

Raising Aspirations

By [Stephanie Cubbin](#)

Art educator and writer Stephanie Cubbin talks about raising aspirations in Key Stage Three Art, and shares advice and strategies for supporting students' artistic development.



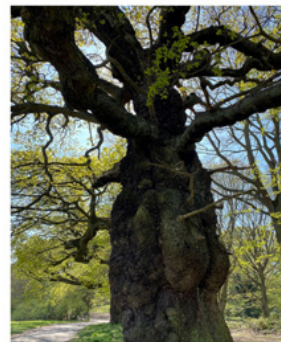
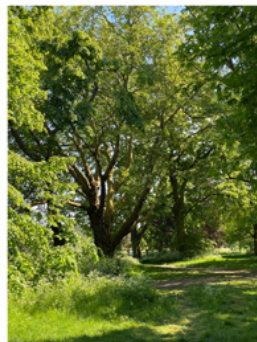
One of the many things I love about teaching is seeing students make or create something that they did not expect they were capable of. It's all about high expectations and what I term 'lifting the lid'. Often with teaching schemes of work, particularly in Key Stage Three, the artist and the work they are expected to make is set. Year 7 can make "drawings in the style of (add your own artist here)" and they will all make this. To ensure that we are maintaining a good classroom atmosphere, we have to make sure that students can all access the work, and so it is often tailored to the weaker end of the class. Students do well when they have completed the task and

differentiation is all about ensuring there are extension tasks for the more able. However, the issue with this way of planning is that there are fewer opportunities for students to show exactly what they can do. Not free drawing lessons where they can draw whatever they choose, but a project with high expectations of research, photography, drawing, painting and experimentation.



I chose to do my final painting in the style of adrian berg as my first imitation (I felt) had a lot of room for improvement. I wanted to try the style again. I also wanted to have another go at acrylic because my other adrian berg painting was only my second painting in acrylic. I did this in a sketchbook and my ruff sketch (to help me know where to paint) filled the whole page, while my painting only filled 2 thirds of it. This is probably because I was painting from a picture smaller than my page so I found it hard when paying attention to detail, I didn't think to make it bigger. That is another thing to improve-painting on a bigger scale than the image.

In my painting the blossom is curving to the right, whereas in the picture the blossom is pointing in a fairly straight direction. This also affects the backgrounds scale. The pathway is supposed straight as well. I changed the colours so they were more like the ones that adrien berg uses in his. I also had only one pink (which was pale) in my acrylic set and it was hard to turn it into bright pink. I did do a lot of experimenting and mixing colours, especially with pink and reds.

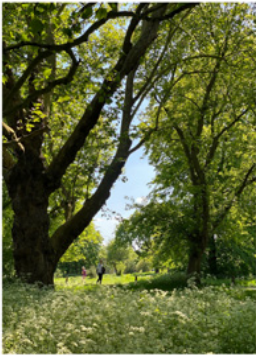


These were the photos I took of regent's park, I chose photos that used vibrant colours so i could incorporate some of those into my final piece. I also focused on the landscapes surrounding water as I was thinking of doing my landscape around the idea of the reflections.

So instead I like to think about the Year 13 students, and what I would expect of them. I'd like my students at that stage in their art education to understand the creative process, the value of good resourcing and experimentation. I

know that they find it more difficult to develop their own ideas, but it is easier with preparation. I want my students to be able to articulate their process and critically review their own work. Finally, I would like them to underpin their ideas with excellent research from a wide range of sources, including live ones.

All of this I ask of my KS3 students too. The curriculum is planned on a theory in which students repeat the same creative process and increase the level of demand for those Y13 qualities. I personally call it the 'creative process' and this process is the basis of any assessment, not one task or drawing, but the whole process (even if it is shortened) and feedback is about the process too. Students are asked to self-evaluate their creative process and annotate through their workbooks on how their art-work is directing their own ideas.

