

Global Challenges & Creative Practice

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MEL BROWN
ARTS UNIVERSITY PLYMOUTH

Global Challenges & Creative Practice: exploring how our learners are supported to create and pursue visions of a better world by developing competencies, skills, attributes and values linked to subject knowledge.

The Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) guidance published by QAA & Advance HE (2021) highlighted the need for HE providers to incorporate ESD within their curricula. Arts University Plymouth has experience of embedding themes of global citizenship and ESD into our curriculum through the following units: Platforms of Exchange - a cross-uni, mixed-discipline unit that invites students to work together to share their creative attributes in pursuit of problem solving Global Challenges - explores some of the key issues facing the world in the 21st century, through creative consideration of citizenship, sustainability, precarity, social justice and what it means to be a global citizen.

At GLAD 2024 the following will be considered: Student experience: reflection of their learning journey through the units. Staff experience: challenges encountered, modes of delivery, issues of inclusivity etc. Impact and influence: from actual student outcomes/achievements through to evidence of continued impact through the wider curriculum and beyond.



Global Challenges & Creative Practice

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Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Guidance published by QAA & Advance HE (2021) highlighting the need for HE providers to incorporate ESD within their curricula.

Sustainable Development - an aspirational ongoing process of addressing social, environmental and economic concerns to create a better world.

Education for Sustainable Development - the process of creating curriculum structures and subject-relevant content to support sustainable development.

The Guidance argues that the aims of the UN SDGs, and what they seek to achieve, are necessary for a positive future for life on earth.



Arts University
Plymouth:

Strategy 2030
Creative
Education for
a Changing
World

AUP Pedagogical Principles: *Teaching for our Time*

We consider practice-based research and enquiry in the arts as an authentic dialogue and encounter with the world and its materials through an exploration of their creative possibilities and tacit knowledge.

We design teaching that recognises that life is a dialogue between creative aspirations, an encounter with ideas and materials, and the societal resistance that is met along the way. We understand the agency of the arts in providing meaningful life-long learning and the personal fulfilment that brings.

We understand that education is the act of turning the student towards the world, to inspire students to want to exist in and care for the world, and to act with kindness as both a method and a means to enact change and deliver positive outcomes.

We recognise the need to provide the space, time and resources to figure out what creativity might mean; and to nourish and sustain the student in this challenging space.

We believe that the arts provide unique possibilities for encountering and learning through resistance and experimentation, for students with a diversity of interests from the sciences, humanities or the arts, while negotiating the hopes and wishes we hold for the world, the environment and our place within it.

Arts University Plymouth: Common Unit Framework

“Our common curriculum is a distinctive proposal for arts education, offering a commonality of theme and activity across courses in order to build community...Rather than a limiting factor, the examination of shared agendas through multiple creative lenses gives colour, richness and diversity to the learning experience

The development of a porous framework supports our pedagogic approach to specialist creative education in the arts, through which the development of our students as highly skilled, knowledgeable and globally-minded practitioners is best determined”

Teaching for our Time, 2023

We have experience of embedding themes of global citizenship and ESD into our curriculum, a particular focus of the following two units:
Platforms of Exchange & Global Challenges.



Platforms of Exchange

Through Level 4 unit **Platforms of Exchange** our first year students are encouraged to share their creative attributes in pursuit of creative problem solving

A project designed to introduce issue-based learning is devised in advance by the unit team in response to a contemporary theme or real world issue.

The focus of this unit centres on the critical and applied knowledge gained through team working, evidenced through critical reflection of collaborative working and the impact of individual contribution in determining creative project outcomes.

Platforms of Exchange: students at the start

“

‘The world around us is in need of change, it is broken and deserves nurturing with creativity.’

‘The world needs change, and creative mind can bring that in their own unique way.’

‘Reshaping the future. Creativity has the power to inspire new solutions to a rapidly changing world.’

‘An opportunity to challenge and reimagine to address inequalities.’

‘Today’s world is full of issues which need to be addressed and sometimes the best way to do that is through creative methods, creative power.’

