edGE

Collaboration

Autumn 2026

Open College of the Arts

This, the 18th issue of edge zine brings together an eclectic collection of student work that examines collaboration not just as a joint creative gesture, but as a deeply relational, tactile, and multifaceted reality.

Our contributors investigate the theme of Collaboration across intimate and expansive landscapes; exploring community resilience, shared experiences, and creative partnerships including external opportunities. From the transition between digital Zoom spaces and physical gatherings to ecological dialogues involving river collaborations, sustainability, and co-creation with nature, these works interrogate the delicate balance of power dynamics, the shared exchange of inspiration, and the profound, inevitable collaboration with death.

You will encounter a vast array of media in this edition, demonstrating the experimental and hands-on nature of collaborative practice. Including interviews, cyanotypes, charcoal, drawing, storytelling, photography, painting, paper weaving, and 3D paper collages.

Through these varied forms, our artists shift the focus from singular viewpoints to the active dialogue between materials, makers, and environments.

To best experience the zine, we've collated clusters of work together, followed by accompanying text and statements from our contributors.

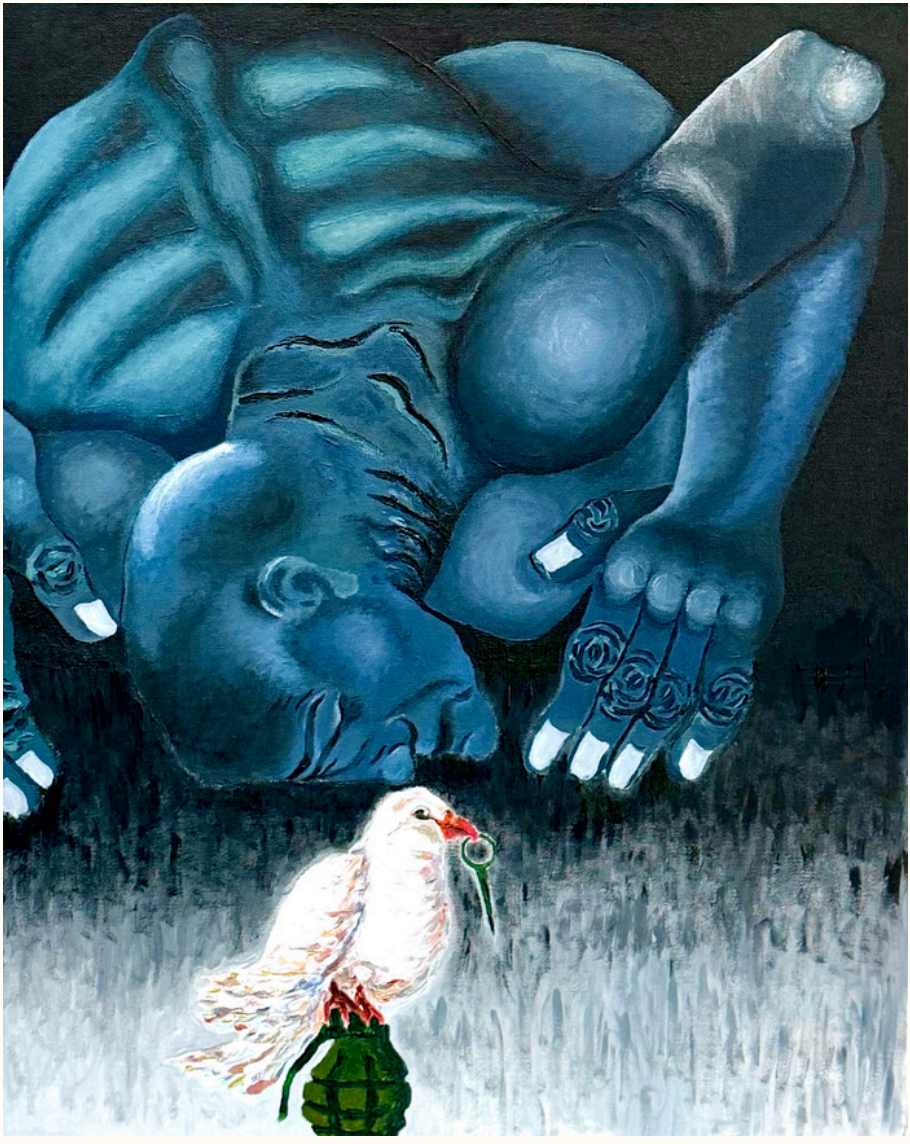
Congratulations to everyone featured! Your comments and suggestions are very welcome, as well as your contributions for upcoming editions - stay tuned!

