

minds making

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

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teaching and learning

Compiled by **Maureen K Michael**

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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>



“So where might an artistically challenging, socially relevant, economically viable, and culturally aware model of art education be found?”

(Sullivan, 2005: 27)



Above and opposite page
Possibilities and experience of
KNOWHOW are presented to an
international audience

“KNOWHOW is inspirational and it is aspirational. It is more a philosophy than a set of rules. It is more a way of thinking and of doing than a way of being told.”

(Maureen K. Michael)



Introduction

The work of KNOWHOW was celebrated by an international symposium called Minds Making, hosted by the promoting institution, the Reykjavik School of Visual Art in Iceland. It brought together the partners from Estonia, Hungary, the United Kingdom and Iceland to showcase the work of KNOWHOW. Using lectures, slide presentations and practical demonstrations, the content and structure of Minds Making showed how KNOWHOW themes can be made evident in practice. The purpose of this book is to share the insights developed from this successful symposium.

Above
The partners of Project
KNOWHOW meet at the Minds
Making Symposium, Reykjavik School
of Visual Art, Reykjavik, Iceland

Making minds with materials— Project KNOWHOW

**Maureen K. Michael, Glasgow School of Art,
United Kingdom**

KNOWHOW is place, person, performance and material. All four elements came together in the Minds Making Symposium, the embodiment of KNOWHOW.

In their architecture, the partner studios illustrate the diversity of the partners. The KNOWHOW partner studios had various former lives before they became art and ceramic studios. The capacity to adapt buildings and spaces, to integrate material processes with creative practice, balancing the needs of a group with those of the individual—adaptability is common to KNOWHOW places.

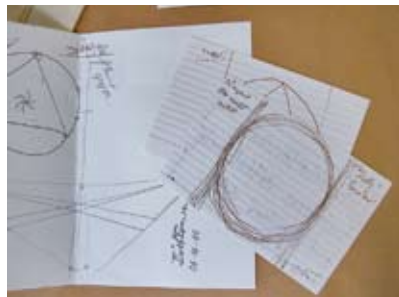
The artist–teacher is a person who is familiar with the circular process of inquiry, who understands that points of critical frustration are necessary in the journey towards innovative outcomes. The artist–teacher is someone who recognises ambiguity and difference as a familiar part of learning and who knows, through experience, that time and perseverance are often the only ways to resolve challenges.



Above
The results of thinking through
the materials of paint and ink

“Observation alone is not enough.
We have to understand the significance
of what we see, hear, and touch.
The significance consists of the
consequences that will result when
what is seen is acted on.”

(Dewey, 1963: 68)



Above
Collage and thinking diagrams
MK Michael

KNOWHOW is performance, but Dewey reminds us that watching a demonstration of cutting, kneading and throwing clay is not sufficient for learning. What is watched must be given meaning. The tutor supplements what is being watched with an oral description of his actions; he offers the students his understanding using the spoken word; he explains the significance of the doing. The students must then find their own meaning for what they have seen: they also must “do” —working with their material.

This triangular relationship between tutor, student and material is common to all the partner studios, and it is noted again and again in the field notes:

The tutor stands at the table corner beside the seated student. The student work is between them. Whilst the tutor is talking, the student is looking at the work that the tutor is holding in her hands. The tutor is talking about different forms and surface textures suitable for grinding peppercorns. The tutor uses her hands to illustrate the shapes she is describing in words. The shapes of her hands mimic the shape and movement the hands will have to adopt in order to create the necessary clay form. Her verbal explanation/instruction is reinforced through the movement of her hands with the clay form. Whilst the tutor is doing this, the student's hands are copying the movements, albeit more tentatively. Questions and answers are exchanged between tutor and student, both using their hands on the plaster mould to further explain their meanings or further articulate their questions. In the silent moments between the questions and answers there is still this movement of the hands across the work. When the tutor and student have finished their discussion, the student moves to the second studio and begins working with the clay form, repeating the movements of the hands seen in the initial considerations.

(Extract from field notes, RSVA, November 2004)

KNOWHOW can be characterised by ideas of person, performance, materials and place.

The KNOWHOW person is a reflective, creative practitioner. This is someone who has confidence and experience in the creative process as a framework for learning. The KNOWHOW person readily acknowledges that 'learner' is part of their identity and is able to empathise with those whom they teach.