”

ROMAN KRZNARIC OUTROSPECTION

THE 20TH CENTURY
I SEE AS THE AGE
OF **INTROSPECTION**

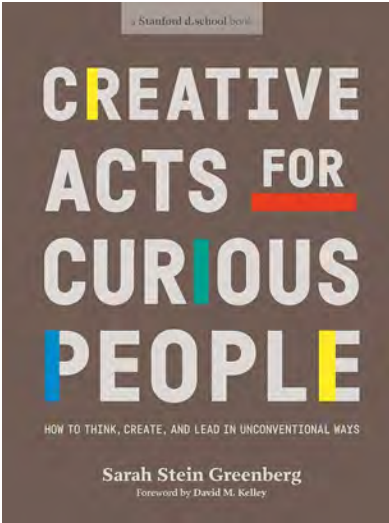


Platforms of Exchange

We see this Unit as a journey our students undertake as empathic adventurers*, collectively testing their capacity to become more empathic designers, communicators and creatives.

Journeys by their very nature can be enriching and rewarding, but they can also be unpredictable and frustrating. The paths we follow can be sprawling and littered with crossroads and diversions or they can be narrow and unnavigable, leading to dead ends and obstructions. Decisions need to be made and directions chosen and when we travel with others we are constantly negotiating and compromising to try to ensure the experience is valuable for all involved.

* Roman Krznaric in *The Power of Outrospection*, explores how we can help drive social change by stepping outside ourselves, encouraging us to expand our moral universe to become *empathic adventurers*.



Platforms of Exchange

Design educator Sarah Stein Greenberg in *Creative Acts for Curious People* states that since we live,

“in an era of ambiguous, messy problems...it’s vital to have both an inquisitive mind and the ability to act with intention”

As we travel through our lives encountering those ‘messy problems’, it’s important to remember that although we face them together, our lived experiences differ widely.

Platforms of Exchange: Student Reflection

“

‘This unit was as humbling as it was enlightening.’

‘I definitely should have trusted the process more but it was a great learning experience.’

‘I have enjoyed working with people outside my course and getting to know everyone’s talents.’

‘This unit really helped me build on my social anxiety and insecurities, as this project was taken seriously and professionally, which made communication much easier for me.’

‘If we had just worked together better, then I feel that our project would have been excellent, rather than just good.’

”

Platforms of Exchange



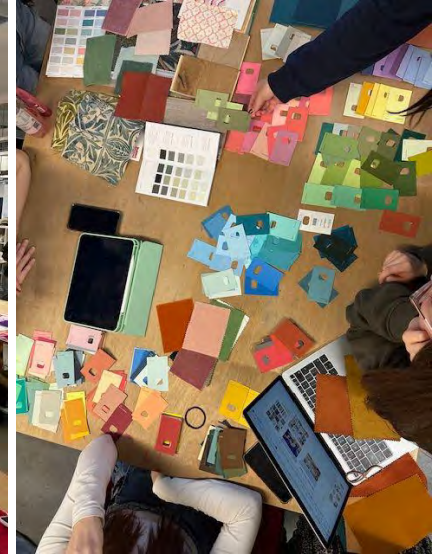
Collaboration between Graphics and Craft Students - designing a contemplative, tactile space on campus

Addressing issues of stigma, shame and taboo surrounding periods through this publication project by Graphics, Fashion and Photography students



Platforms of Exchange

Trevi a nationally award-winning women and children's charity based in South West England, providing safe and nurturing spaces for women in recovery to heal, grow and thrive.



The Trevi team invited AUP students to create an interior and textile concept for rooms in the Sunflower Women's Centre in Plymouth.

Each team of combined Interiors and Textile Design students was asked to research and develop an exciting interior concept that was inspired by contemporary interior and textile trend research, but that also placed the women that use this space at the heart of their design concepts

