



### Introduction:

The Art and Design Department at City of London School has entered a new phase. How it develops over the next few years will be important to the School and our students. Equally for CLS students who may choose future careers in Art, Design and Technology and for others who's skill-set will include a high level of critical and creative-thinking. A cultural awareness that the best Art and Design education develops in young minds will be an asset.

CLS Art and Design Department is at a cross-roads and reflection on the sabbatical may add shape to the conversation on how to proceed. How can Art and Design at CLS best grow to nurture talent and lead with the very best in visual art education?

The sabbatical I received, involved a six week visit to China. The focus was on the following:

- Professional development through internationalizing my teaching practice.
- Exploring how the CLS Art and Design Department could develop international links with Beijing Academy of Creative Arts (BACA). \*
- Opening up more to the global Art and Design field as well as having an eye on the cultural exchange potential for all CLS students.



### Beijing: Creativity and Collaboration

The sabbatical was hosted by BACA who provided a place for me to stay and opportunities to run workshops and give tutorials and talks on working in Art and Design and my own art practice.

During my visit I was based in Beijing with 'Our man in Beijing', Charlie Dutton, a former CLS colleague who now works for BACA on their Foundation Course. His role is International Projects Director and foundation tutor.

- I was involved in running several sculpture workshops and talks as well as giving a talk about my work to Foundation students and tutorials. The feedback from this was very positive and from my perspective, it was great to work directly with students and staff in China.



- In addition to this, I also visited CAFA - Central Academy Fine Art; BIFT - Beijing institute for Fashion and Technology.





- I also took the opportunity to visit many galleries, museums, temples and sights of cultural interest.



One of the important strands of my research was to explore the contemporary Art and Design world, particularly in Beijing.

- To this end I went to various galleries in 798 Art District, Caochangdi and Art Beijing (Art Fair).



- There were also many chance meetings with both students and educators through BACA and Charlie Dutton as well as introductions to artists, curators and gallerists, some of whom were Chinese and others with close links to China.





I met David Webster, Associate Dean of Learning, Teaching and Enhancement at Camberwell, Chelsea and Wimbledon Colleges of Arts part of UAL. I will follow up an invitation to meet with him to discuss ideas more fully in London. It is helpful to be thinking about how to improve approaches to teaching and learning and also get an insight into changes in Art and Design education from an insider. David Webster is also interested in the A Level Art and Design course and how that supports further study. I also met Mick Finch, Reader in Visual Art Practice and BA Fine Art Course Leader at Central Saint Martins, UAL and gained an insight in how this institution thinks globally and nurtures students after they graduate to incubate early career development.

Visiting to China seemed to be an international breathing space, not only for myself but other educators, academics and creatives. It provided fertile ground for sharing ideas and reflecting.

### **Beyond Beijing:**

By chance, Niamh Cleary, our new Art teacher was visiting a friend who is teaching in Shanghai during the Easter Break. We took the opportunity to travel together to visit Jingdezhen which is the porcelain capital of China. We met the coordinator of the Sculpture Factory there which runs an excellent educational and international art residency programme and discussed this as an itinerary option as part of a CLS trip to China in 2017/18. We share an interest in developing the ceramics studio at CLS and keeping this specialism alive in the absence of Glen Farrelly, our former ceramics specialist. We had the opportunity to make porcelain pots and discussed projects together. The Jingdezhen visit was inspirational.

We also visited some of the beautiful landscapes and villages around the Hungshan Mountain region and an unpopulated part of the Great Wall about three hours from Beijing.

I later traveled independently to see the clay sculpted Terracotta Warriors - this is as impressive as one imagines. What I didn't expect to see was another emperors' burial site of Jingdi with hundreds of smaller articulated figures. This area is rich in culture and a must for any future trips.

I envisage that many of these experiences could be fed into future art projects enabling the development of creative, critical, caring and collaborative skills. Ms Cleary and I have begun to

discuss developing an interdisciplinary project with the younger years who are learning Mandarin.

### Conclusion: Creativity and Culture – China Sabbatical



The political map is changing all the time in China, there is still an insularity which effects creativity and critical thinking. Many, though not all of the successful artist have studied abroad before returning to China.

Students from CLS will go on to have careers all over the world and many will have links in China and its influential economy. It is important that they are given opportunities to experience its culture in advance of graduating. With this in mind, and further to my experience working with BACA I have drawn together a number of ways in which CLS and the CLS Art and Design Department could take this conversation with China forward through working with BACA.

The ideas below were first presented at a meeting with Zhang Bo (Director of BACA), Helen Wang (Course Manager) and Charlie Dutton (International Projects Director and Foundation tutor) towards the end of my visit. They also presented some proposals (see attached BACA document) and on the basis of this, when Zhang Bo next visits London in Autumn (October 10-14), I hope that we can arrange a meeting at CLS to discuss these further.

*The first idea is about giving a context and bringing attention to international issues and links within the whole school community of CLS. BACA (and UAL - University of the Arts London) will loosely be part of this 'big conversation with the world'.*

- **CLS Global Citizens Day\*\*** (a whole school initiative) Propose a day in the CLS school calendar to develop, highlight and share CLS's links with schools and projects around the globe and across the disciplines focusing global citizenship values through creative, cultural, scientific and sporting activities.

This could link with #clsweek in the last week of the summer term as a one off theme or become an annual fixture.

