

places and materials

About **KNOWHOW**
Studio approaches to
teaching and learning

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teaching and learning

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This book is designed for reflection. Space has been created for the reader to add scribbles of notes and sketches of ideas. Through use, the book becomes both text-book and journal. Enjoy.



Above
An iconic image for KNOWHOW:
the hands of the teacher perform
the knowledge of an artist. Almost
hidden are the hands of the student
also performing their growing
knowledge of an artist.

The Leonardo da Vinci Programme is an EU education programme that encourages the development and sharing of innovative learning and teaching.

The Leonardo da Vinci programme plays an important role in preparing European citizens for entering the labour market, thereby reducing unemployment. Taking companies' needs into consideration, the programme helps build a skilled European workforce in an increasingly competitive world.

Within this framework, it promotes mobility, innovation and quality of training through transnational partnership—co-operation between various players in vocational training, such as training bodies, vocational schools, universities, businesses and chambers of commerce.

<http://ec.europa.eu>



“Unless we can understand and articulate our distinctiveness we cannot conceptualize, assert or defend our identity because, simply, we have none.”

(Parker, 1997: 157)

Opposite page
Artist-teacher
International Ceramic Studio,
Kecskemét, Hungary

“Hands-on is better, because you remember it more.”

(remark by a student, March 2005)



A sense of place

Introduction

What do the places of KNOWHOW tell us? What educational values do we see in their structure? How is the ethos of place communicated? This book is a search for answers illustrated by field notes, observations, diary entries and images. It is a journey around the studios of KNOWHOW in Iceland, Estonia, Hungary and Britain; it is also a journey around KNOWHOW's defining values, commitments and aspirations, which cannot be pinned to a single place. A KNOWHOW place becomes a disposition, an attitude—wherever you are, teaching or learning, you bring the KNOWHOW place with you.

When you teach and learn through KNOWHOW, you have to consider place and engage with materials. The philosophy of the KNOWHOW place combines the practical with the emotional. The KNOWHOW materials include the media, the objects and also the practical processes involved in learning through experiential inquiry.

Opposite page
Experiential learning
Reykjavik School of Visual Art,
Reykjavik, Iceland

“Practices are developed by participating in their constituent material and cognitive processes. Ideas, issues, traditions of making, and histories of meaning are encountered through direct involvement and experience—rather than from the perspective of a spectator.”

(Danvers, 2003: 51)



Above and opposite page
Learning through materials
International Ceramic Studio,
Kecskemét, Hungary





Crossing boundaries

In Project KNOWHOW, it is the similarities in studio teaching practice that stand out, rather than the different historical, geographical and institutional backgrounds to that practice, suggesting that media and material processes mediate a robust framework of teaching strategies across language and cultural contexts.

This implies that combining the concept of the artist–teacher with such experiential methods holds great potential as a way of giving our young people the experience of trans-cultural learning, in Europe and beyond. Institutions that model this combination in their everyday practice are a resource of pedagogical expertise that, in concert with other educational approaches, could significantly influence learning and teaching of young people in various kinds of education and training. KNOWHOW offers inspiration to education systems that all too often focus on didactic, textbook-based methods.



Above and opposite page
Estonian students build
knowledge in Hungary
International Ceramic Studio,
Kecskemét, Hungary



“Any advice you give them is based in real experience, real time, and you understand what the needs are of the maker; you also understand what the demands are.”

(from interview with tutor, November 2005)

Below
Learning as a social
experience in the
International Ceramics Studio,
Kecskemét, Hungary and
the Glasgow School of Art,
Glasgow, United Kingdom



“If education is going to live up to its profession, it must be seen as a work of art which requires the same qualities of personal enthusiasm and imagination as are required by the musician, painter or artist.”

(John Dewey, in Simpson et al., 2005: 3)

The teacher and materials

The pedagogy of the studio is based on learning and teaching through materials. The practical strategies employed in this creative pedagogy centre on individual research and inquiry, with and through a variety of materials. This literally hands-on approach can be applied across all ages and sectors; it can be characterised as a relationship between place, person and performance, with materials at the core of this relationship.

Described through six principles, the KNOWHOW approach is made accessible as a framework for learning and teaching in different educational sectors. For the studio tutor, their identity as a teacher does not depend on a formal qualification, but rather through working with students and materials. Perhaps other educators could be imbued with their creative identity through immersion in an artist context? This could have implications for (initial and continuing) teacher education programmes.

“The students ask her [the tutor] questions related to their own work and how the techniques could be applied within their particular contexts. She continues to work through her demonstration, answering the questions at the same time. The tutor suggests alternative uses for the same materials, expressing her personal opinions regarding the different qualities of colourants and clays. She alludes to students’ previous experience with similar materials and explains how this demonstration is a development from techniques the students have used previously. The students are directed to a video resource available in the college library.”

