

watch this space

Craft and design at KS3

Shire Hall Gallery & Friary School Lichfield

by Laura Hilton, Audience Development Officer, Heritage & Arts



Introduction

The Shire Hall Gallery is an exciting and innovative contemporary visual art gallery based in the centre of Stafford. The Gallery hosts a diverse programme of lively and family friendly temporary art and craft exhibitions throughout the year. Every spring and every autumn, the Gallery offers creative packages to schools in the region giving pupils the opportunity to engage in practical art sessions with professional artists. However, these sessions normally focus on Key Stages 1 and 2, providing opportunities for primary schools and previous attempts to engage secondary schools have met with varying levels of success.

The aims of this project were to:

- Develop links between the Shire Hall Gallery and the Friary School, Lichfield - a school outside the Gallery's normal catchment area.
- Strengthen the Gallery's understanding of the needs of Secondary level teachers with a view to developing more educational opportunities for Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Increase opportunities for the school to exhibit their own work in the future – or contribute toward Gallery exhibitions
- Encourage more pupils (particularly boys) to take art as a GCSE/BTEC and consider it as a career option through the provision of artist led workshops and direct experience with exciting materials.
- Increase access by members of the public to work by pupils from Staffordshire school
- Raise the profile of creative collaborations and encourage other schools in the area to get involved in partnership working
- Encourage pupils to visit the Gallery in their own time as a social activity with friends or family

Step 1: Creating Art



As part of their project on insects, eleven Year 8 pupils of varying abilities were selected to attend a glass casting workshop at the Arts Faculty in the University of Wolverhampton on 25th November 2010. Pupils at the Friary School have previous experience with glass fusing and slumping but a key aim of the project was to find a method of engaging boys due to make their subject selections and raise their level of interest in art through a dynamic first hand artistic practice.

In preparation for their visit, pupils researched famous glass artists and glass casting techniques to enable them to translate clay maquettes which they had created from their own observational drawings into sand moulds for the molten glass. Pupils had previously worked in the classroom to draw insects from life, create felt or recycled tin insects inspired by Val Hunt and develop their own scrapbooks filled with project resources.



"I really enjoyed the experience of the felt making class which was held by Miss Johnson in our Art classroom. The work we made was butterflies made out of fluffy felt material.

*The making process was complicated because there was lots of things to remember, also it was tricky because there was loads of materials to use. Overall I enjoyed it."***Matilda**

The workshop provided pupils with their first taste of University life as a tour from Stuart Garfoot, Senior Lecturer in Glass, gave them the opportunity to

explore student workspace and see working drawings, samples, 3D models and works in progress as well as completed pieces on display. Working in the Hot Shop with Stuart Garfoot and Simon Eccles (Senior Glass Technician), pupils observed glass blowing and casting demonstrations before beginning to construct their own moulds.

In preparation for the workshop, pupils had collected natural and manmade objects which they felt would make strong impressions in the sand and could be used to recreate the characteristics of their chosen insects. Creating the moulds presented a steep learning curve as the sand (coarse grains with a natural clay coating) was an entirely new material to work with and the properties of the glass had to be taken into consideration as thin or weak spots would cool too quickly causing the work to crack. Pupils also discovered that they could add coloured rods, powders or grits to their design as well as copper sheet or wire so had to make decisions about colour and design without prior knowledge about the ways the colours could change during the pouring process. Several pupils also experimented with adding steel screws, nails and washers to their designs as a method of leaving impressions in the finished piece.



Although some problems were encountered during the pouring process due to higher than expected moisture levels in the sand, eleven pieces of final work were produced for display.

"I want to be a glass blower when I get a job!"

"I am definitely going to carry on with art for my GCSEs."

"I want to go to University when I finish school."

"I thought it was amazing. I didn't think you could do glass in art."

Pupil comments made during the visit

"We went to a glass workshop at the University in Wolverhampton and were shown around the arts corridor until we got to the glass making room. When we got there it was really hot. The man was kind and showed us some examples of glasswork and they were amazing because they looked so hard to make. When we did one everyone found it difficult but the whole experience was brilliant and I loved every bit."