Within the CLS Art and Design Department we could devise some workshops using traditional Chinese techniques e.g. calligraphy and ink painting, porcelain workshop (BACA recommend London-based artist/teachers?) and also look at contemporary



critical art practice and architecture in China or something more directly linked to BACA. Andy Thomson, one of the Mandarin teachers is open to collaborating on future projects.

- Art & Design Department CLS Junior 6<sup>th</sup>/BACA A Level Exhibition: Digital submissions of mixed media work (from China) and original work CLS students and vice versa in China. CLS Art Dep. to print selection of work and produce an exhibition at CLS based on a theme: '**One Day, One Night - Beijing/London**'. Each student in both schools to write a brief artist statement about their ideas, inspiration, focus artist and intentions. This initiative supports portfolio development in the Autumn or first half of the spring term and can be based broadly around contemporary still life, landscape/city scape and figure/portrait. (The new A Level course is planned to start at BACA 2016/17.)
- Suggest BACA consider opening up places for CLS students (and other UK students) to study on the **Foundation Art and Design, BACA** course in Beijing. Explore bursary funding. Both these proposals have been received very positively as ideas to take forward to internationalize BACA and create new opportunities.

*It is worth noting that this idea was enthusiastically received. In addition, the issue of developing BACA bursaries for talented students in China - this is not currently done and would improve opportunities for some Chinese students. I think the CLS/BACA/UAL connection could be a very fruitful and innovative way in which we could forge strong links and strengthen educational opportunities.*

This initiative will benefit Chinese students (British culture and language) and the ex-CLS students both in terms of Art education and cultural experience. It may also be attractive as a structured and creative gap year option for some UK students. Note: Recommend that UK students to have the option and support to apply to the best suited course via UCAS, which may not be a UAL course. I would advocate this independence although there would be an in-built bias.

- Plan an A Level Art and Philosophy (Junior 6<sup>th</sup> + Senior 6<sup>th</sup> A Level) **Trip to China** including Beijing, Xian, Shanghai, Jingdezhen etc., possible date Autumn half term 2017/18. Trip to include 'our man in Beijing' Charlie Dutton - Photography Workshop on the streets and in the hutongs of Beijing and a social/cultural event with BACA art students in the Art District.
- 2016/17 will see 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of GCSE Mandarin students at CLS. By 2019 all CLS A level student will have studied 3 years of Mandarin up to year 9/ 3<sup>rd</sup> year (age 13 to 14) and possibly GCSE Mandarin. Propose '**Mandarin Refresher Class**', a language and culture lunch time or after school session for 6<sup>th</sup> form students planning trips to China. Also for those not wishing to study for an exam but who want the benefits of speaking a little Mandarin for travel, education or future work experience.
- An open door: The link between CLS and BACA has been supported by CLS through the receipt of this sabbatical. CLS see the value of developing cultural understanding and appreciation with China in various ways and this is a welcome addition. The school

recognises the importance of Art and Design and the value of the link with BACA for this subject. The door is open for us to develop this link through the above ideas and future proposals that will benefit our students. However, this will require leadership, support, good-will and collaborative participation from colleagues.

Therefore, it is important that these proposals and ideas are conveyed and discussed with staff at BACA via Charlie Dutton. I will arrange a **TeachMeet** during the Autumn term to share these ideas and proposals and gather feedback from teaching staff at CLS. I will also discuss ideas with students to find out what will interest them most and expect varied responses from different age groups.

*\*More on BACA: They run a Foundation Art and Design BTEC programme and are pending new accreditation through UAL (which is likely to start in September). BACA is also currently developing a 1 year Art and Design A-Level programme and an alternative shorter orientation programme - equivalency of A Level to get Chinese Art and Design students up to speed with a British approach. The focus for BACA is to educate Chinese Art and Design students towards applications to the University of the Arts London (UAL) with which they are official partners through the company St Elite Art Beijing which organises interviews, portfolio reviews and the recruitment process to UAL. Although BACA is a very different organization to CLS I think there are several ways in which we could fruitfully collaborate with each other for the benefit of our students and teaching staff.*

*\*\* 'Global Citizenship Education (GCED) aims to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to become proactive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world.' <http://en.unesco.org/gced>*

#### **Additional Notes on the Value of the CLS Sabbatical:**

Although my proposal set out to explore and develop specific links in China which has been achieved and outlined above, I took the opportunity to further explore Art, Design and Architecture in LA and NY. I did an Art Residency collaborative pilot project exploring sculpture and virtual reality in the UK and am now seeking funding from the Henry Moore Foundation to complete the project. As part of this project I intend to co-produce an event at CLS with Ms Giannarou (Philosophy) during the Spring Term 2017.

I am very grateful for the sabbatical. The importance of this time for all-round professional development and reflection has been invaluable to refresh and recharge after almost ten years of teaching at CLS. It is a real asset and a testament to the school values and ethos that it has a sabbatical programme. I sincerely hope that it will continue to benefit others in the future.

#### **Last Word:**

Since I joined CLS in 2007, City of London School has always been a highly creative environment, open to ideas and cultural diversity - a challenging place to enjoy teaching and learning for all. Given that we are a school next to the UK's premier world-leading art



museums, Tate Modern, the value of Art and Design within the school could be stronger. I hope that this report provides a source of ideas to reflect and act upon both within the Art and Design Department and the whole school so that a new generation of globally-minded Art & Design innovators can emerge from CLS.

