



Abstract

This article provides an understanding of the successful 'Skills in the Making' project (SiTM) in the UK which aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the creative processes and skills for teachers and pre-service teachers. The particular case study presented describes the project as it was developed by the author at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).

The project involved Shelly Goldsmith (a textile artist) working with pre-service teachers as part of an existing module of study. It was hoped that by working in this way and increasing their confidence, once qualified, the teachers would continue to develop.

The illustrations and comments from the pre-service students included help to show the ways in which the hopes for the project are likely to succeed.

SECTION 12

Learning and developing skills

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project based learning

Introduction and contexts

There is little doubt that the opportunities experienced in art in art affect pre-service teachers in training and also once they have qualified (Atkinson, 2003; Beattie, 2001, Grauer, 1998; Cor-ker, 2010). The issues of experiencing contemporary art practices may pose more challenges in this respect as too brief an encounter may be insufficient to enable those individuals to best understand their own responses to the art forms or develop the confidence to incorporate it into their teaching (Green and Mitchell, 1998; Atkinson, 2013). Yet Gregory (2005) suggested the quality of the experiences was crucial in developing positive attitudes and developmental opportunities in the classroom. However, pressure from central government continues to intensify the focus on certain 'core' curriculum subjects (DfE, 2012a;

DfE, 2012b; DfE 2013) throughout school based opportunities as well as the teacher training process as well. It is against this backdrop that this paper will outline the nature of the project undertaken and the impact it had upon the participants.

'Skills in the Making' (SiTM) was 'a professional development programme for teachers and trainees [pre-service teachers] of art, craft and design and primary trainees [pre-service] teachers delivered by makers' (Mossop, 2013:3). It was delivered across the UK and financially supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation over a four year period - initially by 'the Making' (a crafts development agency) and subsequently by the National Society for Education in Art and Design (NSEAD) (Jones, 2013). Penny Jones coordinated the project, liaising in geographical regions with organising teams, teachers and craft workers to define a series of workshops and after-school workshop opportunities.

Although the main focus of this paper is a particular group of student teachers, it will be helpful to first describe the national context of the project.

Skills in the Making

The programme 'sought to improve the teaching and learning of contemporary based practice, to include making processes and material research, and to broaden skills, knowledge, understanding of the contemporary crafts that can be applied to teaching and learning within the classroom' (Mossop, 2013:3).

The skills that were intended to be developed were therefore situated in the making processes and the opportunities offered were very practically orientated. The programme in the earlier years was aimed at the pre-service teachers training as secondary teachers of art. This proved to be problematic in that the changes to teacher training (DfE, 2012b) meant fewer places were made available and some universities ceased to offer their art course as a consequence. By the second year of the programme, an increased focus on primary teachers was being developed. At the end of the third year it was recommended that the 'workshops should be embedded in PGCE or primary training courses' (Jones, 2012:6) and linked to 'new delivery partnerships...[to allow the] sharing of good practice and peer networking' (Jones, 2012:8). This opened excellent opportunities for the pre-service teachers and qualified teachers in the locality served by Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).

CCCU project

Working with the Kent Art Teachers network, CCCU was able to agree a number of opportunities for developing training. Firstly, the students in the second year of the Primary Education undergraduate degree programme were able to work with one of the makers registered with Skills in the Making as part of their elective module on art education. They were introduced to Shelly Goldsmith a local textile artist (see fig 1) and described as '... amongst the foremost textile artists working in the UK at the present time' (Millar, Axisweb). This introduction was via seve-

ral websites: Shelly's own, the 'Direct design' website (the gallery of contemporary textile artists) and the 'Axisweb' page. Together these provided an understanding of Shelly's approach and art forms (an example is shown in fig 2).

'Shelly's skilled application of materials and processes is further informed by a developed understanding of the associations these may evoke for the viewer - an aspect of her practice that she continually tests and extends. Shelly's metaphors of flooding, staining, and seepage may also be applied to the processes of the unconscious she explores. Shelly's work offers opportunities for the viewer to participate in a stream of consciousness that may bring fresh perspectives - not only to traditional skills and processes (the textile media she employs), but also to a fundamental understanding of ourselves, our relationship with the world we inhabit, and the residues we leave behind'.