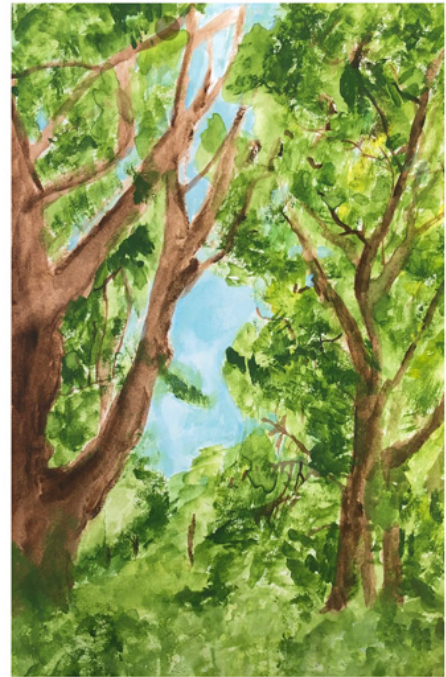


I took this photo in Regent's park and used watercolours to paint my piece.

I used a combination of the two photos on the left to complete the piece and was happy with the overall result. I like how the parting in the trees makes you look to centre of piece and I like how the blue stands out.

Whilst painting my piece, I tried to create the effect of cow parsley as I liked how it framed the picture I took, but when I added a thin layer of art masking fluid to the areas I wanted to remain white, I painted around it areas but when I peeled it off, it peeled off a layer of paper underneath and didn't create the effect I was hoping for. I ended up just painting the whole area the same colour to then add definition and tone to it later on.

If I were to do this painting again, I would add other colours such as yellows blues to make each individual leaf stand out. I would also move the trees down the page so I could add more detail to the top of the trees.



There are some things that I believe are

fundamental to aspirational KS3 teaching:

1. Students should always have choices when it comes to artists – maybe they are choosing a piece from a choice of one artist's work, or choosing between two or three artists. Either way, the students are responsible for their decision and need to articulate why these images are in their projects. What did they use to discriminate between all the works?



royal college
of
ART

John Piper was a British artist who grew up in Epsom in Surrey. He was the youngest of three sons and his father owned a law firm called Piper, Smith and Piper. His two brothers served in the first war and one of them was killed in Ypres. John was not old enough to fight and attended Epsom College from 1918. He hated the school and had to take refuge in art. He spent much of his youth cycling around Surrey, documenting churches and monuments; this is the inspiration for much of his well-known work.



John Piper

(13th December 1903 -
23rd June 1992)

my copy



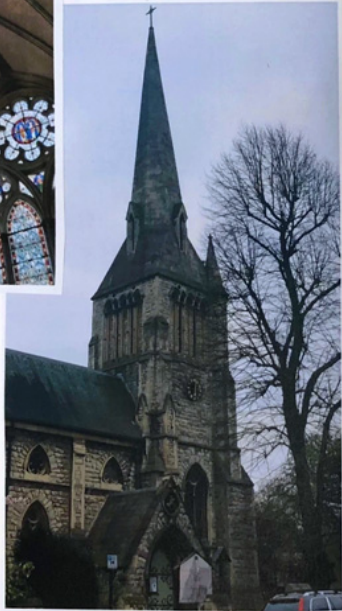
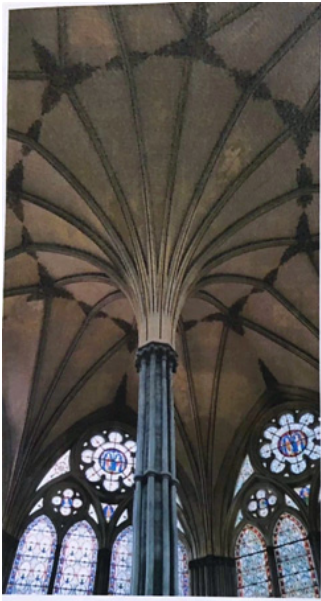
WW2
churches,
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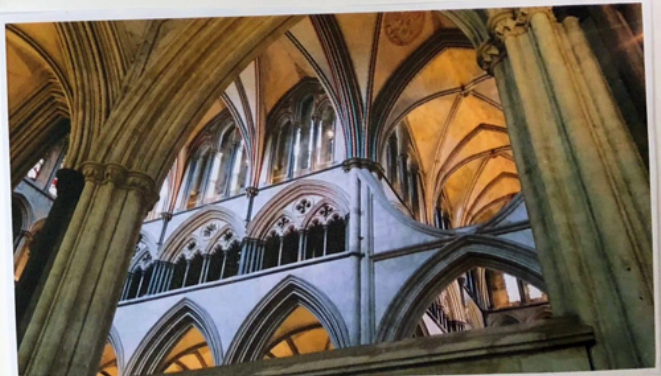
Piper became a war artist in 1940. He was an official member of the War Artists' Advisory Committee and managed to persuade his superiors that he was needed to paint the bombed ruins of churches. This decision reflected his passion for the buildings, even as a child, and Piper was responsible for famous works like Coventry Cathedral. The artist managed to find beauty in ruin and this inspired many civilians to keep hope through the dark days and nights of the Blitz.



