

Revival 2010 – The journey so far

In its third year, *Revival* - a contemporary craft workshop scheme funded by the Crafts Council and delivered by ReachOutRCA, the Royal College of Art's lively outreach team – has grown in ambition yet again. This year, pupils from the four participating London schools, each working with a recent graduate from the RCA's textiles, ceramics, metalwork and glass courses, will exhibit their work at the college's Hockney Gallery on 29th March 2010.

It's a great opportunity to profile the ingenuity of our next generation of creative professionals, and also to challenge and develop that of emergent young makers embarking on 'portfolio' careers in craft. But perhaps the most interesting contribution to current discussions on the value of learning through making, is what happens between the two roles: the reciprocal impact of maker on learner, and the blurring of the return on this relationship. With this in mind, we've asked the four graduates to reflect on their experience at the mid-point of their school interventions.

Here is what they said:

Ella Robinson –Textiles, Cumberland School

I didn't have any expectations about Revival before it began, I just hoped that the pupils would find my workshops interesting and stimulating, a bit of a different way of thinking



A *Revival* workshop in Metalwork with Year 9 pupils from Forest Hill School, led by Caren Hartley © Caren Hartley 2010

and a varied approach from what they are taught at school. As I don't draw it was always going to be interesting as to how the students reacted to my practice, but they have all embraced it, not one has been put off.

When I found out that the majority of students would be boys I was a little anxious, as I am the Textiles corner of Revival, but I have been highly impressed by the way in which all of the students have undertaken the tasks in hand. I know that the pupils have enjoyed the freedom of being a little less restricted in the classroom and have enjoyed working with the fabric, ribbon, scoobies, embroidery thread and wood that the tasks have introduced to them. They also seemed to particularly enjoy working with each other on a quick group wrapping task where they had to link 2 stools together in five minutes with as much fabric as possible.



A Revival workshop in Textiles with Year 10 GCSE pupils from Cumberland School, led by Ella Robinson © Ella Robinson 2010

I am constantly impressed with the way they take a task and make it their own, taking my simple ideas and adding their own individual twists, to produce some beautiful and thoughtful results. They are a really determined class and are always challenging themselves to produce high quality results, being very appreciative of the new materials that have been provided for them. I love seeing the pupils find enjoyment in methods that are inspired by my practice, and seeing the depth and breath of ideas generated by them. It really has been a riot of colour in the classroom!

www.ellarobinson.com

Jo Ayre – Ceramics, Blanche Neville School for Deaf Children

My priority, when planning the sessions, has been to give the pupils an opportunity to enjoy the experience of making. Early on I decided that I would like the project to focus on the process of making ceramics, using a variety of techniques. Each session has been planned with various making activities that the pupils try during the session. As the project progresses there will be more opportunity for decision making, however, I believe the strength of this project lies in giving the pupils the freedom to interact with the material without worrying about a final outcome. As the pupils have varying levels of hearing, it has been essential that I communicate in a concise and straightforward manner. This has provided a challenge (there's no room for waffling!) but has also been quite liberating as it means demonstrating and learning through making have been at the heart of each session.

The first two sessions have been approached by the pupils with enthusiasm and inquisitiveness. The strangeness of making without a preconceived outcome has been

taken on by the pupils, with only a few mentions of “What are we making?” One of the best moments so far has been a frantic half hour of timed mark-making exercises, complete with flashing lights to signal the change of technique, where the pupils seemed to fully immerse themselves in the task at hand.

To be involved with the Revival project, and particularly with the pupils and staff at Blanche Nevile School, has been an inspiring privilege. The project has increased my confidence in delivering workshops that are focused on the pleasure, challenge and physicality of making. Their industriousness and energy has been an inspiration, and the project has provided a renewed stimulus in my own practice. I am excited to see how the pupils’ work develops, and how they respond to the opportunity of exhibiting their work. I believe that their work will reflect the vitality invested in their making and will demonstrate an original response to the medium of ceramics. Join us at the exhibition to find out!

www.makersconnect.com/joanneayre/

Purnima Patel – Glass, Ashcroft Technology College

My project with the students was all about looking at Patterns. The aim was to look closely at Texture, colour, pattern repeats, and materials and make sketches from pictures provided and translate them into glass.

The students were encouraged to look at the handling collection, Cactus Trolley Clock and Textiles box were perfect examples of how pattern is used in different ways. It was great for the students to look at these and feel the textures and get up and close to the objects. Some of the questions they were asked to consider were:

- Why they like /dislike them,*
- Shapes of patterns,*
- Colours,*
- How the pattern is used,*
- Are there any pattern repeats and/ or symmetry etc.*

They were then asked to create an artistic response from the pieces and pictures provided.

www.purnimapatel.com

Caren Hartley – Metalwork, Forest Hill School

Revival is proving to be a great experience, as well as enjoyable! I am teaching a group of year 9 boys at Forest Hill School, all of who are, to my surprise (and great relief), well behaved, polite and hard working!

The project that I have chosen ‘For What its Worth’ is loosely based around the concept of Value. This is a theme that is important in my own work and so I have taken this opportunity to introduce a conceptual aspect to the project, as this is something which they perhaps haven’t experience in relation to their Art Lessons in the past. The students have really taken on board the idea of ‘value’ and what it can mean and during the group discussions came up with some surprisingly sensitive answers.

During the project we have also been looking at 3D processes and developing ideas through making rather than designing, or Haptic Learning, another area that is key to my own practice. The students have become really engaged with the making – even more than I had hoped, and hence the classes have seem really jam packed.

Overall the workshops are going really well, and the boys are getting really excited about making – which is great – the main thing I'll need to remember for next time is too keep an eye on the clock!

www.carenhartley.wordpress.com

If a summary can be drawn from these four quite distinct practice-led approaches, then, it is the importance that *Revival* seems to reveal to the creative educator about approaching teaching the way they approach making: embracing the risks, and sensitive to opportunities offered forth by a particular set of circumstances. The gap between 'maker' and 'learner' appears to be occupied by something the *Revival* artists refer to as "surprising" and "an inspiring privilege" – qualities evocative of the most rewarding creative journey.

Revival - background information:

Revival was initially piloted in 2008 in three London academies, led by ReachOutRCA in partnership with the Crafts Council and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

Revival Aims

- *Raise pupil aspirations and making/thinking abilities*
- *Bring contemporary practitioners into the classroom*
- *Improve the profile of the applied arts within schools*
- *Provide inspiration and practical strategies for teachers to take forward*
- *Develop successful models of collaboration between arts organisations and schools*

About ReachOutRCA

ReachOutRCA deliver the Royal College of Art's outreach programme in which students and alumni lead an exciting programme of art and design projects with state secondary school pupils. Their main focus is to engage pupils who have potential in art of design but may face barriers in taking it to a higher level due to personal, social or cultural factors.

www.craftscouncil.org.uk
www.rca.ac.uk/reachout



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