Jane Wildgoose (on Axisweb: accessed September 2013)

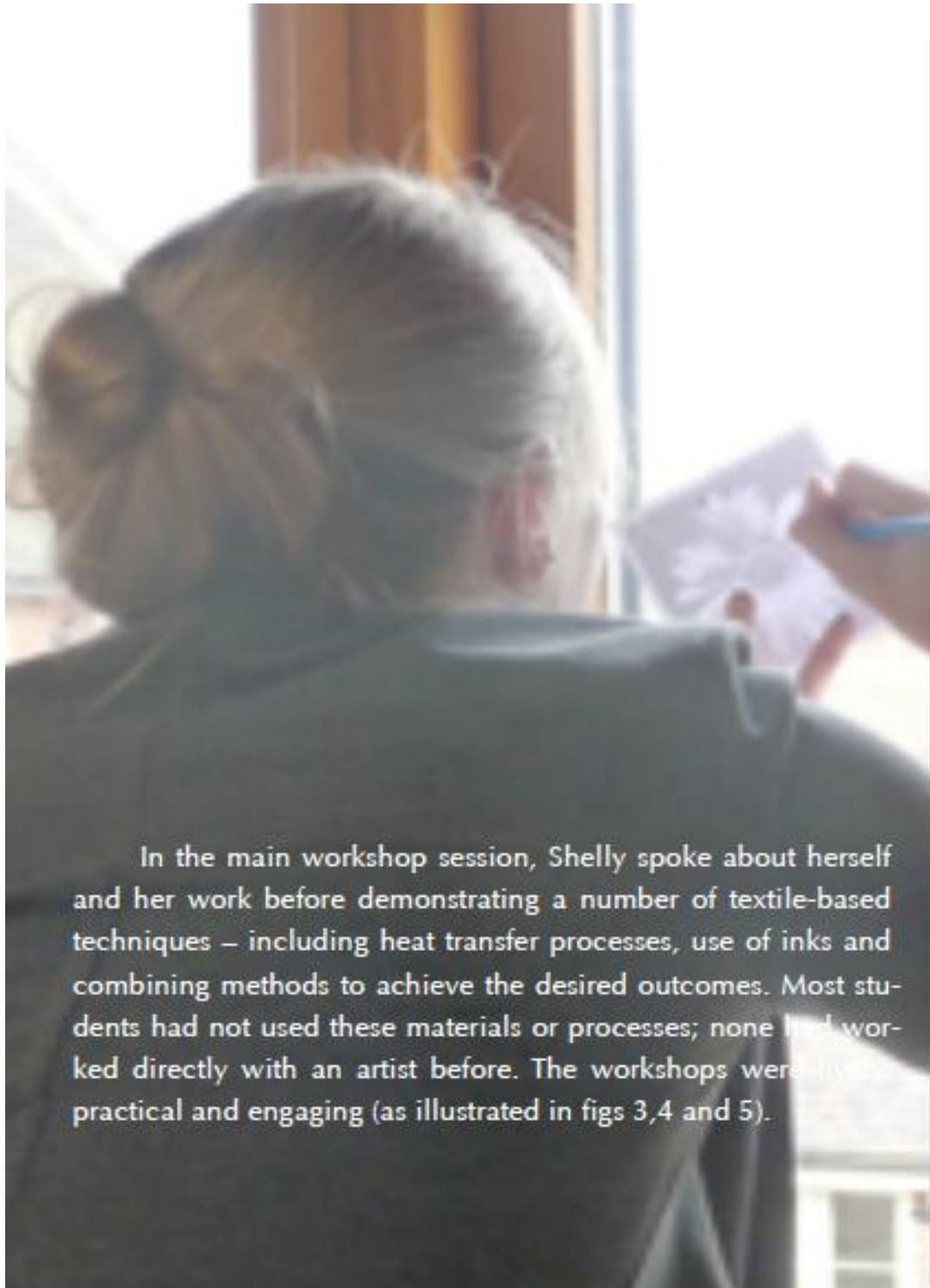
The week before the students met Shelly, she emailed them to outline what she intended to cover in the workshop session. This focused on issues of personal identity and students were invited to email words, sentences or images linked to this theme. In this way, Shelly began to develop a close, personal working relationship with each student before meeting them in the workshop setting on campus.

