



The art of inspiration

Sylvia Vetta talks to an art teacher bringing creativity to the classroom

How do you get young people interested in art? Teacher Teresa Garlake has been inspiring her pupils at East Oxford Primary School – and their work now forms part of a special exhibition at St Luke's Hospital and Care Home in Headington.

Teresa said: “As the pressures placed on children become more demanding, we believe that good art teaching allows them to express themselves and give precious space to their imagination and creativity.

“Art is about building confidence and free thinking. There is no such thing as a mistake in art as we can learn from everything that we do. It is important to value all the efforts of the children.

I always have high expectations of what they can achieve and it is rare that the children do not meet them.”

Many an art student would be proud of the directness, style and sophistication of Teresa's pupils. So how did she help them produce such consistently good work?

“They were allowed to spend time experimenting with colours

Continued on page 82



"The prints were created after looking at the work of Andy Warhol. Years 5 and 6 created their own designs for pictures of animals and then created printing plates based on them"



A section of the doll's house sculpture 'An Elephant in Every Room' by Alison Berman



Teresa Garlake working with Bilal

From page 80

It made for what seemed like a chaotic classroom but, in fact, the children were discovering how printing works through their own experiments. Some worked and some did not – a useful lesson in life.”

Oxford sculptress Alison Berman who has been helping with the project, added: “Teresa is amazing. She has exposed her pupils to the work of great 20th century artists and the result is that they have produced outstanding artwork inspired by them.”

Alison has framed around 100 pieces of work the children have produced over the past eight months and put them on display throughout the public and social areas in St Luke’s Hospital and Care Home in Latimer Road, Headington.

For residents, staff and visitors it adds a youthful vitality to the atmosphere.

Alison said: “The manager was brave to mount this show but since it went up he has received many lovely letters praising ‘the colourful and cheerful pictures painted by the children’. The response has been so positive that when I took down one and then another picture to remove the reflective glass from the frames to take them to the photographer: person after person exclaimed in protest ‘you are not taking that picture away are you?’”

The children of East Oxford Primary School come from diverse backgrounds and some new arrivals lack self-belief so it is good for their sense of self-worth that their work is worthy of celebration.

One of them, Noaman said: “I feel happy. All of the ill people will feel happy when they look at our art.”

Another pupil, Elsie enjoyed the freedom that art presented her – and the fact “that you

can do anything you like.”

Among my favourites and that of young artists Anna, Sania and Chris were the portraits inspired by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Teresa explained how they did them.

“We created lush backgrounds using a limited range of colours and we combined a range of skin tones in chalk pastel to look at the different parts of our faces. We painted the animals in watercolour.”

Teresa said: “Having looked carefully at our faces in the mirrors, we tried drawing with charcoal in a new way. We rubbed lots of charcoal onto a paper palette and drew with our fingers and hands. We tried to look at the light and dark of our faces and all got messy.”

The children I talked to all agreed that the hardest task were self- portraits made with a continuous line drawing while looking at themselves in a mirror.

Continued on page 87



*Self-portraits in
charcoal were
created by years
three and four*

Above: Years 5 and 6 (aged 9-11) were inspired by David Hockney when they looked at landscape

Top right: Portrait in chalk pastel inspired by Frida Kahlo (Years 3 & 4 aged 7-9)

Middle right: A print of a cat. Years 3 and 4 made their own paints and stencils inspired by rock paintings.

Bottom right: Portrait in chalk pastel inspired by Frida Kahlo (Years 3 & 4 aged 7-9)

From page 83

Anna said: "We were not allowed to use erasers if we made a mistake. We had to do drawings with only one line which was really hard. Someone made a really big line across the page but it actually looked really good. Lots of times the mistakes are the best thing."

They were also inspired by the stonemasons who created gargoyles on Oxford's many colleges. Years three and four created some wonderfully scary portraits.

The pupils also looked at traditional Warli art from India to inform a collage they created of the Cowley Road.

Teresa explained: "We created people using stencils and then printed buildings, trees and transport."

The children also looked at 20,000 year-old rock paintings and made paint from crushed rock.

Abir said Teresa's lessons had taught him "to be brave", and

Continued on page 90





From page 88

Elsie agreed: "I used to be really nervous about doing art, when I was younger, but Ms Garlake has inspired me to be brave with my art."

And thanks to Alison Berman their art is bringing smiles to St Luke's. Alison's own work on show at the hospital is evoking a similar response. Her permanent installation called The Elephant in the Room is both fun and thought provoking. **LE**

• To see the art at St Luke's or to learn more about the hospital please call 01865 228873 and talk to the administrator

All the pupils in years 3 and 4 contributed to this large frieze of the Cowley Road inspired by traditional Warli art.



Above: Chalk pastels on black paper. Years 5 & 6 looked at how Dutch artist Tom Schulten uses colour in his landscape work.
Right: A gargoyle inspired by sculptures on Oxford's colleges.

