As I write this I am nearing my 500th day of making art everyday. What started out as a flippant challenge to see if a friend and I could produce one piece of art a day for a year has evolved into numerous projects. Through this daily questioning and documentation I have watched my practice evolve.

The thought of toiling away in a studio making art is an aspirational goal for many artists including myself. It stretches many people's imagination to think of an artist outside of this context. We dream of Tony Hancock in "The Rebel" rather than a practitioner working in their kitchen, a bus or a classroom. The romantic vision of art making involves a very specific set of circumstances and a very specific set of ephemera and art making tools. I can't imagine any creative person describing their work or their practice as easy but once certain assumptions like how and where and when art is made are questioned and acted upon, a new layer of complexity is introduced.

Making art is hard, making anything without a structure is nigh on impossible. Many artists would list a studio as a vitally important structural element of their practice, studios are seen as essential and many potential artists shy away from making work simply because they don't have a space to work. I think that if these potential artists were to push against their immediate limitations they would discover new ways of making despite the external pressures not to make.

Defining yourself as an artist is easy during casual cocktail party conversation. Just lie. Proving that you are an artist is a little more challenging and requires you to be able to show work and explain how it came about. It is very difficult to present a coherent vision of what an artist does at the best of times. Sometimes it feels like a battle to convince even yourself. Actions speak louder than words and artists need to make work. To be an artist, you keep on working; It's a bit like a shark in a beret. I obsessively need to make, I find cocktail party conversation difficult and I cannot easily explain the scattershot range of work I have produced. Over the last 17 months I've become fascinated by the notion of formalising my need to make work within some kind of context that provides a structure and possibility of recording patterns within the seemingly random collage of work that I produce. I have for the last 494 days made and documented on the internet various projects, spanning drawing, painting, video, photography and performance and I see no reason to stop. I suppose part of me believes in the Malcolm Gladwell notion of a practice developing over 10,000 hours and that chipping away at my work for a couple of hours a day can only help me as an artist.

Working without the security blanket of a traditional studio is daunting, but it should not be used as an excuse. John Baldessari's infamous "Post Studio Art" class at CalArts, in which students were encouraged to "stop daubing away at canvases or chipping away at stone" and embrace a wider framework for art production is hugely inspirational. During his time at CalArts, Baldessari attempted to overcome various challenges associated with balancing his art practice with the practicalities of life and his teaching commitment. Baldessari used his practice as a test-bed to collaborate with a generation of students (who he identified as artists) to challenge the cliché views of who an artist is and what an artist does. Baldessari's example of Post Studio practice took advantage through various projects of CalArts' cache of mediums such as video cameras that at the time were not commonly associated with making art. Against many limitations, the works produced by Baldessari and his student artists are rich with potential and indebted to the artist's experiences, environment and methods used.

Keri Smith's books make me want to vomit a little bit. They're mostly a faux messy list of instructions detailing how to be an artist. Once I get past my snobbish knee jerk reaction however, I can see her books as a first step for many of her readers to start thinking and working like an artist. Smith's mini-projects allow the suspension of disbelief to last just long enough for the reader to start thinking of their own projects to work on. We are conditioned to think that making art somehow involves witchcraft. There is an element of unweaving the rainbow about using Smith's instruction based tasks to force a situation where you can be "creative". As John Cleese eloquently puts, "Creativity is not a talent. It is a way of operating". This year I have collaborated with my Photography students on a set of instructions that we have produced and shared within the group to automate our practice. Some of the instructions are derivative of Keri Smith's work; others are avenues to be explored. The project has its origin in quite proscriptive instructions but the resultant practice demonstrates more interesting deviations and personal outcomes.

Creating a framework within which your practice operates is important. Michael Beirut annually sets his Yale Graphic Design students the challenge to produce and document the same task for a hundred days "Everyone starts with high hopes. But things get repetitive by day ten. By day twenty, no matter what you've decided to do, it feels like you've been doing it forever." Forever isn't such a bad thing and stress testing an idea over an extended period of iterations and versions reveals an incredible number of things. Forcing yourself to make time to make work into your daily life feels like a daunting challenge at times. Working without a studio feels like working without permission, but if you expose yourself to a daily practice, things start to happen. It might sound like a prison sentence, but it's actually very liberating. Once you start to find time in everyday to make something a new set of challenges open up; the classic how/what to represent Gerhard Richter type question is joined by something even more daunting, the possibility to make something everyday for the rest of your life, the endlessness of it all takes your breath away. You could literally do anything.