trevi
where life begins

**ARTS
UNIVERSITY
PLYMOUTH**

Global Challenges



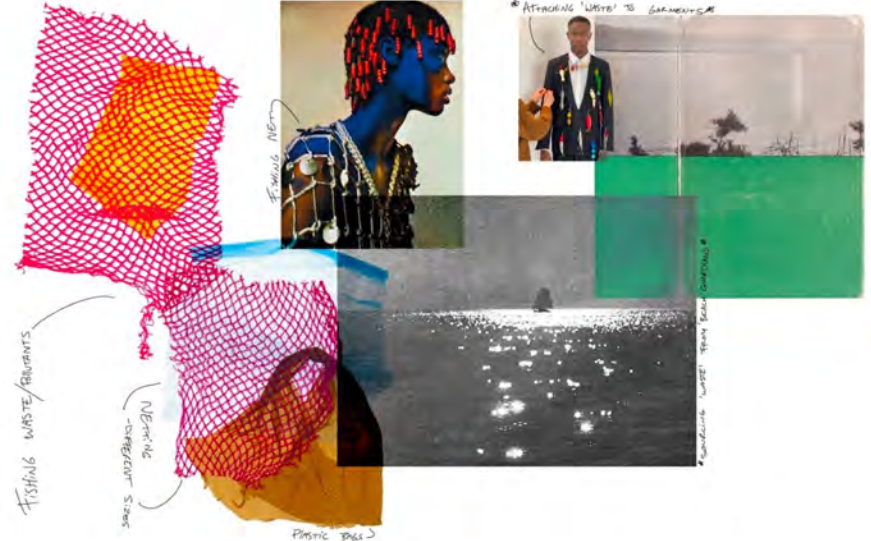
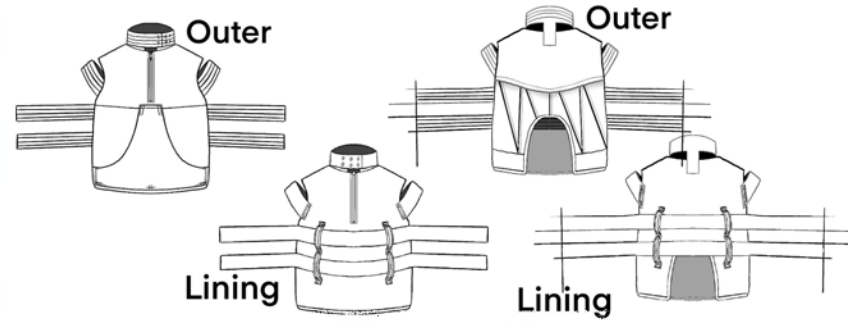
A level 5 Unit, **Global Challenges** encourages deeper thinking about some of the key issues facing our world in the 21st century. Through the development of creative campaigns our second years explore ways in which their creativity could help pursue visions of a better world, whilst also learning what it means to be a global citizen.

Campaign outcomes might take a variety of forms such as a published text, an installation, live event, or simulated online campaign.

Student achievements are celebrated every year in the Global Challenges Awards and students are encouraged to submit their work to external competitions (for example the Creative Conscience Awards and RSA Awards).

Global Challenges

THROWN
INTO
the Sea



Repurposing fashion waste,
BA (Hons) Fashion Design students

CREATIVE CONSCIENCE

**ARTS
UNIVERSITY
PLYMOUTH**

Tell You Later - a deaf student's campaign against having their learning put on hold, Alex Miller from BA (Hons) Textile Design

Foraging Zine,
BA (Hons) Illustration
student Zara McDermott



Global Challenges



Annual Awards exhibition, publication and awards ceremony to celebrate student achievements. Judged by the senior leadership team and by the AUP community of staff & students.

**Global
Challenges
Awards**

Journey through the Common Unit Framework

Our Common Unit Framework was first introduced at undergraduate level in 2021 so we have just completed one full cycle with students graduating in 2024.

ZARA LILY MCDERMOTT



About:

Zara is an illustrator currently based in Devon, originally from a small town called Sandwich in Kent.

She is passionate about creating a positive impact through her work, drawing inspirations from natural world and human experiences. She values the importance of visual communication, and using illustration as a tool to help communicate in fun and effective ways.

Her visual language can range from simple spot illustrations to more complex compositions. This combines fun colours, bold shapes and use of quirky characters. Zara produces her illustrations through mixing traditional and digital mediums.

When not illustrating you will find Zara probably reading one of the many books she has on the go, learning more about health and wellbeing, running, listening to some funky tunes, or enjoying the small magic that unfolds from everyday life.

Recently was named Arts University Plymouth, Ones to Watch 2024 and D&AD Best in Show at New Blood festival.

Clients:

Clifton Coffee Roasters, GreenMinds Plymouth, The Box (Plymouth, UK), MIRROR gallery - Hammer to Shape Mouth (Plymouth, UK), Arts University Plymouth Student Union

Level 4

Zara McDermott

BA (Hons)
Illustration



PROJECT PLASTIC POLLUTION

Our project raises awareness for environmental issues, in particular the effects of plastic pollution on our health, wildlife and environment. This is a widespread problem affecting our marine wildlife and oceans.

We felt passionate about this issue as we are situated in Plymouth, where

the ocean is at the heart of the city and needs to be protected.

We have made a series of 3 posters that educate and increase awareness of pollution. We hope the viewer is left feeling passionate about this issue and can move forward living a more eco-friendly and plastic free lifestyle.

