

Art and Science Masterclass case study

Like many SUPI, Lancaster SUPI has been very successful in engaging schools, academic departments and ECR from STEM related subjects to participate in a range of SUPI activities. We have reflected elsewhere how this is partly influenced by the higher profile of STEM in schools and encouragement from professional bodies and initiatives such as Athena Swan to take seriously public engagement. The wider South Lakes Federation to which the QES Teaching Alliance belong has an established STEM network which has ensured active participation by teachers at STEM focused INSET (see case study 2014).

And yet, when and where we have engaged ECR and teachers from Arts and Social Science there has also been considerable enthusiasm. What is sometimes a challenge is having the visible hands on opportunities that help provide the WOW factor. This case study illustrates a successful collaboration and multi-disciplinary approach which brought two contrasting research passions together.

This case study reports on a serendipitous encounter between Joe Fennell Lancaster Environment Centre (LEC) researcher, and local artist, Sarah Bellwood, the Bellwood and Wright Gallery owner. It outlines how collaboration between the young researcher and enthusiastic artist resulted in active involvement and collaboration between university departments who would not usually work together. The result was a masterclass with participation that was multi-disciplinary and from a public engagement perspective multi-faceted, engaging and raising awareness of university researchers, school staff, students and a member of the community.

Planning and development

Part of the success of this event was the enthusiasm of the key players Joe and Sarah, however, other individuals contribution ensured their vision was implemented. The process began with Sarah visiting the university to use LECs (Lancaster Environment Centre) specimen museum collections as inspiration for her work. There then followed lengthy discussions about the beauty and ecology behind the specimens. Although they wanted to share their passion of the natural world and its conservation, they did not have the contacts with schools and access to wider university resources. Joe's involvement as an ECR on the EPQ project led him to approach Catherine Baxendale the SUPI Research Project Administrator.

The next stage of the process involved further networking and organization by the SUPI Administrator. The concept of linking Art and Science was one that captured the interest of colleagues in Lancaster's Institute for Contemporary Art (LICA) who were already interested in working with schools on Art related activities. SUPI was able to offer resources to fund a free masterclass and provide the necessary administrative support and contacts with schools to support academics and researchers from LEC and LICA to deliver the first Art and Science masterclass lead by the local artist.



Sarah Bellwood

and

Lancaster University



Do you have an interest in art and the natural world?
Would you like to work with a successful local artist?

What and When

On the 7th of July we will be welcoming Sarah Bellwood to Lancaster University for a special masterclass in print making. As a collaborative event between Lancaster Environment Centre (LEC) and Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA), this workshop would be well suited to AS-Level art students (or equivalent) who have an interest in science, nature and the local environment.

On the Day

Using our extensive museum collection of insects and other animal and plant specimens, Sarah and members of Lancaster University will assist you in forming initial ideas before you develop them into a lino cut. You will have the opportunity to meet and find out about the work of ecology researchers and members of LICA. We also hope that you will go on to develop this work with a view to exhibiting at a future event at Lancaster University.

Participate

The event is free to participants and will include lunch. To register (through your school or college) or for more information, please contact Catherine Baxendale c.baxendale@lancaster.ac.uk by 26th of May. Please note, numbers are initially limited to 8 per school or college.



Figure 1: Poster for Art and Science Masterclass

The Art and Science Masterclass

Participants included local art students and teachers from South Lakes Federation who had the chance to work alongside researchers from across the university, who themselves were working together in new and exciting ways.

The day consisted of a sketching session using the specimens as inspiration, with time to chat to ecology researchers from LEC about the specimens and their ecology, followed by a print making session.

Figure 3:
Taking a closer look



Figure 2; Looking and selecting specimens

Figure 4: Careful observation informing sketching



Feedback and future plans

Participants gave very positive feedback on the day as they learnt new techniques such as lino printing and appreciated the opportunity to meet researchers and study in detail a wide range of British species for the first time. One student explained how they gained a *'greater understanding of [the anatomy] of the specimens by sketching'*, another reported that by *'getting to know bugs via Art, took away the fear of insects via analysing them in a different way'*. The positive experience gained is likely to have a positive impact, with 100% of students reporting the day met or exceeded their expectations, and 89% agreeing that the day will help with future learning. The benefits of the process and day have been captured in a video case study which is available from [Art and Science Masterclass with Sarah Bellwood video](#)



Figure 5: The finished results

This masterclass was the first cross faculty event hosted by LU SUPI and has been the start of a relationship between researchers in these faculties, which have resulted in a sandpit meeting to generate future ideas and also an application for funding for 'Observation in a Box'.