

Art Teachers' Newsletter

Summer 2012

from the Oxford University Museums

'OAT So Simple'

See inside for reports on OAT events

The Mother of Invention

2012 is the third year in which Foundation Art students at Oxford Brookes have worked with staff and collections at the Pitt Rivers Museum. However, it is the first year in which they have additionally collaborated with the Museum of the History of Science - an inspired decision as both collections suit their theme admirably. Indeed, 'Necessity is the Mother of Invention' could describe the philosophy behind both Museums, many of the objects on display being the product of human problem-solving and ingenuity, such as 'lighting and shelter' as in the Pitt Rivers or 'navigation and calculation' as in the Museum of the History of Science.



As always, the students' work was exciting and innovative, ranging from winches and pulleys to drawing machines and even a studded figure of Mother Earth. Thanks to course leader Myfanwy Jones who organised the project, and we look forward to working together again next year.

Heist 'Thomas Crown meets Oceans 11'

Recent high profile museum robberies added an air of excitement to the 'Heist' workshop at the Ashmolean. A group of budding cartoonists were thrilled to be given a guided tour of the security systems in the galleries and across the roof of the Ashmolean by security chiefs Stuart Baker and Helder Sousa (*shown below*). Artists spent the first day planning their



heist, guided by cartoonist Adam Murphy, and then translated their storyboard into comic format. Ideas ranged from a flock of magpies trained to steal coins, to disabling the security systems with a series of false alarms. Everybody felt a tingle of excitement afterwards when security reviewed their heist.

An Introduction to Islam

Year 11 and Sixth Form art students from Abingdon School, Kingham Hill School and St Clare's School recently enjoyed a unique insight into Islamic religion and culture with staff from the Ashmolean. A series of 'Arabic Taster' sessions provided an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at rare 13th and 17th century Islamic artefacts followed by a practical workshop in which Rana Ibrahim, a trainee museum education officer, introduced students to the symbolism behind Islamic calligraphy. Inspired by a fascinating film of a master calligrapher at work, the students then had a go themselves before finishing their work back in the classroom.



Students from St Clare's School (*above right*) and the calligraphy they designed which is from the poem 'Stand out of Respect for your Teacher'.



OAT Network Meeting

A recipe for success: put a group of creative people together in one place and they begin to generate ideas. It's exactly what happened at the last OAT (Oxford Art Teach) network meeting. A larger-than-expected crowd of teachers, educators, lecturers and artists gathered at the Ashmolean, resulting in many animated conversations, as well as a real buzz in the atmosphere.

Rachel Payne leads the group discussion



John Childs, Head of Art at Chenderit School and past president of the NSEAD, reported on this year's NSEAD conference, elaborating in particular upon the challenges and opportunities facing art educators today. Rachel Payne from Oxford Brookes then led a group discussion on the forthcoming OAT conference, and Paul Williamson from Warriner School led a 'Bring and Share' session on KS3 Levelling.

The next event will be the OAT Conference on Saturday 23rd June. It will feature keynote speaker Ian Middleton, five practical breakout sessions and artists' updates. An event not to be missed! Full details to follow...

You too can be a great photographer

"If you offer this course again I'd really like to do it" was one of many positive responses from the twenty GCSE art and photography students who attended a recent Saturday workshop at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Using the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson as a starting point, the students took the theme of 'Pairings', first scouring the museums and photographing visitors, objects and architectural features in a variety of combinations, and then selecting their best pieces for a joint criticism.

The free workshop was led by photography tutor and trainee museum education officer, Scott Billings.



Three images on the theme of 'Pairings', taken by students attending the photography workshop.



“A close-run thing”

Public speaking is rarely a priority for Sixth Form art students. However, the crowd in the Ashmolean Education Studio on February 22nd would suggest that ‘Articulation’, a competition for which students prepare a short, illustrated talk on an art-related theme of their choice, is growing in popularity.

This year’s speakers were by turns informative, funny and spellbinding, expressing their personal responses to their chosen art works and thus bringing their topics to life.

Whilst the winner, Helen Femi Williams, related Grayson Perry’s ‘Our Mother’ to weekly shopping trips to Tesco with her own mother, runner-up Jo Thompson related Gustave Doré’s ‘Ninth Circle of Hell’ to a production of Macbeth that she had seen at Shakespeare’s Globe. Meanwhile, in her talk ‘What Lies Beneath’, the other runner-up, Antonia Dalivalle, revealed a fascination with peeling back the layers of paint to uncover the full story behind a Leonardo painting.

In his final summing-up, adjudicator Sir Mark Jones (*seen below with the speakers*) concluded: “It was a close-run thing ... only three final winners could be chosen, but in the end every entrant was a winner, gaining huge experience from the Articulation exercise.”



Making Magic

The University of Gloucester will this year hold its annual Cheltenham Illustration Awards at Oxford’s Pitt Rivers Museum.


Entries from both national and international illustrators will address the theme ‘Tales of Magical Objects’ – itself inspired by the upcoming ‘Small Blessings’ exhibition of amulets at the Pitt Rivers.

The entries will be displayed in the Museum until the end of November and will then form part of a touring exhibition to schools around the county. We hope students will feel inspired to visit the Pitt Rivers and produce and submit their own ‘Magical’ illustrations to be displayed virtually on the Artefact website.

A one-day symposium is also planned for October and will take place in the Museum of Natural History.