A famous example of pushing a simple idea to its limits is Noah Kalina's "Everyday" project, in which the artist takes a compositionally similar photograph of himself everyday and collages the resulting images into video that has, for the last 12 years, documented the faint nuances of a man aging. Kalina's videos and photographs are epic in their ambition and scope but even the most banal of daily projects read as part of a larger whole showcase how creativity and inspiration can be harvested from incredibly unlikely sources.

"We need to be in the open mode when pondering a problem — but! — once we come up with a solution, we must then switch to the closed mode to implement it. Because once we've made a decision, we are efficient only if we go through with it decisively, undistracted by doubts about its correctness." John Cleese.

Daily practice relies on devices like digital cameras and computers to make work in the same way the Impressionists exploited the portable qualities of tubed oil paint, the act of making art becomes free of previous constraints and expectations. The iPhone as portable studio, is the oil paint of the 21st century. It provides anyone the opportunity to make, document and share your work from anywhere.

Entering "365 Project" into Google reveals that seemingly everyone has some sort of daily practice project going on. I think any engagement with a making practice is a good one, but I also believe that as with many things it is important to recognise the journey as more important than the outcome. When you reach the end, what comes next? What if the end wasn't what you really wanted? Sometimes being an artist feels like having the idea - versus the ability to implement it. Daily Practice allows an amount of time, space and attention to chip away at the big ideas. Even being sat on the bus with a sketchbook on your lap it is impossible to not develop and evolve your work.

I don't make money. I make.

A view from inside a camera



Keith Graham

There is at least one good reason for keeping our darkroom at Southgate School - the revolving door doubles as a walk-in camera obscura. The image our A level students see as they stand inside the camera should be an unremarkable view of the canteen framed by windows. But what they see genuinely startles them. They are impressed by the fact that this image appears naturally and with no apparent 'technology' in sight. The impulse to reach out and touch the light is strong and as the projection wraps itself around their fingers, the distorting image reminds them just how illusive the photographic image is and just what a revelation the 'fixing' of the image must have been for the early pioneers. They recognise the image on the wall but there is a sense that this image is not the same as the one that exists outside the camera. The idea that this inverted colour vignette, albeit similar, is not the same as the image outside, circulates. This image is a strange fragment.

And something else with potency takes place at this point - the realisation that the image inside the camera may well be surreal but it is 'natural' and is indisputably connected to the image of the world outside. The feeling of truth is palpable. And when the silence is broken by one of the insiders asking an outsider to step into the picture, the laughter heard is not just because the insiders recognise the outsiders waving at them but because a tension is released. The image on the wall somehow affirms to the insiders the presence of the world outside. Even though they know their peers have not really squeezed through a hole the size of a needle, something magical has. They know that the world outside is now existing alongside the one they are witnessing and they scrutinise the image as though they are viewing it from a CCTV camera. The sudden feeling of a dual reality is a shock and there is a new sense that photography is not simply the capturing of fragmentary moments. Photography conjures a world of its own which is unmistakably linked to the outside. As they step out from the camera and take a reassuring glance at the canteen themselves they know that the image they leave behind in the camera is a peculiar one. Amongst affirming the presence of things, this other reality also affirms the presence of people.

They are reminded that they are not alone. This particular idea has become a highly motivating force for many of our A level students to take and make photographs.

So, it is not surprising that portraiture is a favoured subject for our students. The tendency to see photography as a means to confirm the presence of the photographer and the photographed has an appeal in much the same way as social networking through the internet. To photograph your friends confirms that you have friends and affirms the group of friends you identify with. The very social nature of photographing each other is appealing for many. To photograph is to create an event, and the event, not just the photographing is appealing too. To photograph in school is to declare an allegiance to a social group whose identities have shared characteristics and whose culture is shared. When a class bonds well, that sense of shared identity emerges with everyone willing to pose. Once the bonds are secure, our students play with possible and mythical identities. The most confident explore the theatrical, the dressing up, the acting and re-enacting and instinctively move to using photography as a means to explore narrative. Within the safety of friends, they explore and test out stories and develop personas. They speculate on possible identities and lifestyles, knowing that they are 'just playing' but at the same time becoming aware that they are developing an understanding of the photographer and the photographed.