After John Piper left school his father forced him to join his law firm. John worked there for three years but eventually resigned and went to art school. This angered his father and cost the young man his inheritance. He started at Richmond school of art where a professor helped him to prepare for exams to get him into the Royal College of Art. He arrived at the school in 1928 and left in 1929, taking the method of teaching John Piper did, however, meet his future wife - Elvira Hading.



PHOTOGRAPHY





3. Some art teachers believe that allowing students to trace, use light pads, or work from photos is wrong... I disagree - we break down language for teaching, so why not drawing? Students can trace an object and then (in their drawing lesson) focus completely on the mark-making to show tone and shading. They spend time building a language of marks and when this is mastered, then we can tackle the observational aspect of drawing. The students feel confident enough to 'try' without immediately giving up. It's all about manageable chunks.

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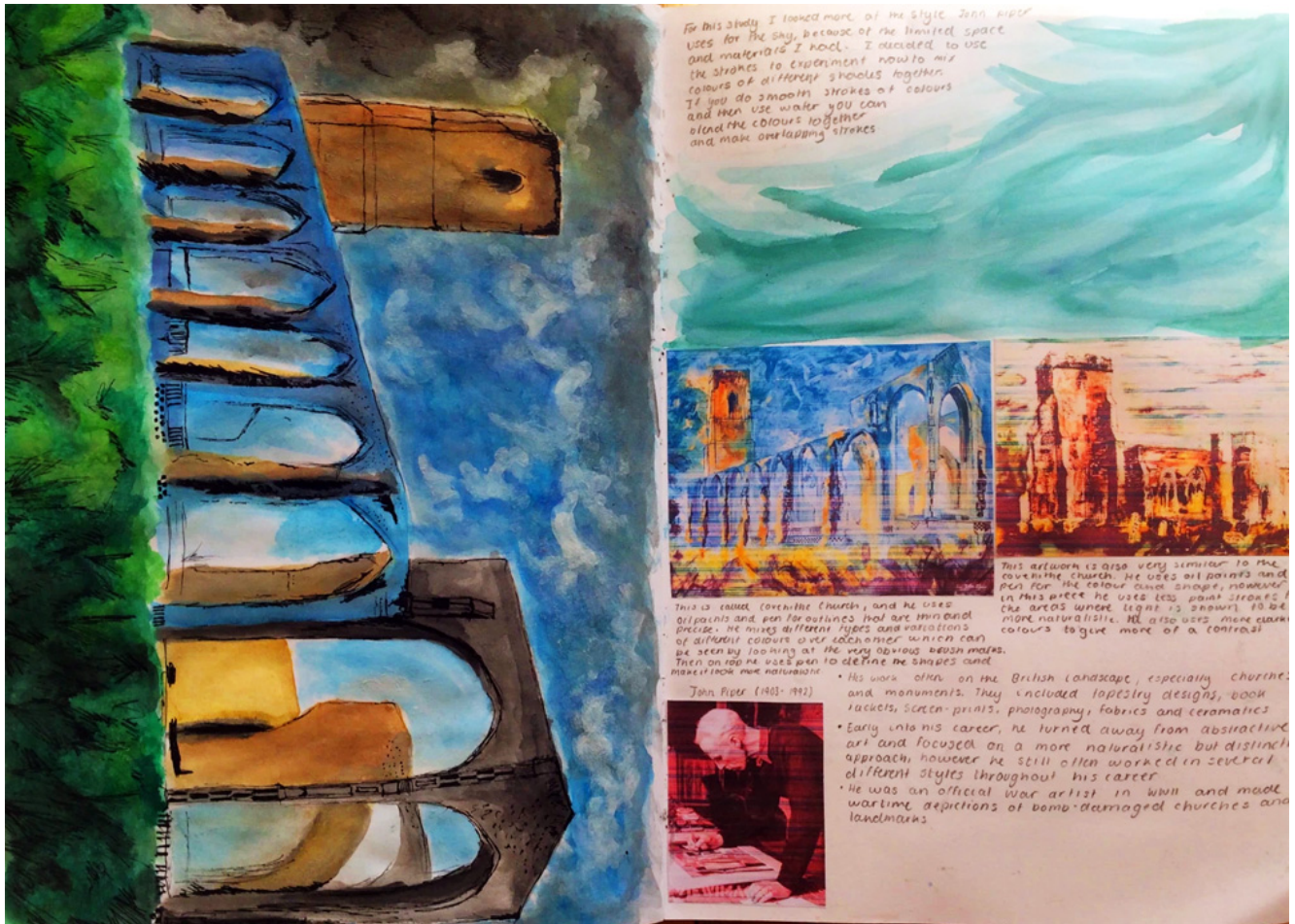
raits from
ints in his