Zara McDermott
BA (Hons) Illustration
Martha Pengerly
BA (Hons) Illustration
Faith Davies
BA (Hons) Commercial
Photography

Tutor: Ilker Cinarli



Level 5

Zara McDermott

BA (Hons)
Illustration



Global
Challenges
Award



Level 6

Zara McDermott

BA (Hons)
Illustration



field System

Four Quarters Award



HOW TO USE YOUR THROW



Platforms of Exchange

Case Study:

Curiosity Incubator

Tutors: Bridgette Ashton and Mel Brown

In Feb-May 2023 we developed a 12 week Platforms of Exchange project called the **Curiosity Incubator**. We both work primarily with Illustration students, but we worked on this unit with students from a range of Design courses.

We wanted to focus on the **UN Sustainable Development Goals**, *but* the potential for Eco-anxiety in our students made us cautious:

- Negative emotions of anger, grief, guilt and hopelessness.
- Climate Grief - sense of 'a world that might have been' slipping out of reach
- Information overload can lead to a sense of paralysis of where to start or even can result in apathy.



Permission to Play

In 'Playing for Time' Lucy Neal describes the driving force behind her book as a 'desire to understand the role our imaginations and creative skills play in reimagining a world in which life on Earth is cherished and sustained.'

In our current climate emergency, fear can freeze us towards incuriosity, so Neal makes strong argument for play as the space in which we can extend the range of possibilities we draw upon as we explore the world, learning what we need to know to survive.

'In this analogy of play in a contemporary world, it's possible artists can be circuit breakers of tragedy, surprising people with alternative ways of seeing, jolting them awake from denial and speeding up a public process of seeing and feeling the 'truth' of climate change.' (Neal 2015)



Curiosity Incubator

So, with permission to play, we distanced ourselves from this troubled planet and we situated ourselves on Mars at a non-determined future date and as a result of an undisclosed Earth event.

We entered the realm of fantasy from the outset.

There was just one rule in the **Curiosity Incubator**: creative ideas didn't have to be feasible - in fact they might definitely be impossible - but they did at least need to be considered.

We rejected the conventions of a design cycle or design process. Instead, through hands-on making. we asked them to build, destroy, imagine, play, curate, invent, share, think, question, relate, reject.

Curiosity Incubator

Imagining new futures - cultivating artificial ideas

We invited students to explore:

- How could hostile environments sustain life?
- What is needed to support living?
- How might those lives be lived?
- What will society/culture look like?
- What artefacts will be made? What stories will be told?

LAB NOTES

Name:	Mel Brown / melbrown@aup.ac.uk
Date: 2023	Bridgette Ashton / bashton@aup.ac.uk
Lab Number: T1.22	
CURIOSITY INCUBATOR 404 Platforms of Exchange	

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LAB NOTES

Curiosity Incubator

There are 17 SDG Goals which lead to 169 Targets. The **Curiosity Incubator** initially focused on just three of those targets within three workshops to kick start the unit:



HOME: Goal 11 Target - ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services



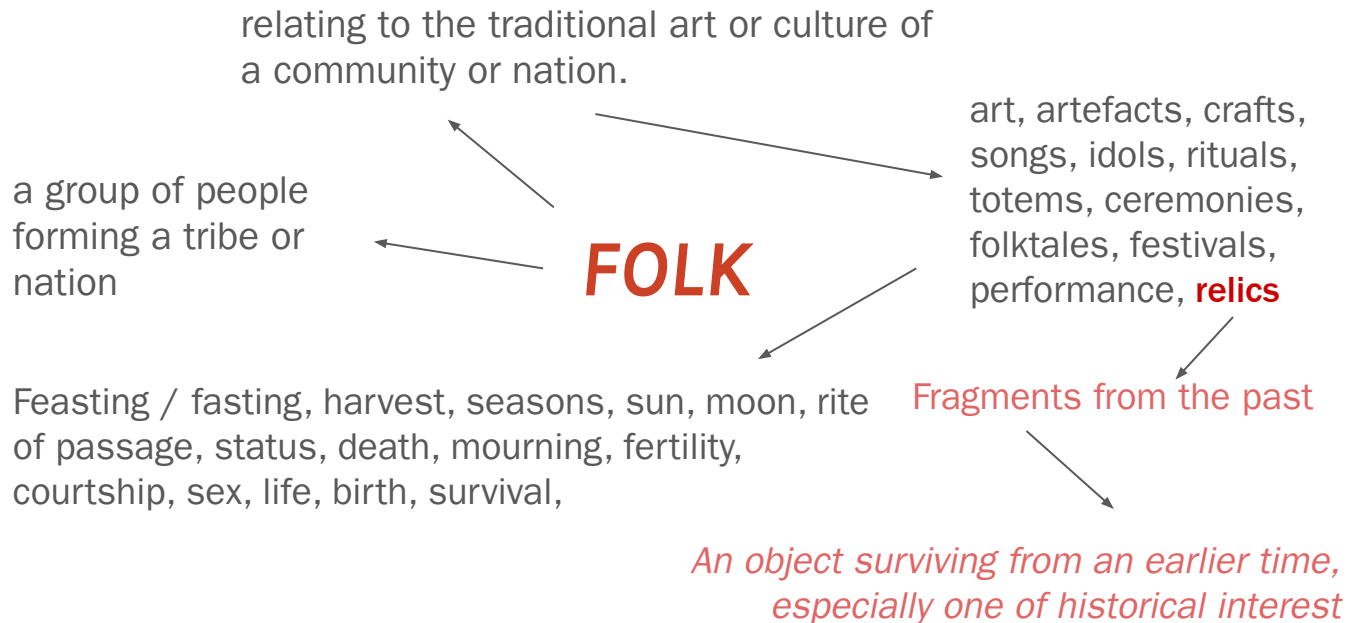
FOOD: Goal 2 Target - end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.