One of the benefits of this trend is that it does not take long before our students see the parallel between their narratives and those used in advertising. The mechanism which is used to persuade us to buy into mythical, unobtainable lifestyles is understood by our students without much persuasion needed from their teachers. The idea that photography is used, on an industrial scale, not just to sell products and services but to influence how consumers define their own identity, lifestyle and aspirations is more challenging for them to accept. But when our students are reminded of their choice of models (often subconscious) and how their images transform their subjects into mythical beings, then, they begin to appreciate the effect of photography within advertising.

A recent visit to see David LaChapelle's Earth laughs in flowers exhibition at the Robilant and Veona gallery gave our students the opportunity to debate truthfulness in photographic images. It became the major talking point for us. Were the prints created from single images or photomontages? (The gallery could not clarify here.) Were the effects mainly due to the painstaking setting up of each shoot or due to meticulous digital editing? Were they derivative or inventive? They images were masquerading on many levels and were not going to give away their truths easily. What was undeniable was the fact that these carefully lit images were not just borrowing from a past oil painting genre but were also exhibited in a salon. They were intended to be experienced as unique art objects. As some of our students fretted over whether or not they would be allowed to take photos of the photos, others pondered over the status of a photograph when it takes on this form. It is true that digital technology now makes meticulous detailing readily accessible and the photographic image can be worked over in much the same manner as a virtuoso oil painting. Presenting photography as high resolution images, like a unique painting, has its advantages. It is a solution to the issue of copyright on the internet. The exhibiting of photographs as objects with the specific intention of being experienced as such makes replication difficult. Like the music industry, where live performances provide audiences with a sensory experience that the internet cannot match, photographs as objects look set to survive even if they are marginalised in our screen pervasive society.

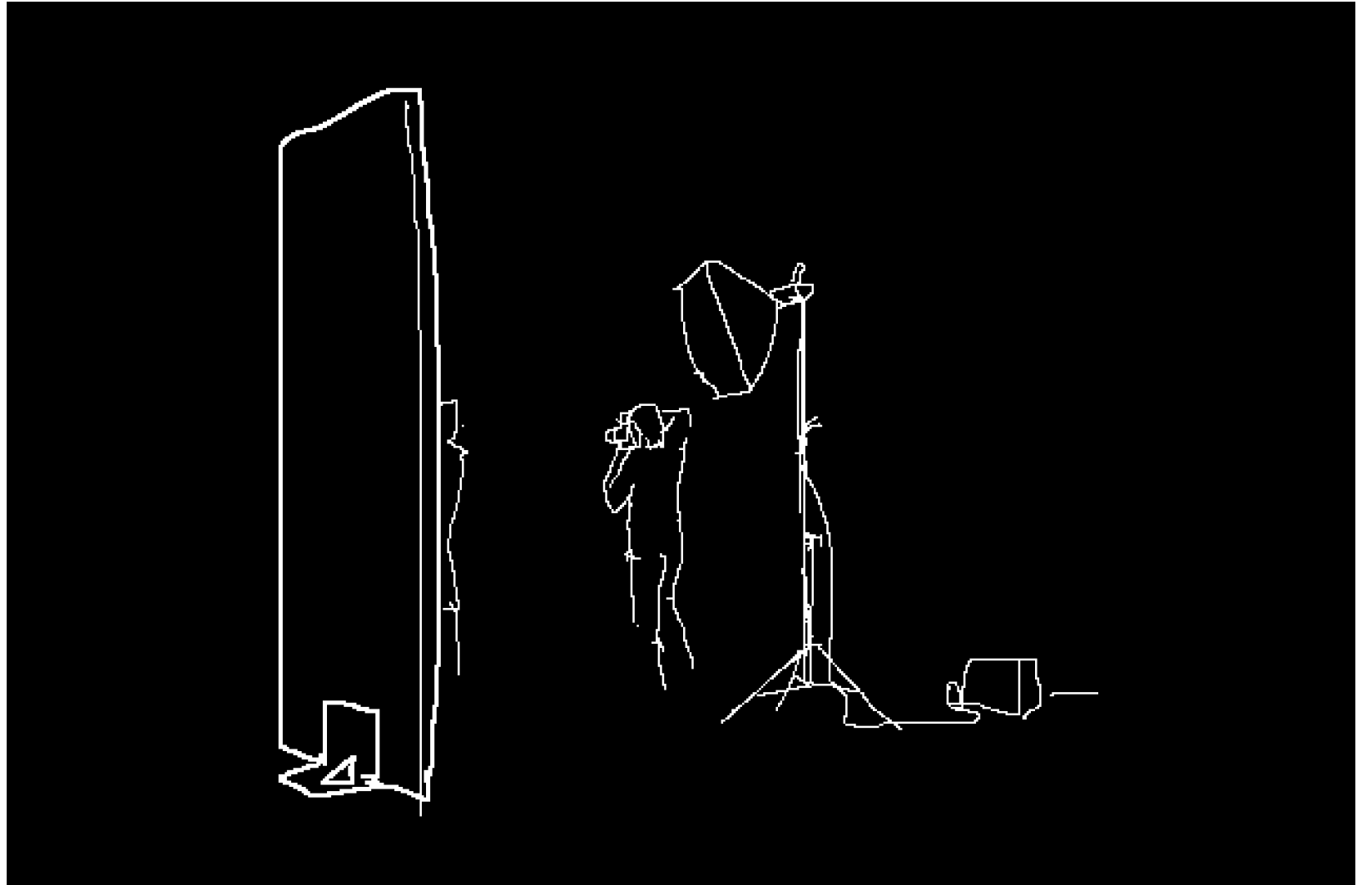
One further question arose before we left the gallery: was LaChapelle's work rooted in Modernism or the classicism of Vanitas? At Southgate, we are frustratingly still rooted in the mainstream of modernist tradition. It is agonising as it is very much a style choice for our students, rather than a philosophy. They readily accept the visual grammar of unified asymmetrical compositions, bold graphic shapes, contrast, dynamism and spontaneity. But they don't believe their work could or even should be a vehicle for social change. Whilst they adopt the style, they do not buy into its philosophy. They believe that their work has the power to affect in a small ephemeral way but they don't think art ever really changes anything. They are not cynical they just do

