

ACADEMIC INNOVATION PROJECT - REPORT 2021-22

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Fashion and Textiles Art Club



What did you set out to do?

The Art Club was first established in the January 2021 Covid lockdown in response to how isolated students and staff were feeling. The Art Club was founded by Sally Gaukrodger-Cowan and Dr Melanie Petch as a de-stress art club.

The aim was for the club to be a Fashion and Textiles based Art Club with a global and historical context. Each session followed the format of introducing a brief history of an International artist/ artisan/ maker and examples of their work followed by a discussion and demonstration of a fun response to their artwork. Activities were short experiments in real time and participants were given takeaway briefs or encouraged to continue after the session. There was also an Instagram page where work, if agreed, could be shared. Each week, different types of art works and historical contexts were explored such as 'The Gee's Bend' quilt makers from Alabama and 'John Bunion Murray's use of colour. Participants took part in live online activities such as painting to music, collage and making paper hats.

As the art club progressed we found that some student participants volunteered ideas and subject matters such as Swedish art and Crochet. One participant talked about her work and demonstrated their skills online to the Art club group. We also had Fashion Buying alumni and guest speaker, Jenny McLhatton, talk about her community upcycled textiles work and experience. Above all we set out to relax, explore, learn and have fun!

How have you achieved it?

Through the above we achieved more than we ever expected. The feedback from participants was so positive:

"I really need that because at the moment I have a lot of stress"

"here is my housemate and my art on the wall from art club!"

"I have really enjoyed this! I feel nice and relaxed"

"Yes loved it! Done lots of prints! It's so therapeutic"

"It was really inspiring! Will definitely be joining again in the Autumn"

"my brain is good now"

"I need this in my life to help me loosen up"

"I think this is what we all need in a climate who teaches us to be perfect even though nobody is."

What next?

We plan to hold more art club sessions in the future. There will be a mixture of online and in person sessions subject to demand. Now we are not in lock down the sessions will be planned for pinch points in the term when students may feel isolated or need more community. For the future building on our sessions of collage, relaxing stitching and crochet we plan a poetry and painting session. An art exhibition in the future of club works would also be great.

Benefits for the University

- Engaged International students who were feeling isolated
- Students, staff, flatmates and family joined in with one participant having an Art club wall in lockdown
- Wellbeing for students and staff
- Improved pedagogy through on line learning and experimenting
- Creation of a creative community

Benefits for Subject Community

- Students, staff, friends and family engaged in the sessions
- A non-judgemental community of creativity
- Relax and have fun
- Learn new skills in a safe environment

Benefits for Students

- International students who were unable to travel were able to join
- Staff from different faculties engaged and enjoyed the 'non-pressure have a go' ethos.
- Students who presented in later sessions built confidence and self esteem.
- A non judgemental creative community



Benefits for Staff

- Engaging with the wider university community
- Experimenting with creative, practice-based pedagogies
- Staff development and research skills
- Joy of seeing experiments and activities produced by participants
- Working with each other at a time of isolation



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