Fig 1 Shelly Goldsmith



Fig 2 Ball and Collar 2012





In the main workshop session, Shelly spoke about herself and her work before demonstrating a number of textile-based techniques – including heat transfer processes, use of inks and combining methods to achieve the desired outcomes. Most students had not used these materials or processes; none had worked directly with an artist before. The workshops were lively, practical and engaging (as illustrated in figs 3,4 and 5).

As part of the module, all students kept a sketchbook. This was not assessed as part of the marking process but was submitted as an appendix to their writ had learned over the sessions. (Pages from some sketchbooks are shown in the sections which follow.)

Indications of learning

Drawing on evidence from their sketchbook, assignment, evaluation comments as well as observations from the workshop and email responses following the next placement in school, it is possible to consider the impact the project had upon the pre-service teachers.

‘My encounter with Shelly was the first time I had met a person who works as an artist. It was really impressive to see her work and hear her stories – about how she created her work. In my sketchbook I noted down the inspiration that she gave to me....In the same way our topic allowed me to work with garments – this was very significant for me, especially learning directly from her. Now I realise that I could have taken more notice of Shelly’s work and built more on them rather than just relying on my memories....’

JK

Fig 3, Workshop activities

A close-up photograph of a person's hands, wearing a red shirt and a gold bracelet, working on a craft project. The hands are manipulating a piece of purple fabric or paper. The workspace is a table covered with various materials, including white paper, a stack of purple paper, a piece of orange fabric, and a pink paper bag. A pair of blue-handled scissors is visible in the upper left corner. The text "Workshop activities" is overlaid in white, serif font in the center of the image.

Workshop activities



Fig 5 Workshop activities

'[Shelly] came into the university and demonstrated how to transfer the various pieces, pictures and words, onto our t-shirts.

This was an invaluable experience.

Without this I would not have had an opportunity to explore my individual identity and what makes me, me, for example family and trips abroad..... I feel this session would inform my future planning.'

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Fig 6 Sketchbook insights

Many pre-service teachers used their sketchbooks to record their experiences. Usually these revealed a fascination with the technical processes they engaged in, but sometimes they also demonstrated further experimentation and application.

Some pre- service teachers specifically recorded what learning they felt had been undertaken from the experience.