not think that there is enough evidence. The media has declared that children now are less likely to be more socially mobile than their parents. So, it is not surprising that our students doubt the social effectiveness of the modernist vision. Maybe they are wise to the vanity of being idealistic.

We left Dover Street and rounded the corner into Piccadilly and experienced an unplanned gallery space selling a symbol of industrial modernism - a performance car. It provided further proof that the modernist style was still used to sell ideas of luxury to those who can afford it. To the whimsical question of whether we should buy a LaChapelle or the car the response was muted once they calculated that the debt they are likely to stack up if they complete a first degree is approximately equal the price of either the car or a LaChapelle. They were not even slightly convinced with the idea that they might consider taking a loan to buy the car or a LaChapelle as though purchasing either might prove to be a sound investment. (I wonder if any student that I have taught or will teach will return one day having become very successful art dealer rather than an art maker.)

Our students are living in remarkable times but the tools of the modernist tradition do not feel wholly appropriate now. If we are to nurture our students to see in a way that is dominated by modernist sensibilities then we really are living through a period of austerity. As the culture of individualism within the age of anxiety still has a strong influence on their attitudes there is still some way to go before the idea that art for the common good has virtue and is worthwhile pursuing. Our challenge at Southgate is to equip our students with the confidence and conviction to see through the lens in ways that express remarkable truths about life now in ways that are remarkable to us.

Simon Faithfull



Henry Ward

As part of the North London Cultural Consortium organised by the Camden Arts Centre, the artist Simon Faithfull has produced a limited edition publication, in the style of the Wainwright Guides of the Lake District. This personal and esoteric guide to King's Cross includes text and drawings, made either on a Palm Pilot or, more recently, an iPhone.

One rainy Sunday afternoon I accompanied Simon as he led an artist's walk, following the guide, around King's Cross. Simon started drawing with a Palm Pilot because "it was a practical way of making quick proposals. The clumsy crudeness of the pixelated line is something I enjoy. It allows me to work towards the kind of drawing that I admire - an economy of line". Switching to the iPhone has meant that Simon now chooses to make drawings on a device which could also be used, as it is conventionally by most people, to take photographs. Whilst on the walk, Simon explained that he is interested in this decision to make a drawing, rather than take a photograph. He went on to question the assumption that we might want to 'add' photos in the context of social media and so on, but that he wanted to 'add' drawings. In the spirit of this he has now created an app, 'Simon Faithfull's Limbo'. Once acquired the app allows you to see the drawings that Simon has made, and to instantly receive drawings as he makes them. You can also find out how close you are to drawings that he has made using GPS. Simon explained that he is trying, in vain, to map the world through his drawings.

