



Making the Creative Process Visible:

An account of strategies that can be used to facilitate the development of independent, creative thought

Access films through: vimeo.com/user2713491
[Open.jorum.ac.uk](https://open.jorum.ac.uk)

Overview

The resource resulting from this project comprises five short films documenting the development of ideas in the work of a cross-section of students from the BA and MA ceramic programmes in University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC). The films render visible their negotiation of thought and seek to illustrate tendencies and patterns in the ways ideas are developed. Whilst a key concern for students is innovation, the ways in which they negotiate ideas often employ common traits akin to the relationship between thought and language. Within an educational context, the identification of these modes of development can provide a toolbox of possibilities to be altered or rejected at any stage in the development of a given body of work but always present to generate and keep ideas mobile.

Teaching and learning in this way can be far more explicit about ways in which students can forge connections between properties, build upon them, recognize strengths and direct their approach toward overriding expression. The significance of identifying these structures is three fold:

- encouraging **objectivity**
- generating **understanding of aesthetic language**
- developing **analytical skills**

The student can take responsibility in finding and employing appropriate methods or indeed devise their own. What is important is that the teaching and learning of art is not solely evidenced according to outcome but - more tangibly - according to **how** that outcome can be achieved.

Toolbox

The films demonstrate that the development of an idea generally incorporates three main areas, under each of these headings are examples of strategies used to progress. It is crucial to note that properties within each category are interchangeable and often returned to as an idea takes shape and develops.

Identify and Mobilize Ideas

- Identify overriding aim
- Use of words to establish key concepts
- Fixing points and eliminating variables
- Two-dimensional investigation (itself subject to most strategies presented)
- Forge connections to ideas in the field of art

Test Possibilities

- Interaction or juxtaposition of properties
- Working in a continuum or series
- Whole and part
- Equivalents between materials and subject
- Expression and representation

Focus and Present

- Orientation and the activity of perception
 - Implied narrative – interaction of works
- Accessible information – professional information

Teaching Resource

The role of the strategies is twofold: 1) they can be employed to encourage the development of ideas 2) used as a means to analyse final outcomes. Both approaches demand the use of the same essential language, the identification of ways in which connections can be made between properties. The students should be able to identify this process in relation to their own practice, providing information for group discussion or forming preparation for individual tutorials.

The resource is directed at BA and MA Ceramics students but also provides a useful tool in kick-starting discussion about the nature of creativity applicable to all arts courses. Discussion arising from the films is particularly effective at the beginning of a project or academic year to establish an understanding of the levels of rigour and achievement expected from them, it is also valuable to revisit near completion of a body of work, when students can recognise traits in their own practice.

Students can be introduced to the resource with the following explanation:

This resource is based on a simple assertion: that there are fundamental structures that enable the development of ideas and underpin most theoretical and subject related concerns. These structures are developed from an understanding of creative thinking which, according to Spearman's psychological model (Torrance, P. *Understanding Creative thinking*, Psychological Inquiry, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1993), p. 232.) is essentially the ability to see or create relationships between things. In art, this is often characterised by the necessary shift we undergo when understanding inanimate properties of form and texture as having the capacity to connect with sensation and emotion. In the development of ideas, as we consider changing aesthetic attributes, moving properties, altering scale, in all such mental thrusts we are 'educing correlates', finding and refining connections. When two properties are brought into relation, others arise and the process of invention unfolds. This teaching resource renders visible this activity, mapping generic or often used ways in which aesthetic connections can be made.

At least one film should be viewed before any further discussion. The following are examples of topics that may arise after viewing:

- What is creativity?
- Is there a generic or universal language of creativity?
- Are methods of idea development visible in a final piece?
- If you had a single idea and submitted it to different methods of development, how different could the outcomes be - what might such an investigation demonstrate?
- Can the traditional modes of critique be used to understand the way an idea is developed: Postmodernism, Semiology, Psychoanalysis?
- Does the attempt to reveal the nature of creativity remove the zeitgeist necessary for creativity to occur?

Framework for Constructing the Films

The role and interconnectivity of initial stimulus, drawing, skills and process were identified in each student's work by speaking with them and viewing their documentation of visual studies, test pieces and contextual references. These images were then compiled into a PowerPoint presentation to ascertain order and emphasis in the development of their ideas. The students were provided with a copy of this presentation as a visual script to guide them in speaking about their work.

The students were interviewed alongside their final exhibition of work, which offered visual reference to each of the developmental steps and enabled the student to speak directly to the work. The visual evidence of their development was then incorporated into this footage. The strategies employed in developing their work are evident in the relationship between still imagery, final artwork and the verbal accounts. These are clearly identified through text in the films as they are employed to negotiate ideas. The editing software used to produce the films is FinalCut Studio 2 and text was inserted using LiveType.

Dissemination

The dissemination strategy includes hosting the films on Vimeo chosen because of the high quality video and audio it offers. The Vimeo resources can also be accessed via JORUM (open educational resources).

Futures

The films offer tangible evidence to illustrate developmental strategies at work across a broad range of practice. However, it would help to further explain the strategies, if each were taken independently and discussed in relation to existing examples of artists practice. This provides the next stage in research development:

Making the Creative Process Visible will become an interactive web-based teaching resource that seeks to encourage understanding of potential relationships between skills, processes and ideas. Its approach is holistic, at the same time exposing students to technical possibilities, building knowledge and confidence, and exploring the potential of this knowledge in the negotiation of ideas, all accessed from the studio or home. A main site will hosts a skill-based archive and a series of case studies exploring tendencies and patterns in the ways

ideas are developed. Affiliated to this, is a social network of student-led accounts, similarly configured to document the skills and developmental strategies in individual practice.

The skill-based archive will consist of a series of short films demonstrating core ceramic processes. These skills will be hyperlinked to examples of current practitioners as well as an established glaze and technical database. The case studies will refer directly to this archive taking the form of interviews and video of students' work across a range of projects from both BA and MA ceramic programmes. These studies will demonstrate the role and interconnectivity of initial stimulus, drawing and skill-base. In this way, they will also render transparent possible integration of theory and practice through clear illustration of associations of thought both within and across disciplines.

The interlinking of resources further encourages creative thinking allowing a user to experience the forging of connections themselves, albeit from select projects. Investigation and enquiry are thereby central to learning, encouraging autonomy and intelligent thinking, particularly as students contribute their own thought processes via the social network. Potentially working from BA through to PhD level, the benefits include an archived community of knowledge available for assessment purposes, online learning, international collaboration and further research into the nature of creativity.