Jack

"I really enjoyed the glass casting trip to Wolverhampton University. I didn't know what to expect. The men working there were really nice and taught us

how to do it really well. I also enjoyed making the moulds in the sand. There were a lot of good objects to use in the mould. It was good how we could watch the glass being poured up close."

Sarah

"I made a glass wasp and it was really fun making it!"

Holly



"We went to the University to experience a workshop with glass casting. It was really fun designing the glass mould in a big pot of clay. We designed the bug then added coloured powder and pellets to add the colour effect.

I think the day went really well and was so fun! The best bit was when the glass was poured in off a steel pole! I loved seeing the orange glass. If I had the chance I would do it all again!"

Emma

"I liked and enjoyed the glass casting. I think was really hot in the room where you made the glass and I was proud at what I made in the sand.

When the man blew a massive bubble through a tube and it banged it was funny!"

James



Step 2: Visiting the Gallery

On 7th December 2010, teacher Sue Crudginton brought Year 8 pupils on a visit to the Shire Hall Gallery to view a fine art exhibition by the artist Rob Ryan. The exhibition featured intricate large scale papercuts, screen prints, illustrations, ceramics and giftware all decorated in Ryan's trademark style. The opportunity to view original work by a high profile artist provided inspiration for the classroom. Activities related to the exhibition were developed by Sue Crudginton and staff at The Friary School, creating a set of new resources available to other schools planning to visit the show and view the work.

During the visit, pupils had a talk from Laura Hilton, Audience Development Officer, about curating exhibitions and were shown the gallery space which was to host an exhibition of their own work in 2011. The class was challenged to think about the ways they would like their work to be displayed and what sort of interpretation should be placed around it so they could prepare and select the work that they would like to have included in the show, create their own captions and panel text and make decisions about layout and display.



Pupils were given time to explore the Gallery's current exhibition, 'Your job is to take this world apart and put it back together again... But even better!!!' by internationally acclaimed artist Rob Ryan. Consisting of large scale papercuts, prints, book illustrations, newly commissioned ceramics and giftware, the show combined contemporary art with commercial design giving pupils an opportunity to think about the ways in which art could be adapted and used for a variety of purposes. Pupils watched a timelapse video showing the creation of a papercut, made quick silhouette sketches based on the works on show and had a go at creating their own papercuts using coloured sugar paper which they took back to school to develop further.

Pupils also participated in a workshop based on 'Pheremone' by Christopher Marley – a series of arrangements of exotic insect bodies which create striking patterns and assemblages. Developing their own paper variations of Marley's work by cutting and pasting photographs of insects to form visually interesting compositions, pupils were encouraged to think about shape, patterns and colour. Pupils thought about the project creatively, approaching it from a variety of angles: layering insect images on top of one another,

creating mandalas and slicing the prints into lengths to create abstract collages. Pupils were encouraged to think about how they could create the same effects by copying, resizing and repeating their own chalk and charcoal drawings.



The challenge of creating a one off workshop catering specifically for the requirements of a themed school project required a different way of working for Jackie Bradbury, the Outreach and Education Co-ordinator. Jackie normally builds workshop opportunities with strong curriculum ties around the work of exhibiting artists. Finding a relevant link between a current class project and Gallery exhibition was a new experience and required skill development, but it is something which may be sustainable and the team are now looking into the creation of new opportunities for working with Staffordshire schools.

Student comments made during the visit

"It was really good. It was really fun."

It was fantastic – I enjoyed looking at the artist's work."

"I enjoyed working in the Gallery because I was able to see real art work."

"It was good to visit a gallery – I've never been to one before."

"I liked the Shire Hall Gallery because all the people were kind and I was thankful to the teachers for letting me come. I loved all the artwork, it was really unusual and fascinating."

Kyle

"When we went to Shire Hall, and saw some of Rob Ryan's work, Shire Hall was an amazing trip. We learnt to sketch over peoples work and make collage of bugs. I did mine as a spider web. I learnt how to a portrait of a part of Shire Hall and I thought Shire Hall was amazing and a unique trip to experience all I could say is it was amazing and fantastic."

