

Introduction

Joe McGillivray: Course Founder and Leader 1993

Prior to 1993 I was the Course Leader teaching on the Art and Design Foundation Course at WMC. The purpose of the course was to prepare students to apply for art and design degree programmes. Many of our Wirral based students tended to be mature, returning to education for a number of reasons, with dependents and various domestic commitments that bound them to their locality.

This meant that many of our talented, Wirral based, mature students had to apply to Universities that were further afield and in direct competition with more traditional student applicants who did not have the challenges faced by our students. We realised that this meant that there was a gap in the Higher Education provision for adult learners.

We were keen for the course to recruit non-traditional students with a range of life experiences that would enhance the diversity of the course and provide a wide range of student and staff learning opportunities. This innovative founding proposal was accepted by Liverpool John Moores University.

Working with lecturers from the Fine Art course at LJMU that included Bob Scriven, John Holden and Mike Knowles the staff at WMC were keen to focus on a studio based, practise orientated course, that endeavoured to balance both traditional and contemporary approaches to Fine Art. So we produced programme that integrated theory and practice creating real relationships between studio activity and theoretical knowledge, an innovative approach in comparison with many other institutions.

The programme document was placed in front of a validation panel in May 1993, and the course was approved with a start date in September 1993. We recruited 13 students to our first cohort who were forever a part of the course and its aims as all future students have been. Our first Degree Show was hosted by the Williamson Museum and Art Gallery in the summer of 1996. We quickly realised that this was another unique feature of the course- a Degree Show at the heart of the creative community on the Wirral.