

Application for Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

Introduction

Applying to study the Creative Art Degree at the Open College of Arts (OCA) is the culmination of decades of art practice, contemplation, research and introspection. For most of my adult life I have been employed as an engineer. Throughout this time, I have always felt that my real 'calling' was to do 'something creative' and yet I could see no way to make the transition. Having recently qualified as a teacher, I can now see an opening where a second career could be based around art education. Obtaining your BA (Hons) would give me the formal, academic recognition to achieve my goal of being an artist and art teacher.

This transition from engineer to artist is so much more than just a career change; it represents a seismic shift in my thinking and lifestyle. As a result, in providing evidence of experiential learning, it is really important to me to demonstrate that I am not just an engineer with some artistic 'technical ability'. I want to demonstrate that I have really thought about what it means to be an artist.

Aim. The aim of this paper is to provide supporting evidence for my APEL application and detail of proposed entry point onto the degree course. In developing my argument I will provide a brief overview of:

- My background.
- Qualifications.
- My Portfolio
- Preferred path to obtaining a BA (Hons)

Background

Arts versus the sciences. I have always been interested in the creative arts and my earliest and happiest memories of my time at school are about my time spent drawing and painting. My highest grades at O' level and A' Level were in the arts. Despite this aptitude, I was equally very interested in technology and science and as a result of parental and school 'encouragement', headed off down this path through university.

When I am drawing or painting, I feel totally relaxed and absorbed. I move into a different state, time flies and I feel fresh, alive and content. I rarely feel this way in my normal day-to-day work routine and am becoming more aware of just how I think about and perceive the world. To me, art is about doing what intrigues you and feels right from your own personal perspective. For me, it is a singular and introspective process.

Time for a change. Several factors have come together which have created an opportunity for radical change, namely: re-emergence of an even stronger creative drive and the increasing importance of a stable family life. Having reached a senior stage of my career, I am able to take stock and view things in perspective. This process has given me a clearer understanding of just what makes me tick and what I enjoy. Up until now, it has been a case of the fledgling artist with a secret dream, but I believe that I now have the opportunity and indeed the audacity to think about becoming an artist.

Finding my creative identity. Looking back I can see that the artist within has never really been formally nurtured apart from my very junior school experiences. To address this gap, I have tried to focus over the last two years in particular, on a more creative approach to my art. Evening classes have really helped to challenge me in many ways and my art teacher has been very effective in helping me to be aware of the way to look at things in terms of tone and shape. She has helped me to open my eyes, tap into my own creativity and shift my understanding and preconceived ideas of just what art is. Prior to this year I think I have been particularly focused on a photo-realistic style which is not surprising considering my technical background. This has been reflected in my own drawing and painting which can appear linear and rigid. She has strongly encouraged me to develop a more painterly style, to try to be freer and less concerned about realism.

Contact with the works of other artists. In addition to spending time attempting to develop my skills in my own art studio, I have made the most of opportunities to study and look at professional artists and in recent years have visited galleries in London, the Picasso Museum in Barcelona, the Churches of Florence and the Vatican Museum in Rome. Although it is far from the ideal, I find that visiting galleries via their websites can be rewarding especially when I am sat at my desk at work and have a few spare moments. I have even managed to take my children (all under five) into the National Gallery! I also enjoy reading about fine art, its techniques and the history of its progress and would be happy to discuss this area in more detail. Books that stand out in my reading over the last two years include: *The Yellow House*, *Nine Turbulent Weeks in Arles* and Gombrich's *The Story of Art*.

Qualifications

A brief summary of my qualifications will hopefully convince you that I have the academic ability and personal drive to enter your degree course at a higher level:

- O' Levels , A' Levels. In both cases my best grades are in Art or English Literature/Language.
- BEng (Hons) Engineering 1988.
- PGCE(FE) 2008.

My portfolio

Most recently I have been working on a series of seascapes in mixed media which I have exhibited (and sold) in a local gallery. I still have a very long way to go and I recognise the limitations of my work; but I strongly believe that I have the incentive, openness and flexibility to shake of my old habits move forward. Samples of my work are included in this document and with many more on the attached CD.

Studying with the Open College of Arts. I am drawn to studying with the Open College of Arts for two main reasons. Firstly, your course allows me to continue employment and support my family. Secondly, having completed a distance learning PGCE, I feel that I am particularly suited to self-directed study.

My preferred route to your BA (Hons) would be as follows:

Level 1 – Bypass due to experiential learning.

Level 2 – Painting 2 Relating to Others, Painting 2 Finding your Way.

Level 3 – Painting 3 Your Own Exhibition. Painting 3 Advanced.

Future expectations. I feel that my creativity is awakening and I am now committed to achieving my full potential. I believe that the best way to achieve this is through the formal study of the Creative Arts. Only then will I develop my practical skills and theoretical knowledge and see the emergence of my own unique style. I am also extremely keen to begin teaching art at whatever level possible. For example, if I was to be accepted as a Level 2 student, I believe that this would give me the credibility (when combined with my PGE qualification) to begin teaching art in my free time perhaps working with adults or within prisoner education.



Suburban House
Pen and Ink on Paper
24 x 33 cm
1999



Still Life with Tankard and Fruit
Mixed Media on Paper
29 x 36 cm
2006

Portrait - 2007



Seascapes - 2008