Your Edge zine support team

Contributors

Bad Soup - BA Hons Textiles
Bethany Rose Gale - BA Hons Visual Communications
Cathy Williams - BA Hons Painting
Sharon Mulberry-Rookes - BA Hons Painting
Sue Jones -BA Hons Painting
Anne Stenbom - BA Hons Painting
Jennifer Beresford - BA Hons Painting
Deborah Masters - BA Hons Painting
Janice Scott - BA Hons Painting
Sheena Fowkes - BA Hons Painting
Ása L. Aradóttir - BA Hons Painting
Sarah Fletcher - BA Hons Painting
Felicity Talman - BA Hons Fine Art Alumni
Gillian Alborough - BA Hons Drawing
Ruth Malone - BA Hons Drawing
Charles Worvill - BA Hons Drawing
Hilary Lawler - BA Hons Illustration
Julie Gayle Balliu - BA Hons Fine Art
Katherine Pilling - BA Hons Textiles
Kay Julie Hutchings - BA Hons Fine Art
Michael R - BA Hons Drawing
Nina Cruse-Vallard - OCA Staff /Alumni
Rebecca Chetcuti - BA Hons Drawing
Sara.nick - BA Hons Fine Art
Sarah Johnston - BA Hons Drawing
Kevin James - BA Hons Photography
Rebecca Davis - OCA student
Shirry Insole - BA Hons Fine Art

Sara.nick
Collaboration with death



Instagram - @my_red_dandelion

Rebecca Chetcuti
THE INNOCENT



Instagram - @_.silent.rebecca._

Kay Julie Hutchings
Sunshine (2026)



Instagram - @kj.hutchings

Julie Gayle Balliu
Numbers House, Heidelberg Street, Detroit, USA







Instagram - @juliegayle.balliu

Pages 1 – 4

1- I created this work during a period overshadowed by the recent war involving Iran, Israel and the United States. Like many people, I found myself watching violence unfold from a distance while feeling powerless to change it. The image of a seated figure leaning forward to kiss a dove of peace became, for me, both an act of hope and a question about its impossibility. The theme of Collaboration inspired me to think beyond cooperation as something positive. Collaboration can also exist in silence, in indifference, in systems of power, and in the decisions that allow violence to continue. In that sense, my title, Collaboration with Death, suggests that death is rarely the work of one individual alone. It is often sustained by many visible and invisible forms of participation. The dove traditionally represents peace, yet here it becomes fragile, almost unreachable. The gesture of the kiss is both tender and tragic, asking whether peace is something we genuinely pursue or something we admire only after it has been lost. Rather than offering a political statement or a solution, this work invites viewers to reflect on their own relationship to conflict, responsibility and the quiet ways we may all become collaborators in the stories we inherit.

2- "The Innocent" explores my interpretation of collaboration through both its power to create and its power to destroy. While collaboration often brings people together to build, support and inspire, history also reminds us that it can be used to wage war, leaving the most vulnerable to suffer the consequences. This painting focuses on the innocent people who become trapped in conflict, particularly children. They are meant to be protected, nurtured and given the opportunity to become the generation that shapes a better future. Instead, they inherit wars created by decisions they never made. As children, we are taught not to fight. We are encouraged to apologise, make peace, and learn from our mistakes. We are also taught to learn from history so that its tragedies are never repeated. Yet wars continue across the world, showing that humanity often struggles to put those lessons into practice. The reflections of war in the child's eyes represent the reality witnessed by countless children every day. Rather than seeing dreams, safety or hope reflected back at them, they are forced to witness destruction, fear, and loss. Through this work, I hope to encourage reflection on our shared responsibility towards one another. Collaboration should be used to protect life, promote peace and ensure that future generations inherit compassion instead of conflict. As I quote: "History is filled with lessons, but the innocent continue to pay for those who refuse to learn." – Silent Rebecca (art name)