For further details, email: adrian.brooks@prm.ox.ac.uk or see the Pitt Rivers’ blog: pittrivers-amulets.blogspot.co.uk





OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY
AND
THE PITT RIVERS MUSEUM
WORKSHOP COURSES
2012

<p>The Art of Scientific Illustration 5th June 1 Day £12.50</p> <p>Bookbinding Taster Course 8th June Half Day £10.00</p>	<p>Linocut Illustration 7th June 1 Day £12.50</p> <p>Illustrated Book Course 30th July, 1st, 2nd, 3rd August 4 Days £25</p>
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A series of one- and four-day printmaking, bookbinding and scientific illustration workshops for GCSE and A Level art students will take place during the June half-term and Summer holidays in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the Pitt Rivers Museum.

Artists from the Flagstone Press will help students to boost their portfolios and learn new skills, which we hope they will then put into practice back at school. The workshops, which will be subsidised by the University, will run in conjunction with an exhibition of printing and sculpture at the Museum of Natural History and should not be missed.

To book a place, go to website: bit.ly/printworkshops
For further details, e-mail: info@flagstonepress.co.uk

Soapbox Thoughts from an art teacher

“In the act of drawing one is thinking, not just recording.”

There are many different ways of working to record artworks and objects in museums and galleries. Here are some suggestions for students working in sketchbooks and then taking ideas forward in the art studio at school:



- Follow the shape of the image with your finger in the air whilst drawing the shape onto the page with the other hand.
- Look just at the artwork, not the paper. *A Year 12 at work*
- Memory drawings: look for 5 minutes very carefully at an artwork and then turn away from it and draw it in your sketchbook without looking at it!
- Make a drawing in a continuous line (biro or fineliner) so that you can make a wire sculpture back in the art room.
- Draw the artwork from a partner’s description; this can lead to use of annotation of keywords.
- Collage: using coloured paper, cut out the basic shapes of an artwork, stick onto a piece of paper and then work on top in pencil, crayon etc.
- Work on at least one page without using any drawing materials at all: try tearing and collaging paper etc.
- Details: Select a small area of a painting or sculpture in order to examine closely and then draw the lines, brushstrokes, chisel marks, textures. Discuss the language of colour, shapes and marks and how they contribute to the whole.

Jane McDonald is Head of Art at St Helen and St Katharine, Abingdon

What's on in Schools

Abingdon School

Abingdon School will hold its 'Exhibition of GCSE and A2 work' on Thursday May 24, 6.00-8.30pm and colleagues from other schools are most welcome. Please e-mail James Nairne (james.nairne@abingdon.org.uk) if you intend to come. The exhibition is on show throughout the School's Art Centre. For directions, go to: www.abingdon.org.uk/maps



Magdalen College School, Oxford

Thursday May 10th (4 - 8pm)
Art Exhibition
Cowley Place, OX41DZ

Friday 29th June - Sat 7th July
Arts Festival
Cowley Place, OX41DZ

Parking available



The Cooper School, Bicester

The Cooper School, Bicester is launching its Art & Design Technology Exhibition on Thursday, 21st June 2012 from 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

Oxford Academy

Art and D&T Exhibition
on Wednesday 4 July 2012
at 3:30-6:00pm

The Oxford Academy, Sandy Lane
West, Littlemore, Oxford, OX4 6JZ



Radley College, Abingdon

An exhibition by the sculptor
Alison Berman in the New
Theatre Foyer, Radley College,
Abingdon, OX14 2HR.



20th April - 23rd May, 2012. Open daily 11am-4pm.

Didcot Sixth Form College

Didcot Sixth Form College, Fine Art and Applied Art courses, are exhibiting their work on the 3rd of July at Cornerstone Didcot, as part of the summer showcase. The event comprises the art exhibitions and Music and Dance in the auditorium, for which tickets are required (please contact Cornerstone box office). The art exhibitions have free entry and you are very welcome to come along, any time from 7:30pm that evening. We exhibit in the meeting rooms on levels 1 and 2.

The work is typically of a very high standard, showcasing a wide breadth of study and skill from all students.

The Fine Artists focus on aesthetic and concept and have produced some highly personal work which reflects their own artistic journeys. The Applied artists focus on audience and purpose, working on briefs to fulfil the needs of a client. This work is brave, responsive and visually engaging.

The Marlborough School, Woodstock

The Marlborough School Art Exhibition Private View is on Thursday June 28th and is called 'The Summer Exhibition'. It is open from 4pm to 6.30pm.

The Renaissance in Astronomy

A Special Exhibition at the Museum of the History of Science
to mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of Gerard Mercator

11 May to 9 September 2012

This summer, a stunning selection of 16th-century books, instruments and globes are brought together in a special exhibition.

The *Renaissance in Astronomy* tells the story of the developments in astronomical observation in the years leading up Copernicus' revolutionary proposition that the earth is in motion.

The exhibition marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of cartographer Gerard Mercator, whose world map projection we use to this day. Mercator was famed for his pocket globes, and a pair of his splendid terrestrial and celestial globes, lent from the National Maritime Museum, will be



Johannes Schöner's magnificent celestial globe (centre) and other objects featured in the exhibition

featured in the exhibition. Also on show is Mercator's own annotated copy of Copernicus' groundbreaking book *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*. Important books from the library of Royal Astronomical Society will be featured, including Peter Apian's stunning *Astronomicum Caesarium*, along with astronomical instruments from the Museum's collection.

The exhibition is a collaboration between MHS and the Royal Astronomical Society.

Educational workshops will be available alongside this exhibition. Please contact christopher.parkin@mhs.ox.ac.uk for further information.