also paints his friends, and family. Hockney
es oil or acrylic paint to give his pictures a
d flat effect. In Hockney's pictures, he uses very
brave colors which makes them really stand



This is called 'b
by David Hock
it was made in
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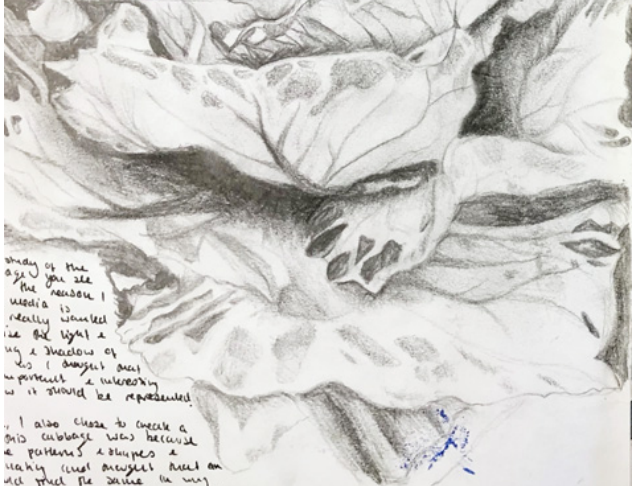




4. Students need to be given the opportunity to make their own connections, including Year 7. Many students have mobile phones with cameras, or can share with friends. They need to understand, as early as possible, the difference between taking snaps and composing a photograph inspired by an artist or photographer. Collecting your own resources is fundamental to making original artwork, and in KS3 art, students can make original and exciting artwork.

5. Students should be given the opportunity to exhibit their work - in corridors, online blogs, galleries or community spaces, or even on posters, invites and cards from the school. They start to

see their making as a serious enterprise.

