

WHY TEACH THIS?

The stumbling block for many otherwise **talented** and creative young people can often be their lack of confidence when stepping out of the **safe boundaries** of realistic depiction, into the relatively uncharted waters of abstraction and **conceptual ideas**. They often resemble novice skaters hanging on to the side of the rink – but helping them let go and dare to glide can result in some of the most **powerful moments** you experience as a teacher.

For all but the most confident young artists, taking those first steps into abstraction can be a challenging and sometime uncomfortable experience. Young people can be conservative and resistant to change. Their relatively limited life experiences have not yet taught them the benefits of risk taking in the hope of finding new knowledge.

Proficient students relish the opportunity to engage in a piece of art that reflects the realism of the subject. Start to mention abstraction and they will often become fearful and concerned about how to approach it. This lesson is an endeavour to help students embrace more sophisticated artistic concepts more easily and in such a way that they understand that they can regularly use this as a problem solving tool to further their own development.

ABSTRACT VALUES

YOUR STUDENTS WILL BE AMAZED AT WHAT THEY ARE ABLE TO ACHIEVE BY THE END OF THIS INSPIRING AND FAST-PACED LESSON FROM **CAROLINE SAUNDERS...**



+KEY RESOURCE

Creating sketchbooks to record students' observations is listed on the new Art and Design National Curriculum. Students will use these sketchbooks to review and revisit their ideas, improving their mastery of Art and Design techniques. The beautiful collection of high quality sketchbooks from Pisces Art will inspire any artist. With collections made in the UK – some by hand – the expansive range from Pisces is designed to encourage experimentation and creativity. A personalised gold blocking service is also available on many sketchbooks, allowing your school the opportunity to raise its profile whilst giving that perfect finishing touch.

For more information visit www.piscesart.co.uk or call 08442 570 390.



STARTER ACTIVITY

At Hazelwick we encourage all of our students to be creative in all aspects of their learning and the objective of this lesson is how to transform any given subject easily and effectively into a piece of highly individual, meaningful and imaginative art.

Students should start the session by grading themselves from 1 to 10 on their confidence in being able to produce a successful piece of abstract work in a single lesson. This could be using a mini whiteboard or sheet of card with a confidence line on it, where they mark their own name. For groups who are very used to sharing this self-reflection they could form a continuum line across the classroom or post their name on a sticky note on a shared class confidence line.

Responding to sensory stimulus

Using a range of musical and visual stimuli students are asked to respond using marks in a variety of media. This might typically start with nothing more than a few pastel lines scribbled out in response to some gentle piano music or words of poetry.

The idea is to quickly, but smoothly, build up the students' repertoire of creative responses, at the same time rapidly increasing their confidence with the concept.

As marks become bigger, braver and brighter, tools should be swapped – even resorting to painting with hands – and of course the intensity of the stimulus used should be cranked up, moving from Bach to Deep Purple to the Ride of Valkyries, for example.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

Now that the students are warmed up they will be growing in confidence to tackle the more advanced and demanding tasks given to them.

Start gently! From any visual starting point students should have five minutes to produce a pencil or graphite representation of the whole object or a selected section from a group of objects.

So far so good, but the students are not, as yet, moving away from their comfort zones.

Next, the students are given a piece of modelling wire and a further five minutes to translate their drawing into a 3D wire model. Internet timers and exaggerated countdowns help to increase the sense of anticipation and excitement, not to mention the increasing pace of their creative flow.

The lesson rapidly progresses with students tackling ever more challenging tasks. They convert their model into a newspaper and charcoal collage, then into a larger scale black and white painting using anything except a brush, using a viewfinder to select a visually interesting area to expand even more, introducing colour and more media... the list goes on.



At the same time the restriction of time helps to keep up the pace of the lesson, increases the sense of urgency and focus and eliminates indecision. We made full use of devices, such as iPad cameras, whiteboards and visualisers, to share examples and demonstrate techniques without interrupting individual creative focus. Students responded exceptionally well to the array of different tools and techniques in the lesson – engagement and challenge were high throughout.

The personal progress scale was frequently referred to – students were regularly asked to re-assess their confidence and ability on the scale of 1-10 and there was clear evidence of progress across the work of all those involved.

INFORMATION CORNER

ABOUT OUR EXPERT



Caroline Saunders initially worked as a professional textile designer. Now, as leader for art at Hazelwick School in Crawley, she thrives on the challenge of enabling students to succeed in her chosen field.

FEEDBACK AND DEVELOPMENT

The group came together at the end of the lesson to discuss their experiences and outcomes. They were all surprised at the level at which they had achieved a task they initially thought was beyond them.

In addition, Apps such as Screen Chomp allow for extensive and valuable feedback opportunities, recording the work being discussed as a group and comments written alongside that could be referred back to at any time by the student concerned. Students refer retrospectively to this particular lesson as having been pivotal in the development of both their practical skills and confidence to experiment with the unknown.