3- My current practice focuses on abstract paper weaving and grids. I am interested in the interplay between colour and form, the collaboration between warp and weft, and the mindfulness repetition that forms the weaving process. My weaves are created from my paintings and found papers and I investigate how these come together visually in grid formations and how these forms can be simplified, disrupted, and rebuilt, allowing unexpected relationships, rhythms, and compositions to emerge.

4- Numbers House is the result of a collaboration that began unexpectedly during my studies with the Open College of the Arts. While researching an OCA project, I stumbled across the Heidelberg Project in Detroit and was immediately captivated by its extraordinary story. Founded by artist Tyree Guyton in 1986, the project transformed a neglected neighbourhood into a vibrant outdoor art environment, demonstrating the power of creativity to bring communities together. Inspired by what I had discovered, I contacted the Heidelberg Project simply to share my admiration for their work. That conversation grew into an ongoing collaboration, leading to the creation of twelve original watercolours inspired by the site. Numbers House was inspired by one of the project's most recognisable installations. I was fascinated by the story that the original house became covered in numbers, said to have been inspired by a resident's weekly lottery numbers. It reminded me that ordinary objects can hold extraordinary stories, and that communities are built from countless individual lives and experiences. What began as an OCA research exercise has developed into an international creative partnership. Today, limited edition prints of the series are helping celebrate the Heidelberg Project's 40th anniversary this year and are available to its international audience of around 250,000 visitors each year. For me, the work embodies collaboration in its truest sense – connecting artists, communities and ideas across continents through a shared belief in the transformative power of art.

Shirry Insole
Shared Body

The aftermath of a fall,
not mine,
but another.

Not just any other,
but my own mother.

I am shaken,
so is she.

She sustained bruises
and a broken nose.
I sustained
the vicarious aftermath.

Six hours later,
she eats,
she talks,
asks me
for a board game.
The body returns,
mine doesn't.

The way she fell,
tumbling forward.
Unable
to catch herself.
The pavement,
the shock on her face.
Bruises,
mixed with blood.
Dust,
on clothes,
hands,
knees.
Blood,
metal
in the air.
Dripping,
pouring,
staining
her purse,
my hands,
my dress.
An empty street,
the two of us.
Panic,
heartbeat,
the weight
of deciding
what happens next.
The sudden knowledge
of how easily
a body
becomes fragile.

Behind closed eyelids,
between each blink.
Her fall
returns.
Not remembered,
but replayed,
slow motion,
continuing,
replaying,
slow motion,
continuing,
replaying.

Always
mid-air,
just before
the ground

Instagram - @shirry_insole_art

Michael R

Negative Space, Positive Face



Bethany Rose Gale
Bumble Bee



Instagram - @bethany_illustrates

Memory of Self: From Zoom Screens to Gallery Walls

Memory of Self: From Zoom Screens to Gallery Walls

We are a group of ten Level 3 OCA students who, despite never having met in person, have spent the past three years building a creative community across Europe. Living as far apart as Iceland and Portugal, with most of us based in the UK, we meet monthly on Zoom to support, encourage and challenge one another. In March 2027, that virtual collaboration will finally become a physical reality.

Memory of Self, our third collaborative exhibition, will be held at Lansdown Hall & Gallery in Stroud from 9–14 March 2027. It will be the first opportunity for us to meet face to face and share our work directly with the public.

Our collaborative journey began in February 2024 with the digital exhibition 'Manmade by 9'. This was followed in 2025 by a beautifully bound book of original paintings that, as Janice Scott describes, "travelled around the UK", allowing each artist's work to be experienced in a different way.