Intrinsically linked to the KNOWHOW person is the idea of performance. Performance in KNOWHOW is a communication of experiential knowledge through the demonstration of practice, anecdote and formal curriculum. Performance illustrates the tacit, intuitive knowledge of the practitioner and acknowledges the significance of a multi-sensory approach to learning and teaching—a visual demonstration with a spoken commentary (personal and anecdotal) and a personal experience with the material and process in hand. Part of the performance is the non-performance: knowing when to step back from the activities of teaching in order to give space for learning to happen.

At the centre of the performance are the materials of KNOWHOW. KNOWHOW materials are the tangible, experiential things through which learning and teaching is made meaningful. It is not important what the materials are, but rather that they are relevant to the learning experience. Paper or prose, drama or dance, food or music, cloth or clay—these are all materials that require interaction with the senses. It is important that there is an individual physical engagement with objects and materials if learning is to happen. The focus on the aesthetic experience, the critical engagement with materials—together they offer a possibility for learning that can so easily be lost in our common school systems, where policies and budgets seem to conspire against the time and confidence needed for creative, experiential learning.

The materials, performances and people of KNOWHOW shape the place of KNOWHOW: a physical and emotional environment that responds to the demands of material processes and encourages the social interaction necessary for effective learning—this is the KNOWHOW place.



Above
Creative outcomes as evidence
of thinking and learning



Above and opposite page
The landscape of learning and
communities within the landscape.
County Dalasýsla, Iceland.



Above and opposite page
How does our built environment
affect our learning?
The architecture of downtown
Reykjavik, Iceland

“Through participation students question. By deliberating and doing they become answerers.”

(Margaret Macintyre Latta in Diaz and McKenna 2004: 187)



Above and opposite page
Fishing boats, Reykjavik, Iceland

Steve Ogden and Ed Bently, Cumbria Institute of the Arts, United Kingdom, demonstrate Teapot Sledging in Iceland



Above and opposite page
Demonstrating the tacit knowledge
and skills of the artist-teacher



Above and opposite page
 Demonstrating the tacit knowledge
 and skills of the artist-teacher

“Experience can be objectified through making art pictures of any kind. It can be visually and verbally explored in a journey that can be likened to aesthetic experience and it is this journey and not just what is at the end of it that a young art student described as containing ‘the entire colour scale of feelings’. All education should be such a journey and art education is an excellent space for this.”

(Rosa Kristin Juliusdóttir, University of Akureyri, Iceland)

“I decide myself if I succeed in making a picture. A mistake is only the beginning of a new adventure.”

(student quote following experiences with the Summer Art Camps of the Reykjavik School of Visual Art, Iceland)



Above
Exploring colour theory
Reykjavik School of Visual Art,
Iceland

Studio practice as a state of mind— a/r/tographic commitments as a way of being

**Rita L. Irwin, University of British Columbia,
Vancouver, Canada**

I am in admiration of all of you for the intense work and dedication you have given to the project over the last three years. The sheer distance between sites could have been a deterrent, but in the end it appeared to be a motivation for collaboration. Electronic communication brought people together quickly, while face-to-face interactions were still the most beneficial. This is not surprising because, if people are to learn, they need opportunities to discuss, interact, learn from one another, negotiate and engage with others on important issues—and the same is true for institutions.

And finally, the languages and cultures of the groups in the project had to have been a challenge, even with an agreement that English is the working language of the project. After all, it is a foreign language for four of the six partners. I was impressed to hear that Maureen viewed the language differences as an advantage, in that she was able to focus on the observable behaviours rather than the language of the lessons. Having said that, I am sure she would have learned more with a facility in each language. And, of course, cultural matters were another area of diversity and learning.

The main goal (of KNOWHOW) was to articulate the existing pedagogy of the ceramic studio—that is, the relationship between learning, teaching and making—in a manner accessible to other education practitioners. “Framed as a research question: How can the learning, teaching and making experience of the ceramic studio environment

be re-presented and made accessible to other education practitioners?” Somewhat later in the report, the aims are stated even more clearly:

The explicit aims of KNOWHOW are to promote the experiential nature of studio learning and teaching as an approach to education that could be used in common [state] school systems and/or training environments ... The implicit aim of KNOWHOW is to promote the aesthetic experience of art practice as a valid framework for learning, teaching and research.
(Michael, ‘Project KNOWHOW’: 21)

I think it is here that I wish to linger a bit. Both these aims begin with promotion:

1. Promoting the experiential nature of studio learning and teaching as a worthy approach.
2. Promoting the aesthetic experience of art practices as a valid framework for learning, teaching and research.