Melissa

"In Shire Hall gallery we saw and learnt about bugs and did a piece of collage out of pictures of bugs. It was really fun and I hope we can go again. Thanks for a really good time."

Carly-Anne

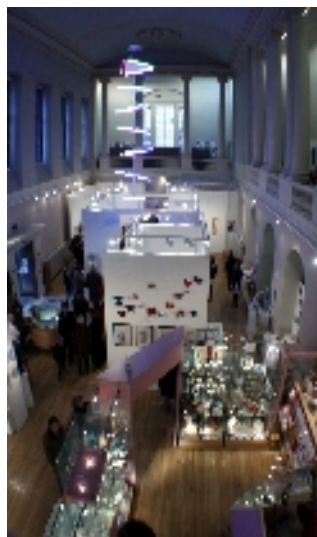
“When we got there it was big and had lots of painting and ornaments. I wanted to have them all. They had lots of texture and features and when you look at artwork it kind of tells a story about what’s happening. To sum up, it was the best gallery ever.”

Jayde

“At Shire Hall gallery it was really fun and I did two workshops. The first workshop I did was downstairs in the gallery drawing Rob Ryan’s artwork, as an extension task we took a look at the shapes of the display cabinets and drew them. For the second workshop we went upstairs and we did a collage workshop with Laura. That was quite fun and we had to take our time on it. My opinion is that it was very good.”

Olivia

Step 3: Curating an Exhibition



Alongside Kaleidoscope, an exhibition of highly commended artwork created by pupils aged fourteen to sixteen from Staffordshire LA schools, pupils from Year 8 at the Friary school, were allocated an area of gallery space to showcase the results of their insect project. This exhibition ran from 15 January to 27 February 2011 with a launch event on Saturday 15th January 2011 attended by representatives from all participating schools, along with pupils and their families and friends. The exhibition was opened by Councillor Liz Staples and attracted approximately 14,000 visitors.

The exhibition included observational drawings, 3-Dimensional work including glass casts and recycled metal insects, felt pieces, photographs of work in progress and a video documenting the project along with statements from pupils about their work and experiences.

Outcomes for the School

- Annual visits by Year 8 pupils to the Shire Hall Gallery
- Further experimentation with glass at the Friary School
- An opportunity for the Friary’s GTP student teacher to lead on a project with Year 8 pupils and gain direct experience of partnership working and organising school visits

- Work by Year 8 pupils accessible to 14,000 members of the public and pupils from 10 local schools participating in the Kaleidoscope workshop programme.

Outcomes for the Gallery

- Annual visits by Year 8 pupils to the Shire Hall Gallery
- Development of the schools programme offered by the Gallery through working to find links between school projects and current exhibitions and devising one-off in-house workshops based on links between themes, techniques and style.
- New partnership links established with a school outside the Gallery's regular catchment area
- New partnership links established with the Arts Faculty at Wolverhampton University



“The WTS7 programme provided a broader experience for the students with the additional opportunity to work in a university and a gallery rather than just the school based lessons. The visit to the University ‘Hot Shop’ was an amazing experience for the students and staff alike and resulted in the students watching their designs cast in glass.

The project was excellent, very effective and has laid down the basis for further visits in the future.



This was a very mixed group of students, some of whom had never visited a gallery before; none had been to a university and many had never been out of their home town. The experience has been monumental for them and has added to the breadth of educational experiences the students have had access to. Hopefully more students will be encouraged to take Art & Design in some form at KS 4 and 5 and then on to a career within the field.

Watch this Space has delivered quality CPD both for myself and my GTP student. I gleaned a great deal from the experience that will help with further programmes of study and visits in the future and has helped form new and hopefully long lasting relationships with Shire Hall Gallery and staff. My GTP student was introduced to a complex and multi-layered programme of study that included a great deal of liaison work, planning sessions and organisational skills. This has enriched her understanding of working with other agencies, what can be gained by the interaction between school and gallery/museum and how important networking can be for the provision of Art & Design education in a school.”

**Sue Crudgington, Director of Art and Design
The Friary School, Lichfield**