



Ofsted Subject Conference Report: Art and Design

Title: **Inspiring artwork: using the resources of galleries to inspire work with children**

Venue: **Somerset House, London**

Date: **18 June 2004**

Speakers:

- Peter Muschamp HMI, Specialist Advisor for art and design
- Ghislaine Kenyon, Head of Learning, Somerset House
- Paul Brennan, Chair of National Association of Art Advisers
- Douglas Anderson, Claremont High School, Kenton
- Mark Hazzard, Windmill Hill Primary School, Swindon

Workshop leaders:

- Andrew Mutter, art adviser, Newham LEA
- Tom Bilson, Head of Digital Media, Courtauld Institute
- Chris Wightman, art adviser, Devon LEA
- Julia Weiner, Somerset House
- Al Johnson, Somerset House
- Susan Sheddon, Somerset House
- Sara Maude, Landscope School, Devon
- Nicola Perrot, Dartmouth Community College

The conference was a co-operative venture involving Ofsted, Somerset House and the Association of Art Advisers, including workshops in the building itself, the Courtauld Collection, the Gilbert Collection, the Conway Collection and the Hermitage Collection.

Synopsis

Against a background of highly varied practice in the use of galleries in both primary and secondary schools, the conference aimed to explore how artworks, including architecture, can be used to set suitable learning challenges for pupils, both in terms of practical work and critical appreciation and to disseminate any outcomes through a range of regionally-based initiatives. Practical workshops were designed to enable

participants to engage with different kinds of artworks and, in the process, the needs and viewpoints of pupils of different ages and abilities and social and cultural backgrounds.

The conference was aimed at primary and secondary teachers, with, where possible, representatives from both phases within the same LEAs chosen to participate. In the event, close to 60 delegates attended the conference from a wide cross-section of LEAs.

Summaries of conference sessions

Peter Muschamp HMI

While last year's conference gave some attention to the processes of teaching and learning when using museums and galleries as resources in art and design, its main focus was on the factors contributing to successful gallery-school partnerships. This year, the intention was to look much more closely at how teachers might actually use particular gallery resources to inspire pupils' art making and develop their critical appreciation, addressing the National Curriculum requirement that pupils *'investigate art, craft and design in the locality, in a variety of genres, styles and traditions, and from a range of historical, social and cultural contexts'*.

The reason for this theme is, as last year, because practice in the use of such resources varies widely. Such variation is occurring, however, in the context of ever-increasing usage of museums and galleries, at least in some areas of the country; an encouraging development. The resources available include around 2500 museums and galleries in the UK, which are visited by around 24 million people, a third of these being children. They range from small regional galleries with modest collections to the Tate Modern which, in its first year, had 2.5 million visitors, making it the most popular modern art museum in the world. While these offer often quite distinctive experiences, as do the collections in Somerset House, they all involve the viewer in a perceptual relationship governed by codes and conventions, all of which have to be learned. By taking children to galleries we are, in part, teaching them these 'languages'.

Ofsted inspection evidence suggests that where children make the most from visits to galleries, there are certain factors in play.

- There has been considerable **planning and preparation** by teachers, often in collaboration with gallery staff; and the preparation involves all those visiting: pupils, teachers and other adult helpers
- The visit:
 - is **relevant** to the curriculum, often with more than one curricular focus e.g. art and language work, art and citizenship, art and geography
 - is **focused**: that is to say it does not try to encompass everything on display (though it might begin with an introduction to the whole collection), rather it focuses on a few key images or artefacts

- is **timed appropriately**, for example to coincide with the beginning of a project or at a point where new information or experiences might need to be introduced
- **challenges** the pupils, both artistically and intellectually
- is **evaluated** for its usefulness.

As starting points for the work in Somerset House, a number of questions were suggested.

- How can we prepare pupils for visits to galleries (remembering that, for some, galleries are daunting spaces of which they have little experience)?
- How can we help pupils to record and analyse what they see?
- What kind of knowledge do we as teachers need to help pupils make sense of what they see?
- What would be the starting point for pupils from my school when beginning to engage with a particular painting or artefact?
- How might this particular art activity connect with other parts of the curriculum?