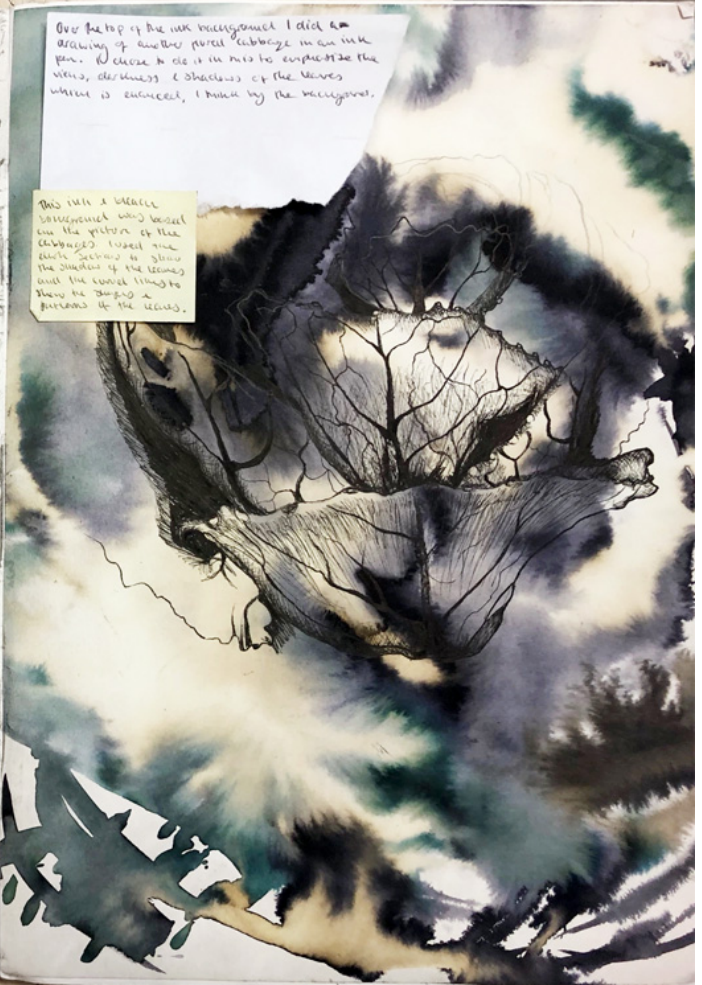


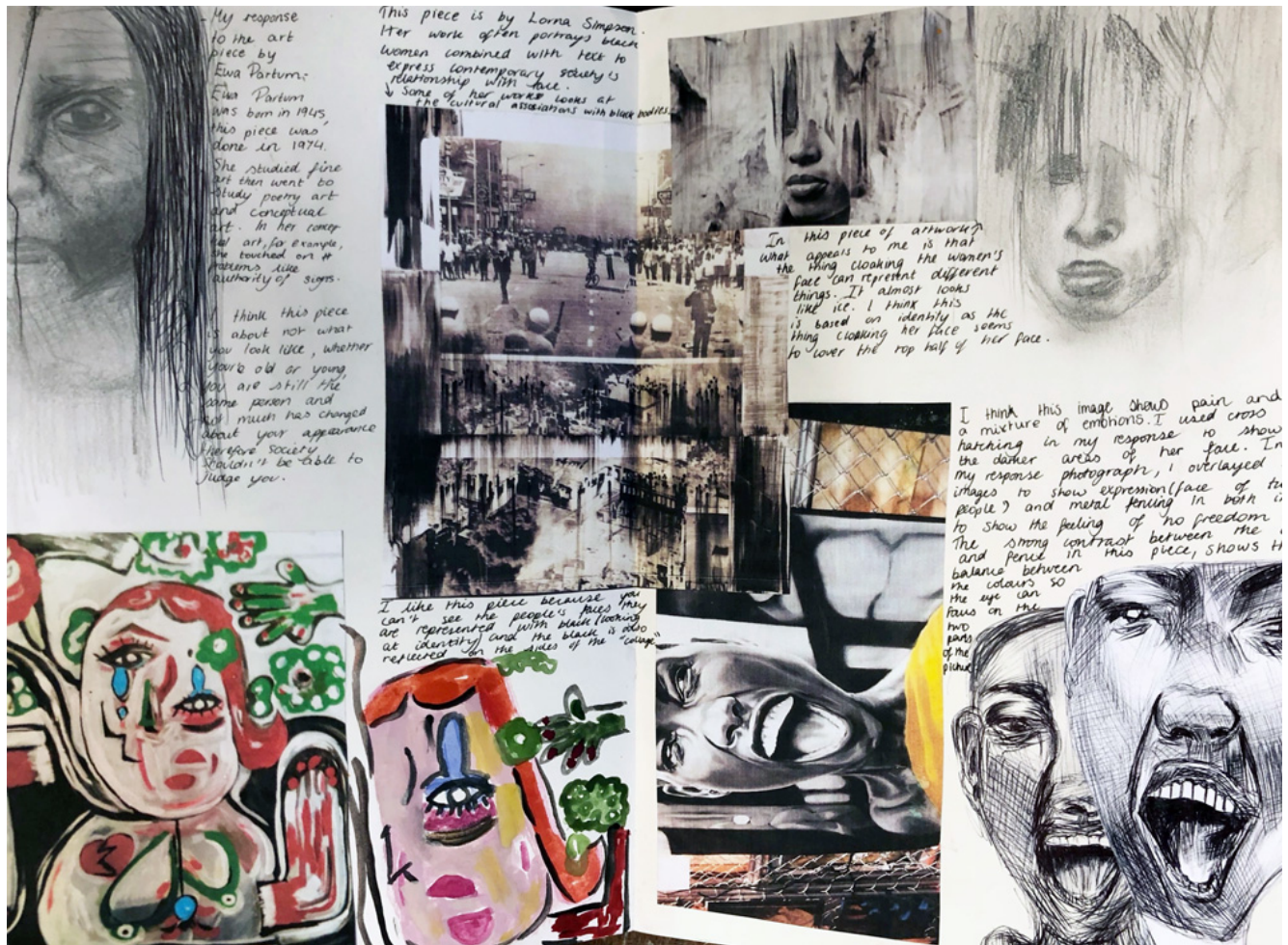
study of the
age you see
the reason I
really wanted
the light &
the shadows of
the leaves and
the interesting
as it should be represented.

I also chose to create a
this cabbage was because
a pattern of shapes &
which I had thought about
the light & shadows in my
the leaves & patterns I tried to
by looking them closer & closer.
doing it in pencil allowed me to fulfill
as now I wanted the picture piece to look.

Over the top of the main cabbage I did a
drawing of another purple cabbage in an ink
pen. I chose to do it in ink to emphasize the
lines, shadows & textures of the leaves
which is achieved, I think by the background.

This is a whole
cabbage which I used
in the picture of the
cabbage. I used the
dark colors to show
the shadows of the leaves
and the light colors to
show the shape &
patterns of the leaves.





Students in each year group have an annual independent project, which we tie in with an exam-style outcome. They are given a theme related to the work they have been doing that year, and a series of tasks that they need to achieve. Students will be expected to decide what practical work they do in lessons, and what they should do at home for homework. The tasks include artist research with responses, photographs in response, drawings and paintings from life or photos, and then some development ideas to a final outcome. The outcome idea is their own choice and developed from their own work, this is often completed in exam-style lessons.

If students do not bring anything in, or engage with the unit, they are given something to draw by the department, in pencil in their book. This is part of their assessment, and will be part of their self-evaluation too. By not participating, or bringing in interesting homework, they are learning about their own dedication, or commitment to the subject. They are still drawing and being assessed. In our experience, most students are excited and want to demonstrate their enthusiasm and commitment to the exam. The negatives of a few students, not fully engaging, is deeply outweighed by the many who show enthusiasm, creativity and some surprising skill levels in this opportunity.

Our online blog helps as a way to share excellent practice and outcomes. This way students can see what their peers, and the other year groups are achieving. They might be inspired by the work that they see, and again drives the aspiration.





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