Simon Faithfull's Limbo is available on iTunes.

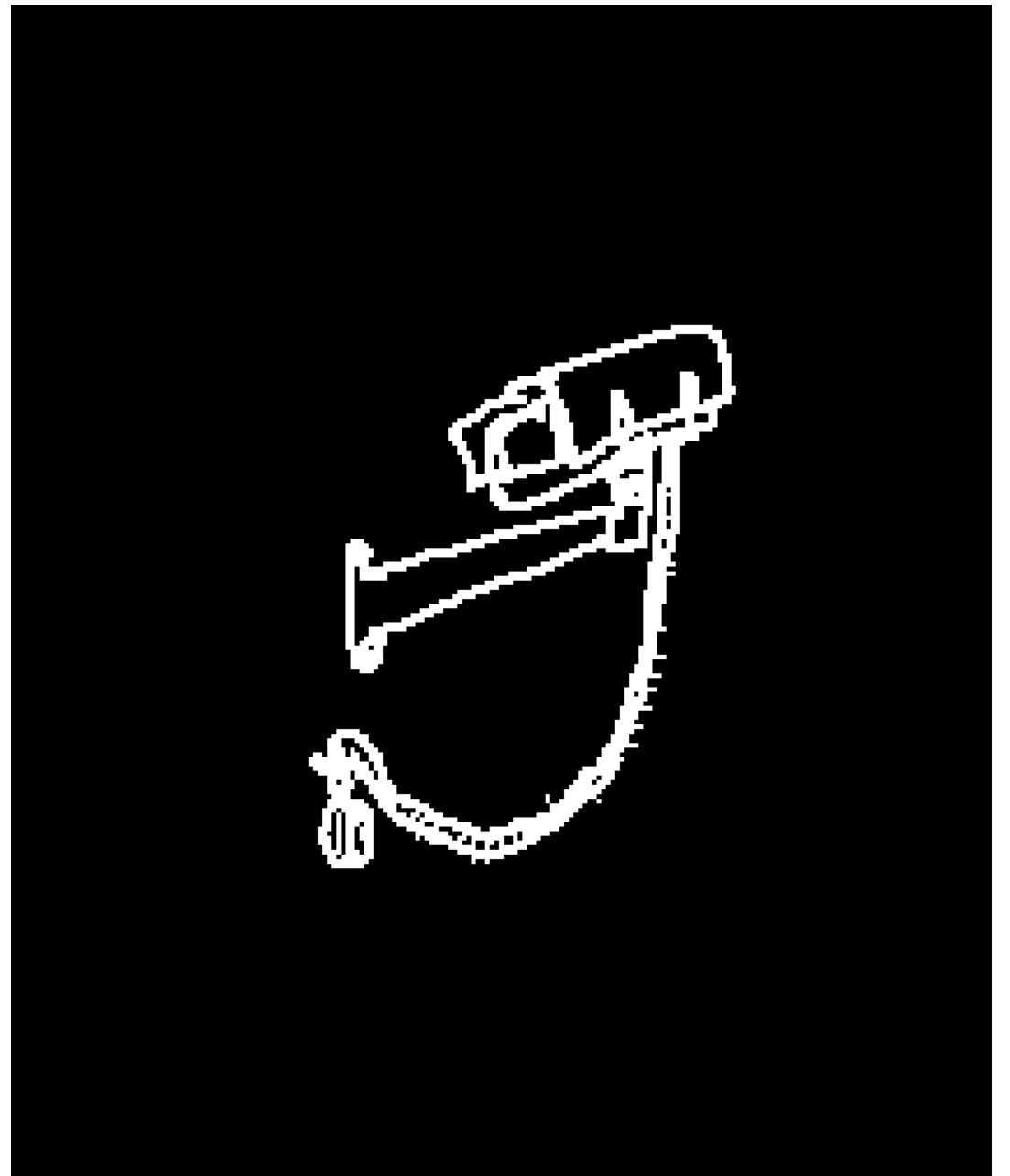




Image by Tamsin Wildy