Looking to the end of the day and beyond, what outcomes would we like to see? Essentially, ideas, plans and stimuli for use in schools, perhaps leading to units of work. We also hoped that the day would give delegates an opportunity to re-assess their own practice, especially in relation to using galleries, and help to foster even closer links with these national resources.

Ghislaine Kenyon, Somerset House

The director of the learning centre described the education work of Somerset House and the way the facilities, including the courtyard fountains, are used by schools. She stressed that although the collections on offer are unique, the models of learning used by her colleagues could be applied just as effectively in other galleries. Exemplifying how the collection and the buildings have been used by schools, two teachers, **Douglas Anderson** of Claremont High School and **Mark Hazzard** of Windmill Hill Primary School, gave illustrated talks on how their work with children had been inspired by Somerset House as a building and by particular artworks within the collections. The work was in a range of media; two and three dimensional; encompassed a range of starting points; and, especially in that of the primary school, was linked to other areas of the curriculum. It was also work which had been sustained over a period of time, often moving from one medium to another, and was underpinned by careful observational drawing.

Paul Brennan, Association of Art Advisers

In this short presentation, the idea of using sketchbooks to mediate the experiences of the day was explored. Each delegate was given a sketchbook to use in any way they thought fit to record and reflect on the workshops they were about to undertake.

Workshops

Delegates undertook two different workshops, providing contrasting experiences of the building and its collections.

Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery

Workshop 1: led by Chris Wightman

Using the work of Fauve artists Andre Derain, Henri Matisse, Maurice de Vlaminck, Georges Braque and Alexei Jawlensky, the workshop explored the importance of both Fauvism as a short-lived movement in art history and the use of colour in painting to express mood, feelings and emotions. In pairs or small groups, delegates:

- investigated cause and effect in selected paintings
- considered a descriptive and expressive vocabulary pertinent to selected paintings
- recorded in colour their observations of selected paintings
- developed small-scale collage work based on selected paintings
- considered assessment objectives and strategies related to practical work.

The workshop also considered strategies for developing assessment for learning including 'hot seating', 'talk partners', comment marking, peer assessment and 'two stars and wish' evaluations.

The outcomes included: a range of different ideas for the development of units of work; developmental studies using pencils and collage; written responses to paintings; ideas for assessing work; and opportunities to share and compare each other's experiences and ideas.

Workshop 2: led by Julia Weiner

This focused on the portraits of women by Rubens, Gainsborough, Morisot, Manet, Renoir and Seurat in order to examine the way that women have been variously portrayed as mother, daughter, wife, working woman and male companion. Because the portraits ranged from one painted in the early 17th century to ones painted in the late 19th century, the issues of fashion and the changing roles of women were also discussed.

These paintings have been used as a starting point for a project with two classes of Year 5 pupils who wrote poetry and short plays about the paintings. The poems were then displayed next to the paintings and the plays performed in front of the paintings during National Children's Art day. The children also made up quiz sheets and 'discovery boxes' containing hands-on activities based on the paintings, designed for use by either other schools or by families.

The workshop provided opportunities for group members, who worked in pairs or small groups, to:

- consider descriptive and expressive vocabulary for the paintings discussed
- write poetry or a short drama inspired by the paintings
- discuss practical work that could be undertaken in the gallery, based on these paintings.

Outcomes included a range of different ideas for the development of units of work based on portraits of women, and opportunities to share ideas and experiences.

The Hermitage Collection

Workshop 3: led by Sara Rickard

This workshop was split between viewing the collection of Islamic art and producing ideas for units of work in the learning centre. Learning processes were illustrated by work in progress from Year 10 and Year 7 classes in the group leader's school, based on Indian art forms; the focus was colour and pattern. Group members worked in pairs to suggest starting points and how these might be developed.

