

'Living Legend Masterclass' Final report

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Explanation of the brief

This 'Living Legend Masterclass' project involved the creation of learning materials to enhance the accessibility of workshop practices within art and design education. It was funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning through Design (CETLD) and led by Qona Rankin, Dyslexia Co-ordinator at the Royal College of Art (RCA).

Art and design practices rely heavily on teaching through technical demonstration. These demonstrations can often take place in workshops that are busy, noisy and cramped. Discussions with students revealed that they were often unable to recall the content or exact sequence of the demonstrations that they had experienced, thereby leaving them hesitant or unwilling to use that process in their own future practice. In many cases these student were too embarrassed to ask for repeated demonstrations.

Therefore this project set out to create a visual record of a set of demonstrations that would increase access to and reinforce learning. This is particularly important for students who have difficulty with learning at the pace set by the course. This could include international students, students with family commitments, and students with disabilities such as dyslexia. Equally the outcomes of the project should be of use to any student with gaps in their knowledge. This resource would not only help students but would also benefit the institutions involved, by broadening access to knowledge amongst all the staff, improving health and safety awareness and raising the profile of technical instructors.

The project set out to create two films that demonstrate techniques that are commonly used in the Ceramics and Glass Department: Sledging and Turning. The intention is to determine the potential for and cost of establishing an expanding archive of 'Living Legend Masterclasses'.



Three screenshots from film on 'Turning'

Does the solution fulfil the brief's criteria elegantly?

The project relates most closely to the themes of Practice-based learning and, to a lesser extent, Interdisciplinarity in design education. The project is founded on a simple idea. It has documented a sample of working processes of a practice-based course, and provided

contextual information and advice to enable a range of students to benefit from the insight and expertise demonstrated.

Does the solution fall within the financial restraints?

The project was completed on time and budget. A detailed breakdown of expenditure is attached to this report.

Is the solution sustainable?

The techniques demonstrated on film were chosen because they are widely used, key to the curriculum and enduring. It is hoped that they will continue to prove useful to students that need to employ them.

In addition it is hoped that they will help to spark an interest in expanding the archive, both at the RCA and throughout the art and design sector. The experience of making these films has been tremendously instructive in refining and rationalising the filmmaking process, and subsequent films could be made more efficiently and economically.

There have already been discussions with the Printmaking Department at the RCA to apply for internal Learning and Teaching Project Funding to create their own Masterclass film.



Three screenshots from film on 'Sledging'

How might the solution be improved?

A draft version of the film was showcased to 19 staff at the RCA in June 2008. The feedback received was generally very positive. Suggested improvements related both to the production and presentation of the films. These included:

- Improving the sound quality
- Including more detailed subtitles
- Making the subtitles optional
- Adding a glossary of terms
- Incorporating still images of critical moments

In addition, it was suggested that it was important to stress the related health and safety issues, and to make it plain that the films were intended as a complement rather than a substitute for live demonstrations. This may be better expressed through accompanying materials, such as handouts, than within the actual films. It has been possible to incorporate

some of the suggestions into the final edit. A further seminar was arranged as part of the CETLD 'Design in Scholarship' series, but unfortunately this was cancelled.

There have been other lessons learnt through the process of conducting and evaluating the project. One of the most important has been the use of students. Their presence has helped to create a dynamic where the viewer is cast as another student rather than the sole focus for the demonstration, reducing the self-consciousness of the demonstrator and making the film a more faithful record of the process. They have also served to add useful comments and questions. These have not always been included as part of the film for time considerations, but the response to them often has been.

The experience of directing and managing the filmmaking process has been an instructive one. It is clear in hindsight that giving greater thought to the editing phase while planning the recording could have saved time and effort. Similarly, if repeated, it would be beneficial to arrange a test screening with a subject expert and sample of students at an earlier phase of the editing process, which would allow more time and freedom to make necessary changes.

Overall this has been an interesting and valuable project, which we hope will grow in scope and use in the coming years.

Qona Rankin