(extract from researcher’s field notes, March 2005)



Above
Students photographing their work
International Ceramics Studio,
Keckskemét Hungary

Students working together
Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow,
United Kingdom

“We are obliged to examine with rigour the extent to which creativity has become the first sacrifice to modularity, and to realize how irreplaceable a creative education is.”

(Freeman, 2006: 101)

Opposite page
Impressions of learning
Student ceramic work



Place, meanings and materials

The six places of the KNOWHOW study embrace a great breadth of geography, culture, history and politics, the institutions are of various shapes and sizes, and they work with different education systems and policy frameworks. Despite this diversity, KNOWHOW has found commonalities that seem to withstand difference—or perhaps thrive on it?

What follows here is a description not of any single place, but of all the KNOWHOW places of study. The ethos of place that threads through the six original KNOWHOW places is the ethos of KNOWHOW itself. It can be seen in how a space is structured and used, and in how materials are used for every age and stage of learning.



The place of KNOWHOW contains clues to the philosophy and pedagogy of this unique learning community. KNOWHOW is metaphorically sandwiched between a supermarket and a co-operative of academics. Like the supermarket at street level, KNOWHOW meets a need: it supplies ingredients for lifelong learning that perhaps cannot be found elsewhere. Like the academics on the floors above, KNOWHOW encourages a continual search for new questions, making connections between the most unlikely sources and through a variety of materials.

KNOWHOW provides a forum in which to investigate what it means to be an individual in relation to our world and environment. It can be seen as a bridge between people's everyday experiences and their understanding of these experiences. The learning of basic art principles, concepts and methods gives students a language that will help them in their journey across this bridge.

*Above and opposite page
Materials are transformed
in the kiln*

Cloistered, contained and calm



“The ‘studio’ is a walled complex of whitewashed buildings and inner courtyards. The buildings are a mixture of original farm buildings and sympathetic new builds. There are cobbled paths and patches of green, large open outdoor spaces and small, intimate corners between ivy-clad walls. Within these walls are studio spaces, sleeping quarters, storage rooms, communal kitchens, kiln areas, administration offices, workshops and a gallery space. Each niche and nook of space fulfils a function; that function, or potential function, is described in the layout and physical content of the area. Throughout these spaces are examples of artwork, in a variety of media: metal, glass, collage, print, paint and ceramic. Some pieces of artwork are purposefully displayed; others are stumbled across in discreet parts of the courtyards.”

(extract from researcher’s field notes, March 2005)

Above
Architectural details
International Ceramic Studio,
Kecskemét, Hungary

“At first it was like, ceramics? Maybe it is cups and plates and maybe it is a little boring. But then I figured out that in ceramics you can do everything. For me it was like: Wow, you can do everything! It’s so easy this material —it’s really very human.”

(from interview with a tutor, December 2005)



Above and opposite page
Materials for
creative learning

The bridge between experience and understanding

For KNOWHOW this bridge is built by commitment to three basic principles or values:

1. the normalising of learning,
2. learning in community,
3. learning through the visual arts.

Too often, learning and education are seen as separate and different from our daily lives; they are not 'normal'. We go to school or university to learn different things in different subjects in different chunks of time. Learning is compartmentalised, cut off from our everyday lives. Normalising learning means taking away its 'differentness'—creating a situation where learning is infused into daily life, where education is a consequence of experiencing, exploring and understanding the everyday.

KNOWHOW people are engaged in a creative process of learning and making meaning. Each person is involved in a form of creative practice, so each person is engaged in their own journey of learning. The experiences of their learning journey inform their practice of teaching. This creates a depth of understanding about the learning process, to the benefit of the students. KNOWHOW people openly acknowledge themselves as learners, sharing what they know. That way, KNOWHOW successfully moves beyond the rhetoric of inclusive community learning.

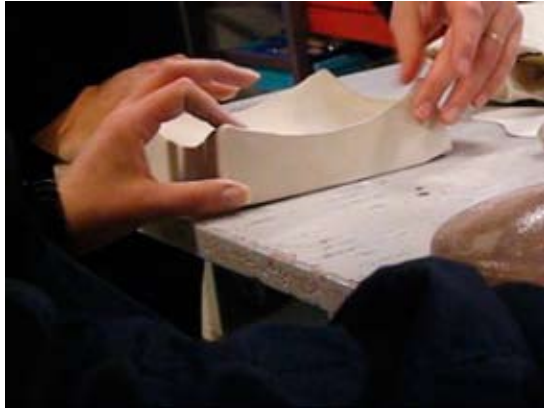
Everyone in the KNOWHOW community—administrative, technical or teaching—has a commitment to creative practice and facilitating learning experiences for others: they are each pedagogical artists. The two practices, art and teaching, are seen as mutually beneficial and important to the philosophy of KNOWHOW.