The outcomes were planning ideas, visual ideas sheets, and questions for pupils.

The Gilbert Collection

Workshop 4: led by Al Johnson

The Gilbert Collection comprises English and European gold and silver objects, snuffboxes, mosaics and miniatures. The workshop began with an introduction to the collection, including its formation and location in Somerset House, and then considered aspects of the collection using the following questions:

- Mastering materials: technique and skill in the making of objects. *How evident is the hand of the maker?*
- Reflecting fashion: *in what ways have contemporary style influenced the design of the artefacts?*
- Use or ornament: *many of the objects appear to have a function, but are they essentially functionless?*
- Pattern or poetry: *the surface patterning on many of these works suggests a complex narrative – is this essential to the design or merely decoration?*

Outcomes included ideas for designing and developing practical activities with children.

Somerset House

Workshop 5: led by Susan Sheddan

This workshop considered the actual building of Somerset House, including its vaults, as a stimulus for art work. Beginning with an overview of its history, using the foyer displays, the workshop explored how the building has been used as an inspiration and site for performance art and school projects, and how such approaches can be applied to other sites and buildings. Group members made notes and drawings, and used digital cameras to record their ideas and experiences.

The outcomes included: a range of different starting points for the development of units of work; starting point questions for units of work based on buildings; collected impressions and first-hand observations of a historical site; and shared ideas and experiences.

Conway Collection

Workshop 6: led by Tom Bilsen and Andrew Mutter

The Conway photographic collection is part of a larger collection of online images which can be accessed on www.artandarchitecture.org.uk. The site includes all the Courtauld's collection of paintings (over 500 works), all of its hitherto largely unseen collections of drawings (nearly 7000 works), as well as over 22000 photographs of architecture and 11000 photographs of sculpture from the Conway library. The website was launched last year as part of the Government's New Opportunities Fund Digitise programme.

The workshop enabled group members to access the collection in a number of ways. It began with a short talk about the website and the nature of searches, then in an introductory activity participants explored the site using foci such as: places that I would like to live in; costumes that I would like to wear; people that I would like to invite to dinner; and places that I wouldn't mind living in. Later, using '20 clicks', participants explored themes and topics based either on one of their own schemes of work (SOW) or on the QCA SOW e.g. *what a performance* (6b) *people in action* (6a), and *can buildings speak?* (2c). Participants sought connections between images and printed them out. These were then cut, torn, layered and developed into a 'zoom' or folding sketchbook.

The outcomes were a range of strategies and ideas to support the teaching of art and design, and reflections on different ways of teaching.

Some key issues and questions arising from the day

- What kind of prior knowledge do we need, to make paintings or artefacts accessible to children? Compare our responses to the Gilbert collection and the Courtauld collection: which was the most challenging?

- What is the best way to use sketchbooks in a gallery context? Was your own experience of using a sketchbook on the day helpful?
- How does the fact that galleries are public spaces affect the way we, and children, look at the work on display?
- What status do we accord 'craft' in our subject? How can we talk about craft to children? Is craft the same as 'making'?
- What (if anything) is distinctive about engaging with artworks in a gallery and engaging with artworks in school? Does each context invite a different kind of pedagogy?
- From your experience of working in mixed phase groups on the day, did you gain any new perceptions about progression in the subject and art can be taught?

Next Steps

In the autumn of 2004, all those who attended the conference will be contacted and invited to share examples of work linked to a gallery visit, which might have been inspired or prompted by the conference.

Activities will include:

- HMI making visits to a sample of schools related to particularly innovative practice
- exhibiting such work in Alexandra House (Ofsted's headquarters)
- schools e-mailing images and text for contribution to a CD-ROM, which will be sent to all participating schools.

The kind of evidence being sought includes examples of:

- **teaching strategies** used to prepare for a gallery visit to maximise subsequent learning
- planned links with **other subjects**
- **sketchbooks** used to record and develop ideas and observations in galleries
- schools using a **range** of gallery visits – including school-based exhibitions and gallery-based workshops with artists.