FOLK: Goal 11 Target - protect and safeguard...cultural and natural heritage

Curiosity Incubator + The Folk Workshop

FOLK: Goal 11 Target - protect and safeguard...cultural and natural heritage



Curiosity Incubator + The Folk Workshop

The Prompt:

We are situated on Mars. A number of abandoned plastic components have been discovered. These materials are coveted since petroleum based products cannot be manufactured on Mars.

Transform your plastic object using the materials and components supplied through enclosing, adorning, binding and wrapping. Construct a new artefact that commemorates your chosen component, referring to a past which is no longer attainable.

We invited fantasy, storytelling and myth-making and we celebrated imagination, fabrication and exaggeration.

We were introducing the design students to the fictional worlds explored by illustrators and we were introducing them all to material exploration and hands-on making, removed from ideas process and design cycle conventions and Google Search instincts.

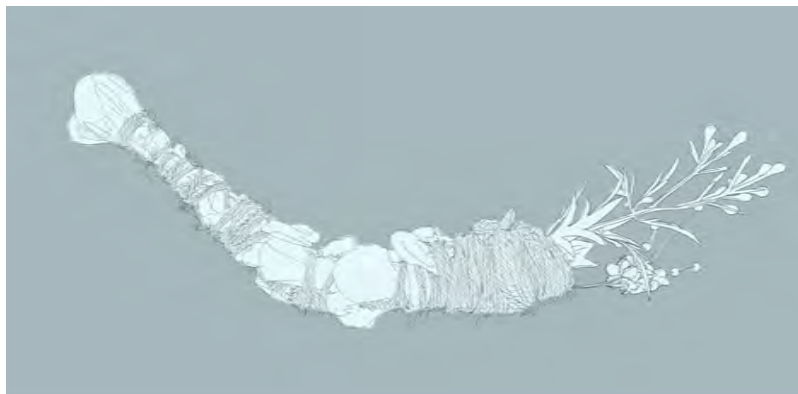
Curiosity Incubator + The Folk Workshop

As they worked, we invited workshop participants to imagine and invent the narrative behind their relic, to acknowledge the ritual they were performing, and to write down their story



Curiosity Incubator + The Plastic Reliquary

Myself and Bridgette were as caught up in the narrative as our students. The artefacts have been displayed as **The Plastic Reliquary** and I obsessively drew them, documenting to preserve them, archive them, thus extending the narrative.



Curiosity Incubator + Thinking through making

“Our aim was to prioritise experimentation and the unexpected. What we observed was our participants engaging with materials directly, fostering a deep connection with their objects and getting purposefully lost in the action of making.

In stripping back the design process, revisiting the fundamental aspects of making, they were tapping into a universal skillset inherent in all of us.

In contrast to the prevailing digital landscape, this workshop emphasised the unique qualities of analogue making, highlighting the importance of physical, hands-on experiences in a world increasingly dominated by AI influences.”

Curiosity Incubator tutor Bridgette Ashton

Curiosity Incubator + ESD Competencies

The Education for Sustainable Development guidance provides insight into UNESCO's key competencies for sustainability and how they align with ways of thinking, practicing and being as part of a transformative journey.

- systems thinking
- anticipatory thinking □
- normative competency
- strategic thinking □
- collaborative competency □
- critical thinking □
- self-awareness □
- integrated problem-solving



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