These are large advocacy goals. The report speaks about the increased evidence of competitiveness in a market-driven economy and the need for creative, imaginative, autonomous and risk-taking individuals, and more of them. The report also recognises that “teaching too often functions as a denial of creativity” (Freeman, 2006: 91). The report claims that art school studio practices are rooted in creativity, since the teachers and students identify themselves as artists. The report goes on to say that:

The teaching within an art school studio is a model of engaging students not just with creativity, but with critical creativity through materials and processes: a model of educational engagement that holds critical scrutiny at its heart.
(Michael, ‘Project KNOWHOW’: 24)



Maureen Michael suggests that the studio model is one of the most important models for art instruction today, despite the influence of new technology. Each studio culture traverses a plane of oppositions between theory and practice, concept and content, visual and textual. For Maureen Michael, these dualities lead to a place where great creativity, collaboration and critique can exist in a community. She goes on to call this 'a community of practice'—using Lave and Wenger's definition that emphasises participation as a process in learning ...

... As I reflect upon my own days in the ceramics studio, my experiences resonate with the narratives that were portrayed in Maureen's report. I am also thrilled to see Maureen's picture book that portrays the themes through visual and textual means. And the fictional narrative does a brilliant job of teaching us the qualities of working in a ceramics studio. To those reading this narrative, I am tempted to think they will come to know the studio in a much more immediate and intimate way than they would have through the report—though the report is meaningful!

... The research was carried out in a thorough, thoughtful, efficient and timely manner. It has a societal contribution to make and the KNOWHOW project itself, without the research, is a stunning example of community-based partnerships that truly works ...



*Above and opposite page
Developing knowledge
of shape and form.
Children's art classes,
Reykjavik, Iceland*



“A curriculum centred on ideas rather than technique is beginning to emerge.”

(Jackson, 1999)



Above
Appreciative graffiti

Opposite page
Inspirational
landscape, looking
north from
Reykjavik, Iceland



A possible way of artist education— a new renaissance

**János Probstner, International Ceramics
Studio, Kecskemét, Hungary**

The computerised 'brave new world' has brought about grand changes in every area of life: the maddeningly huge amount of information and the fact that the real world is now interchangeable with virtual images means that creative human beings, the art pupils, are in danger of losing their knowledge and contact with real material and how to work with it. Yet, with this, man might lose one of the intrinsic and unsurpassed values of the very nature of being human ...

... artist education, in my opinion, is by no means about creating theories and methods, and then forcing them upon real life. Rather the system of artist education can only be constructed as a whole by presenting as many ways forward as possible—to be chosen freely, combining direct spiritual/ ideological dialogues with tangible demonstrations in practice, and by establishing a harmonious balance between mental and experimental experiences.

Opposite page
The artist-teacher
János Probstner

“What is missing at this time is a catalyst that will bring the multiple benefits associated with learning in the arts to the attention of the general public. Otherwise, the arts are likely to remain at the periphery of our education system.”

(Liane Brouillette, in Brouillette and Burns, 2005)



Above and opposite page
Objects of making and inspiration



Visual extracts

The presentation of Ian Farren, Director, School of Art & Design
Cumbria Institute of the Arts, United Kingdom

Traditional and Contemporary Craft at the edge of the Empire;
a Cumbria Perspective



Above and opposite page
Students in partnership with
tutors and working across
different materials

Reflections on reality



Above
Ceramic work
Reykjavik School of
Visual Art, Iceland



Above
Student drawing
Reykjavik School of
Visual Art, Iceland

Researcher artefacts
on display, Reykjavik
School of Visual Art,
Iceland

Sigurjon Myrdal, Icelandic Ministry of Education

When Sigurjon Myrdal of the Icelandic Ministry of Education was asked about using the KNOWHOW approach in the school system, he agreed with the symposium that it demonstrates good educational practice, saying:

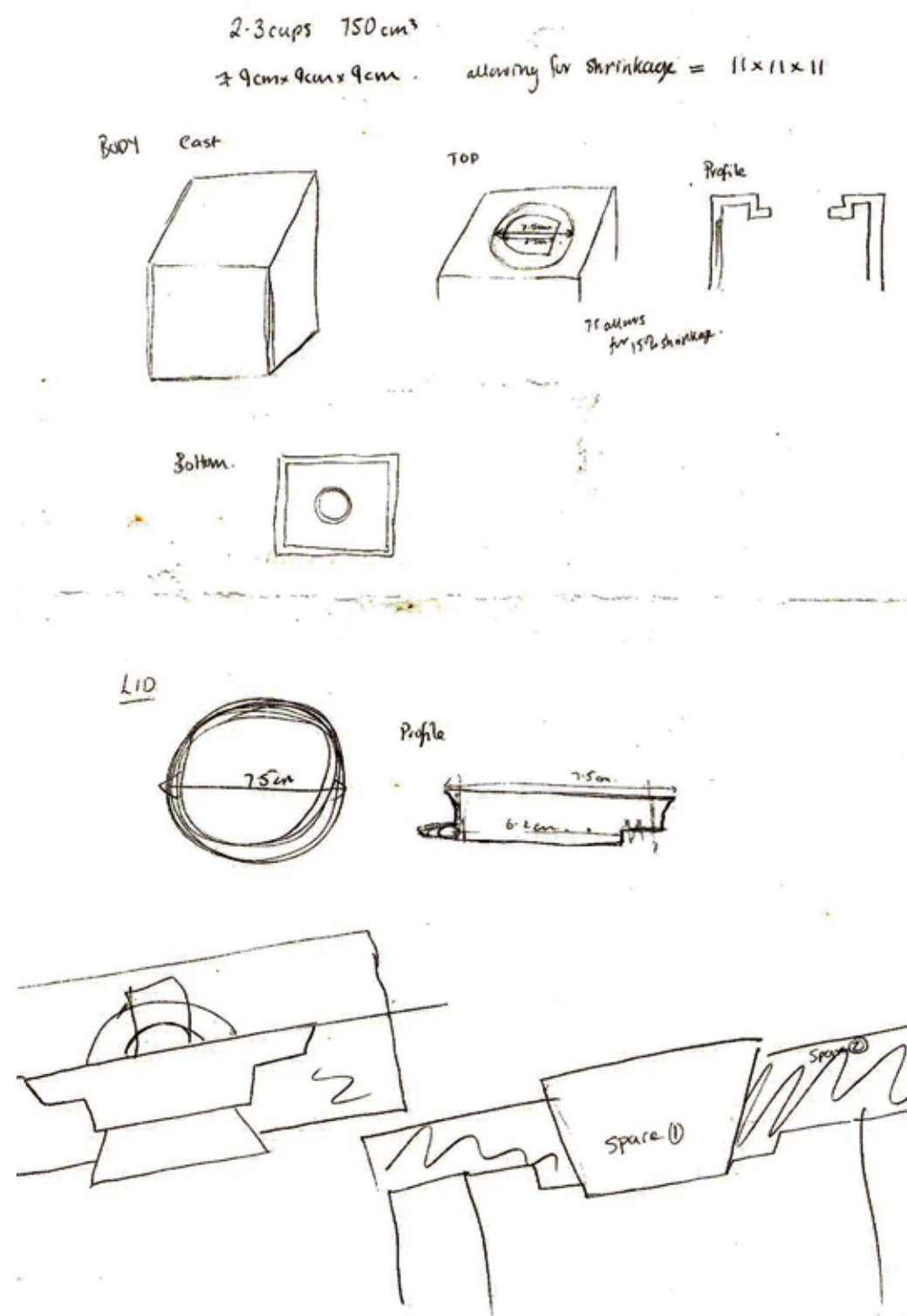
This has nothing to do with official policies or teacher education; it has to do with money and the allocation of time as a resource. This approach is time-consuming, not very goal-orientated or efficient. You need to give students time, space and freedom to reflect and experiment in community. So, we need to decide whether we want to spend our money on real education or not?

This is a reality faced by policy-makers in every sector of education. KNOWHOW provides a forum for the discussion and debate of such practical but essential questions—real education or not?

Discarded drawings— the importance of drawing in the communication of meaning

**Bill Brown, Glasgow School of Art,
United Kingdom**

The drawings, sketches and scribbles that are made on scraps of paper or table-tops are often essential in communicating ideas and concepts in a way that words alone cannot. The visual presentation Discarded Drawings examines a collection of drawings made between individuals as a means of understanding each other.