KNOWHOW generates an environment where people think through materials and creative processes. This form of learning is not restricted to a single, segregated age group. Students learn from their peers, but they also see—and learn from—others of different ages, interests and experiences. It is important for the very young to see that adults are engaged in the same types of activity as they are. This encourages the idea that learning is normal and everyday, that it goes on throughout one's life. Equally, it is important for teenagers and adults to be reminded that the learning of the very young is no more or less important than their own. Each sees the similarities in approach to learning, but also each sees and values the differences in outcome.

The strength of the visual arts as a tool for learning is seen in the breadth of outcome. The variety and difference of the final work is evidence of a system that facilitates the same opportunities for people, but allows individuals to make their own meaning and do their own learning through experiencing these opportunities.



Above
Ideas of culture and experience
in local textiles



“His hands are covered in wet clay. As he is speaking his hands are making movements in the air. These movements are similar to those of the demonstration. He repeats these movements around the clay already on the turntable. His hands are not touching the clay. He is talking all the time his hands are moving.”

(extract from researcher's field notes, January 2005)

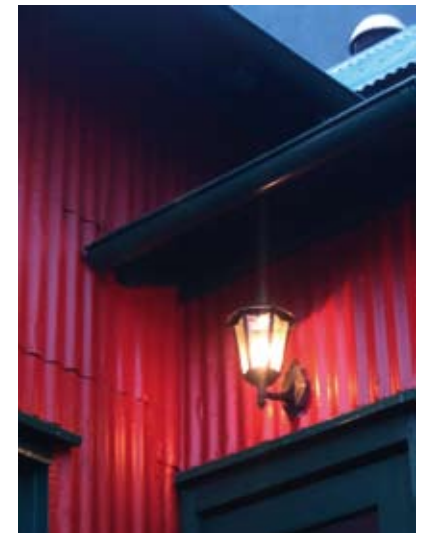


Above and opposite page
The hands of the artist-teacher in dialogue with the materials and the student. Reykjavik School of Visual Art, Reykjavik, Iceland and Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, United Kingdom



“Whether activity or language is the central issue, the important point concerning learning is one of access to practice as resource for learning, rather than to instruction.”

(Lave and Wenger, 1991: 85)



Above and opposite page
Inspirational environments,
Iceland

“If you look at teaching as a creative practice, then what’s wonderful is applying your creativity to new projects, new ways of delivering, new ways of demonstrating, new ways of actually getting students physically involved with what they’re doing. That really puts a lot back—I think that’s a sanctuary at the end of the day.”

(from interview with tutor, November 2005)



Above and opposite page
Woodfiring kiln
Creating the conditions
for transformation





Above
Ordered spaces
Reykjavik School of Visual Art,
Reykjavik, Iceland

Space to learn

The physical spaces of KNOWHOW are designed to support apparently opposing needs. Students and teachers need studio spaces, and these may be dedicated to particular media, such as ceramics or life drawing. The administrative and technical staff need working spaces that allow them to do their jobs efficiently.

The underlying philosophy of KNOWHOW demands a physical space that encourages community and cross-fertilisation of thinking. The construction of the interior allows studio spaces to take advantage of natural light, but the absence of doors into many of the studios allows people to see and be seen as they work. Situating a common room in the centre of the building supports the idea of coming together as a central practice. The needs of administrative and technical staff are met through the design of different office spaces throughout the physical space. Spending time in a KNOWHOW place gives the impression that everyone has ownership of the place. The three-year-olds appear as confident there as the teenagers; the older generation are enthused and interested in the youngest generation creating sculptures in the corridors.

In KNOWHOW it is accepted as commonplace to learn through the visual arts, not just learn about the visual arts. It is accepted as natural that the outcomes of learning will be different for each individual person. It is taken for granted that this type of learning will continue throughout a person's life, contributing to their sense of self and an understanding of their relationship with the world.

We are living in a globalised world that can no longer offer predictable life-long career opportunities to our young people. It is no longer enough to equip young people with a single trade and skill-based qualification or just a subject-specific degree if they are to thrive in our world. No, we as educators are obliged to prepare our young people with life-wide skills and the confidence to use them.

Among these life-wide skills are the ability to identify what needs to be learnt, knowing how to learn, and the capacity to think critically, embrace opportunity, take risks and reflect while doing. These are the skills learnt in the studio. These are the skills firmly established in the everyday studio teaching and learning of the places of KNOWHOW. These places offer a model of experiential educational practice that is robust and relevant to the needs and future of young people in Europe and beyond.

(text adapted from Maureen K. Michael, 'Myndlistaskólinn í Reykjavík: reflections from an outsider' on the Reykjavík School of Visual Art, Iceland, 2005)



Opposite page
Student working with plaster,
Glasgow School of Art,
Glasgow, United Kingdom



Above and opposite page
Students and tutor working in
partnership, International Ceramic
Studio, Kecskemét, Hungary



“Using the creative arts in teaching in higher education can engage and empower individuals who learn in different ways, and who may have been excluded from traditional forms of learning which value cognitive and verbal means of learning and assessment.”

