

APPLY YOURSELF

Hannah Day explains why applied art and design warrants a place within a curriculum more typically concerned with matters of painting, sculpture and the like...

Our art department recently needed to find some temporary cover. Fine art teachers were lining up to help us out. Photography tutors were thinner on the ground. The pool of graphic communication specialists proved to be a desert, with no one able or willing to be found, anywhere.

Given the increasingly applied nature of the subject, why the lack of available tutors?

Limited by resources

While the specialisms available for both the GCSE and GCE pathways remain the same, it's fair to say that many schools – limited by resources and student numbers – only offer traditional, fine art-focused courses. Related subjects such as textiles, graphics and 3D design are often further rooted in technology – could that also be part of the reason?

Still contending with our temporary cover needs, I cast my mind back to some of the art teachers I'd got to know throughout my career. While I'm lucky enough to share our graphics course with an experienced illustrator, most art teachers I know are painters who mix their own practice with teaching. It logically follows that if your work is fine art, then that's where your teaching will be more focused too.

If my recent experiences are in line with the national picture, we should reconsider applied art's place in our teaching – and how we can ensure teachers and students get to develop confidence in this important area.

Applied art has a place

It may be that your applied art provision is already extensive. Conversely, you may have barely thought about it at all – or if you have, perhaps even dismissed it as a 'lesser' form of creativity. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, we need all art teachers to value applied approaches to creativity, so that they can craft well-considered projects for their students.

Graphics is a very popular course at my college for several reasons – the chief one being that students can see how it clearly leads into

Inspired by the Bauhaus school, our students will learn how Photoshop can be used to move, rotate, resize and duplicate objects. Simple text is then added, and finally their designs will be applied to a set of four postage stamps.

This process teaches them about various design parameters, including dimensions, considerations around displaying the price and King's head, and the need for a collection of different designs to convey a degree of unity. With the added contextual element, we'll spend around 12 hours

E's Art Club' YouTube channel (see youtube.com/@nickengland151). Each video spotlights an individual graphic or photographic artist, and then shows you how to recreate their work digitally, step by step. Since each tutorial has a related artist, there's an easy contextual link to ensure assessment objectives are being met.

What's more, those steps are demonstrated using Photopea (photopea.com) – an image editing application clearly modelled on Photoshop, but free to use and a great alternative if your school lacks an Adobe licence. It's browser-based, meaning students can access it outside of school, thus opening up your homework possibilities.

Alternatively, decide what

“Could your students photograph the rehearsals for the school's next big theatre production and design the program?”

various careers. They also respond well to being tasked with meeting clear briefs that have listed outcomes, and can bring their own interests to bear on their studies by linking projects to the graphics outcomes required within various fields.

For many, the more typically conceptual and personal nature of fine art projects holds little appeal, but they still want to be creative. These pathways offer them just that.

Start simple

The vast majority of our students don't possess any Photoshop experience when they join us, which is why we'll start with a simple project that teaches them all the basics, before leading to their first graphic outcome.

on this project, but the process can be streamlined. This being their first project at college, we'll ensure there's scope for students to work at a steady, unpressured pace.

Whenever we've come to plan for the year ahead, this project has always held firm – because introducing the foundational elements of graphics is a neat and rewarding project for our students to take part in.

Resource reuse

If you're relatively new to all this, don't be put off by the potentially time-consuming nature of resource preparation. There are a great many free resources out there, so use those instead.

Among my favourites are the videos found on the 'Mr

you want to teach and find a video to match. When teaching technical elements, I'll ensure that I have related videos for many of the lessons coming up, as backups for absent students and those keen to recap certain topics and processes.

Link to what students love

It seems that nearly everything we encounter and interact with nowadays includes some form of branding, visual identity or graphic design. Let students decide what the focus of their projects should be, and then use this as a base to which you can link the teaching.

Our course covers logo and typography design, websites and packaging – all of which can be applied to any number of sectors. Take an album, for example – there will be a logo indicating the record label, website and social media details for the musicians, the dimensions of surrounding packaging itself, the CD cover and the typography

used across it all. I ask students to pick any brand – a product, place, film, album, book or campaign they're interested in. The only area we steer clear of is game design, since games already have such a clear visual element.

This is, of course, covered across the duration of a 2-year A Level course, and you don't have to do it all. You could tackle just one area. Decide if logos play to your strengths, or if typography is what excites you. That way, your students can gain insights into applied art while still leaving time for those fine art activities.

Consider other pathways

I've focused so far on graphics, as that's what I teach, but 'applied' can refer to any outcome that has a commercial end product.

Could your students photograph the rehearsals for the school's next big theatre production and design the program? Could

 **tw teachwire**
FREE
RESOURCES
A 'Bauhaus' graphics project containing class/homework activities, visual displays and evaluation questions
bit.ly/ts141-AA1

they design sculptures for a shared space within the school grounds and create a maquette as their outcome?

Could they redesign the art block with architectural drawings, or design the bedroom of their dreams, complete with mood boards, fabric samples and their own self-designed lamp?

One of our ex-students, who now works as an architect, visits us from time to time and sits in on lessons. After recounting a potted history of his journey from this very college to his current career, he sets the students a design brief hinging on a specific problem at a certain location, and provides them with a map of the surrounding land and existing building(s).

Most recently, this activity concerned a football club that needed to rebuild its changing facilities. The brief presented a mix of limits and possibilities and challenged students to find a balance between the two. For that lesson, the students were able to experience the type of work undertaken by practising architects and consider it as a possible career route. Indeed, several students stayed after the session to grill him, keen as they were to find out more.

So whatever you do, don't overlook this varied and exciting aspect of art education. It's where many of our students will likely end up, should they choose to enter the world of creative work – so let's show them how to get started.

ONLINE INSPIRATIONS

If you're unsure where to start with teaching applied art, see if the following suggestions can get those creative juices flowing...

PHOTOGRAPHY

You can find plenty of visually inspiring feeds on Instagram – one I particularly love is [@things_i_see_when_its_quiet](https://www.instagram.com/@things_i_see_when_its_quiet). Get students to record their visual style – maybe it's muted colours, geometric shapes, industrial locations – then respond to their work, presenting it in the same grid format.

TEXTILE DESIGN

Instagram user [@imakestagram](https://www.instagram.com/@imakestagram) is full of crazy tutorials. Her original clothing garments are somewhat resource-heavy, but her accessories are made with everyday items and easy for students to recreate themselves. Link to millenary, footwear or costume design to widen the contextual base.

ARCHITECTURE

Tiny Houses (see their Facebook page at facebook.com/itinyhouses) serves up numerous examples of compact living. Use these as inspiration to get students designing their own living space with a series of limits. This links well to environmental, housing supply and cost concerns.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Hannah Day is head of art, media and film at Ludlow College