Visual extracts

The presentations of Irene Bell, Bill Brown and Archie McCall,
Glasgow School of Art, United Kingdom

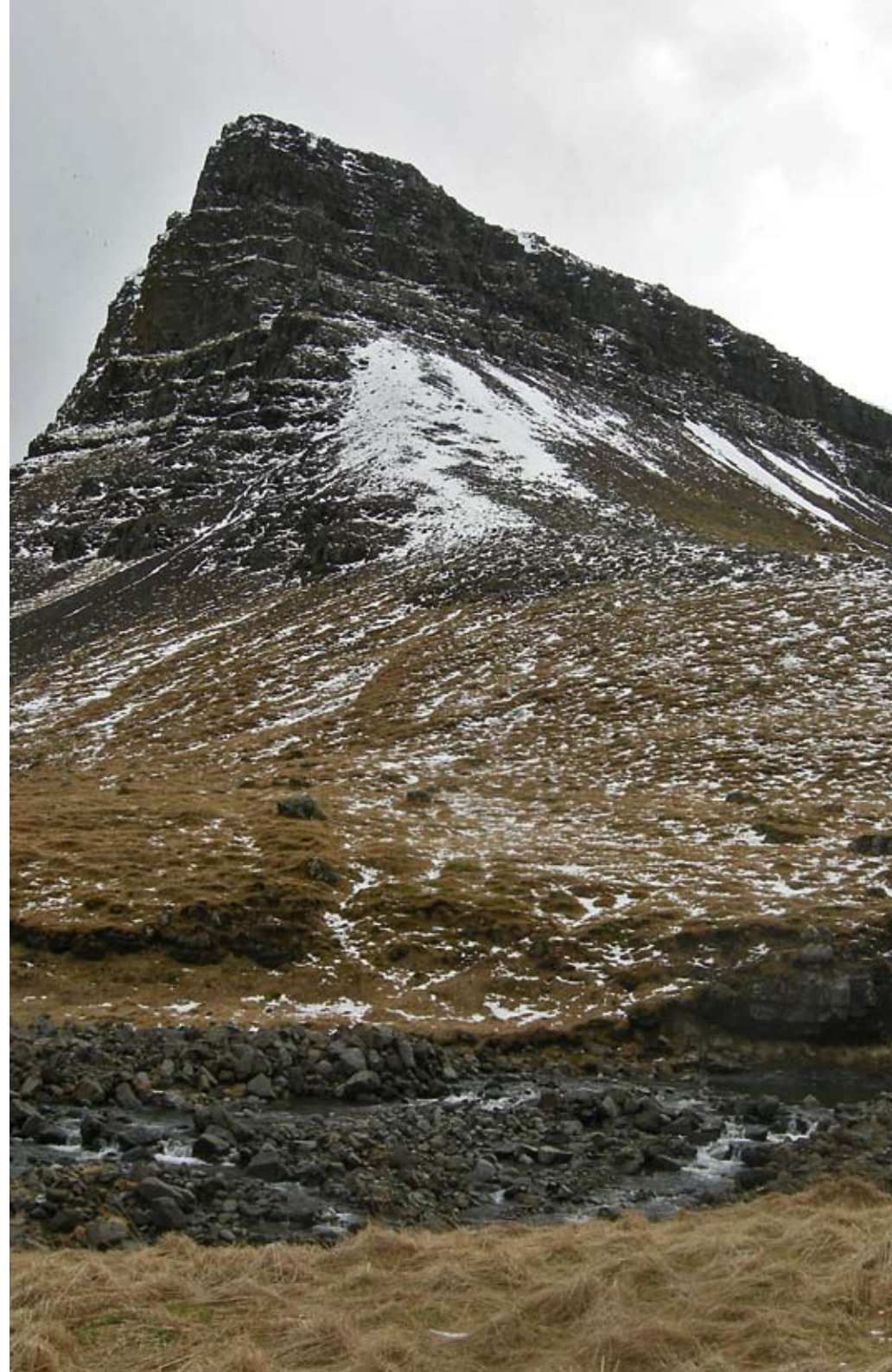


Above and opposite page
Master craftsman working with plaster

“If you raise the level of meaningful discourse in even a general education course, the level of work produced will improve dramatically and students will leave the course with an understanding of how meaning is shaped by images through various technological means.”

(Jackson, 1999)

Opposite page
Aspirational hopes
for learning
Nyp, Northwest
Iceland



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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