(Simons and Hicks, 2006: 77)

Opposite page
Student sketches for design problems, International Ceramic Studio, Kecskemét, Hungary

The original sites of KNOWHOW



Reykjavik School of Visual Art, Reykjavik, Iceland

This is the lead institution for Project KNOWHOW even though, in student numbers, it is the smallest. However, it has the widest range in students' ages and backgrounds. The Reykjavik School of Visual Art (RSVA) offers programmes of study to people of all ages from three years old onwards. This creates an ongoing dynamic dialogue between the departments of the school, among teachers as well as students. The Reykjavik School of Visual Art extends the influence of the studio approach through formal curriculum work with teachers and pupils of the pre-primary, primary and secondary schools in the commune of Reykjavik and the neighbouring commune, Seltjarnarnes. In addition to their successful foundation-year programme: (preparing students applying for academic studies within the visual arts), the school has developed a programme; FORMING—clay and other materials, which is a degree-awarding course, providing new opportunities for students in the field of art, craft and design. Professional artists, architects and designers with part-time contracts staff the school.



Iceland Academy of the Arts, Reykjavik, Iceland

The Iceland Academy of the Arts is a young institution, established in 1999. The Academy offers degree-bearing courses across the departments of visual arts (design, fine art, architecture and theory) as well as music, and the performing arts. The Academy offers a Teaching Education Programme for BA degree graduates within the arts. KNOWHOW enjoys a particular relationship with the Teaching Education Programme. This innovative programme brings together 'artist-educators' from across the arts (music, performance and the visual arts) in a formal programme of teacher education. Drawing on their creative strengths and their disciplines through exciting practice-based projects, they prepare their work in the common school system as well as within the art schools for children and youth in Iceland.



International Ceramics Studio, Kecskemét, Hungary

The International Ceramics Studio (ICS) is affiliated with the University of West Hungary in Sopron, Hungary. It is geographically and perhaps ideologically separated from the university. ICS was originally established as a residential facility for ceramic artists in Hungary, but is now established as an international centre for creative education focusing on the medium of clay. The philosophy of ICS is demonstrated through the practice and writings of its director, János Probstner. János is convinced of the pedagogical benefits that come from students and professional artists working in the same place. ICS is an inspirational haven for established and aspiring artists from all over the world.



Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn, Estonia

Within the Baltic state of Estonia, the Estonia Academy of Arts (EAA) is the only institute of art and design that offers practical-based, degree-awarding ceramic courses. The Academy is in the heart of the capital city, Tallinn, but it attracts students from all over the world. In the ceramics department, great importance is placed on a combination of experimentation and skills. The tutors all maintain their own artistic practice in addition to their teaching duties, reflecting the value placed on creativity as a way of learning and teaching.



Cumbria Institute of the Arts (University of Cumbria from August 2007)

This institution is rapidly expanding to meet the demand for integrated, cross-discipline degree courses. As Cumbria Institute of the Arts, it became committed to an agenda of widening access and participation, an agenda that is now UK educational policy. It developed strong links with further education colleges and established a renowned programme of foundation courses. The Ceramics Department is grounded in a solid craft heritage, as well as providing opportunities to develop conceptual approaches to the medium of clay. The teaching and technical staff, both full- and part-time, all have their own professional practice. In the autumn of 2007, CIA became part of the University of Cumbria, encouraging studio-based education to influence and infuse other disciplines and faculties.



Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, United Kingdom

The Glasgow School of Art is a small specialist institution offering degree-bearing courses across the Schools of Design, Architecture and Fine Art. Within the School of Design, the Ceramics Department (the only remaining department of ceramics in Scotland) works with students in providing a broad base of design and conceptual experiences with ceramic materials. The department benefits from a strong student-exchange programme and also operates the only part-time, distance-learning Ceramics degree in Europe. Each member of the ceramic staff has their own artistic practice, demonstrating by example the ideals and challenges of artistic learning and teaching.



Opposite page
Master craftsman demonstrating,
Hungary

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KNOWHOW Partners



Reykjavik School of Visual Art, Reykjavik, Iceland
www.myndlistaskolinn.is



Iceland Academy of the Arts, Reykjavik, Iceland
www.lhi.is



Estonian Academy of the Arts, Tallinn, Estonia
www.artun.ee



International Ceramic Studio, Kecskemét, Hungary
www.icshu.org



Cumbria Institute of the Arts, Carlisle, United Kingdom
(University of Cumbria from September 2007)
www.cumbria.ac.uk



Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, United Kingdom
www.gsa.ac.uk

EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/leonardo/index_en.html