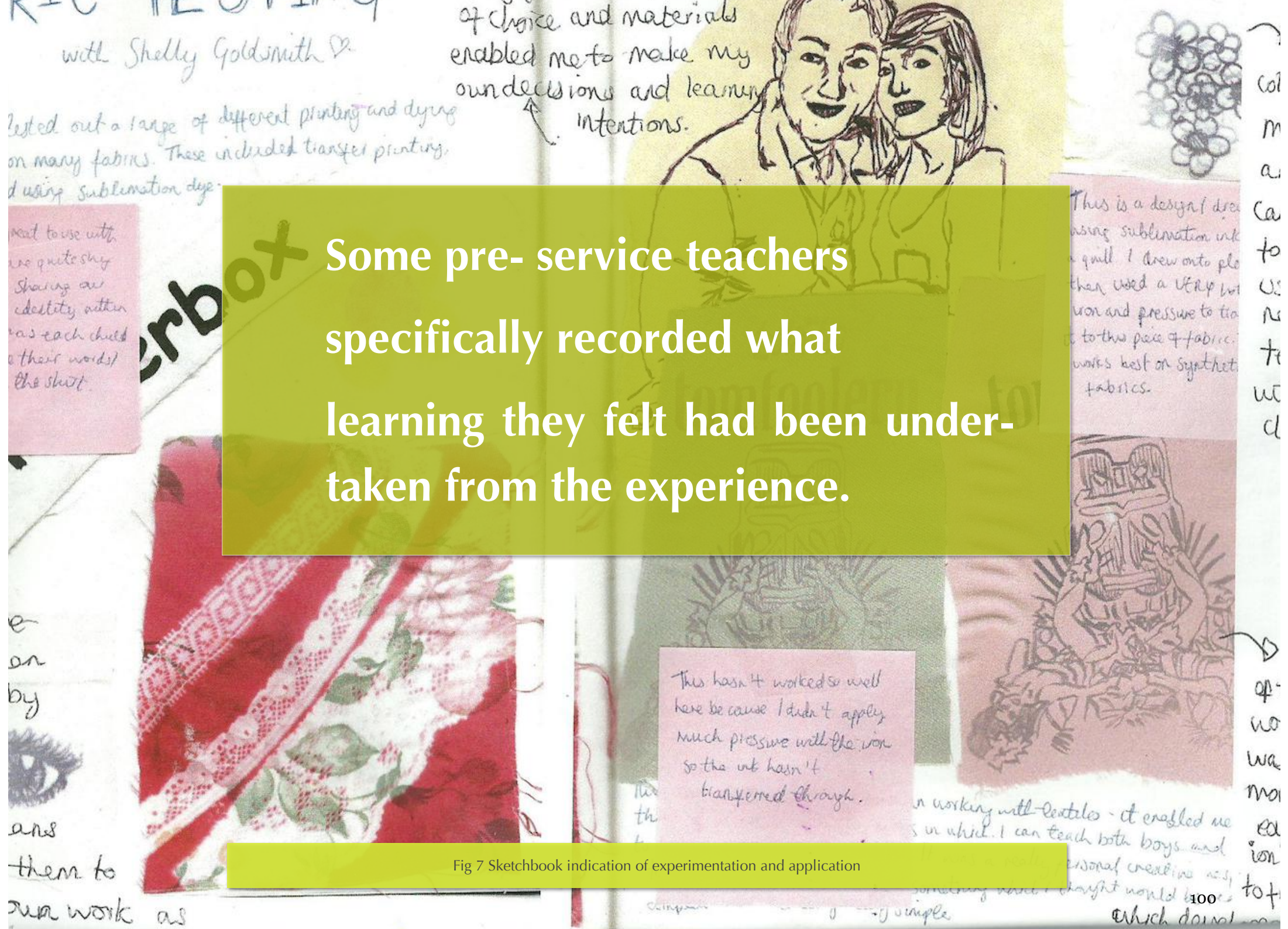


Fig 7 Sketchbook indication of experimentation and application

What did I
learn from this
session?

- A whole range of techniques to customise textiles that I had not used or seen before.
- Ways in which these techniques could be used within the primary classroom
eg: cross curricular - designing different cultural or historical era textile.
- Using the name tag technique that Shelly used to tell a story - could be changed or to encourage reluctant readers.
- A form of art where the learner does not have to be confident in drawing or painting and can have a go.

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Samples from
the session I made...



↑ A lace print using the dyed paper over the top, heat transfer paper and a very hot iron.



↑ Using stickers to create star shapes over a cross patterned section of dye.




↑ Using very pale dyed paper, a flower template and a sticker in the centre to keep it plain from the dye.



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Fig 8 A pre-service teacher's sketchbook demonstrating the development towards reflection on learning



The opportunity to work alongside a working textile artist appeared to have had an impact beyond that of an ordinary workshop.

CONCLUSIONS

Inspectors have already commented positively on opportunities in schools for students to work in this way (Ofsted, 2009; Ofsted, 2012). The SiTM project also allowed pre-service teachers to benefit.

importance of undertaking making activities of their own

The importance of undertaking making activities of their own (Dyson, 1989; Cleave and Sharp, 1996; Edwards, 2013) was clearly illustrated in the processes the pre-service teachers engaged in. The underlying importance of the project was not in the development or transference of skills (or the related techniques) but in the supportive mechanism by which it further allowed the learning process. As qualified reflective practitioners, those pre-service teachers will have opportunities to continue to apply that learning to their own creative endeavours and also in their teaching and inspiration of their pupils in school.

As one pre-service teacher commented:

'From working with Shelly it is clear that textiles can be used in a range of ways. One technique was the use of cryptology on fabrics, in particular, hidden messages inside clothing or concealed on fabric patterns. From my own investigation and enquiry of this aspect of textiles, I could see that it could be adapted to suit any age and nearly any subject....

In the classroom I could use her techniques to suit the subject in hand, for example, by using an old shirt, with lines of poems printed onto it, with the children in groups to decipher the poem.....it would also be possible to develop the designs so they could create their own shirt about themselves.....

To conclude,Shelly has enabled me to develop as a teacher, progress in my knowledge and to consider the effective methods for teaching.'

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In short, the importance of working directly with or alongside artists has been demonstrated through the SiTM programme. As Gregson (2011) and Ogier (2011) both noted, this approach offers an added dimension to pre-service teachers and qualified teachers alike.

The challenges for the future are to ensure the CPD opportunities are still available for teachers and to attract external funding to continue the programme for pre-service teachers.

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