Memory of Self marks the next stage in that journey, exploring the ways memory shapes identity through a diverse range of artistic responses.

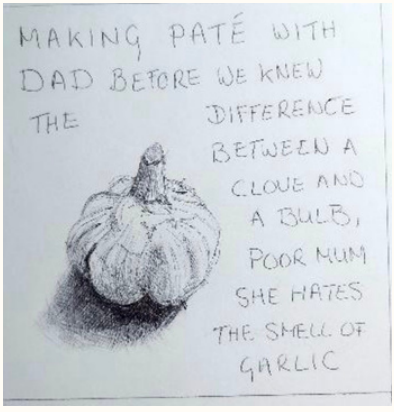
Although the exhibition is still several months away, each artist is already developing work inspired by the theme.



Sue Jones primary sketches

Sharon Mulberry-Rooke's early sketches have "opened up some ideas for a group of small paintings using text to try and capture some memories."

Sue Jones will focus on primary sketches to then create: 'a series of abstract landscapes, inspired by places which have significant memories' for her.



Sharon Mulberry-Rooke's sketch

Memory of Self: From Zoom Screens to Gallery Walls

Anne Stenbom is revisiting Hardwick Hall in County Durham, a place deeply connected to her childhood. She recalls it as "the place of many walks and adventures in my childhood", made even more meaningful because her father was "instrumental in the development of the Country Park."

For Jennifer Beresford, Memory of Self draws upon childhood places remembered through old black-and-white photographs. Working from both memory and archival images, she creates paintings that are "often dreamlike and blurred," including Walk in the Woods, made with oil stick on canvas.



Anne Stenbom, Hardwick Hall Country Park



Jennifer Beresford, 'Walk in the Woods', 30x20cm, oil stick on canvas

Memory of Self: From Zoom Screens to Gallery Walls

Deborah Masters, who has been instrumental in organising our monthly Zoom meetings, is exploring "what's different and what's the same in the childhood experience of urban parks" through works such as Friendly Gardens.

Reflecting on the value of collaboration, Janice Scott describes how studying with the OCA could sometimes feel "completely lost" and isolating. She credits these collaborative projects with enriching her learning experience and has played a key role in sustaining the group's WhatsApp community and initiating each of our exhibitions.

Working in oils and mixed media, Cathy Williams is inspired by old family photographs, where personal histories merge with collective memory to suggest new narratives.

Summing up the forthcoming exhibition, Sheena Fowkes writes: "Each artist offers a personal interpretation shaped by individual history and common theme. Together, the works form a collective narrative that shows how memory shapes identity, highlighting both the uniqueness of personal experience and the universal process of self-discovery."

Also exhibiting will be Ása L. Aradóttir and Sarah Fletcher

We would be delighted to welcome fellow OCA students, tutors and supporters to Memory of Self in Stroud next March. Instagram links for the participating artists are included with this article, and we hope you'll follow our progress as the exhibition continues to take shape.



Sheena Fowkes, 10x8", oil on aluminium



Cathy Williams, 'Flower Power', mixed media on A4 MDF panel



Deborah Masters, 'Friendly Gardens Study', oil on paper

Pages 5-8

5- This poem is written from a single voice, however, it explores collaboration as a shared embodied experience. The work emerged through witnessing my mother's fall and the lingering perceptual and emotional aftermath reflects how one person's experience can continue within another's body through memory, sensation, and imagination. The poem understands collaboration as a relational process. It is a collaboration between two bodies, between lived experience and memory, and between the event and its continual reconstruction through language. The proposes collaboration not simply as making together, but as the shared ways in which experience, perception, and remembrance are carried, transformed, and communicated between people.

6- This piece was created in my second project as an attempt to depict a miniature bust of da Vinci I own, but made exclusively using scraps of material accumulated from previous works. The piece is a collaboration of ideas from many different artists, the medium was inspired by Matisse, relinquishing artistic control by not allowing the paper to be changed from it's scrap form, as well as depicting a familiar object, inspired by Joan Jonas, and the idea of recycling materials and being resourceful came from Josef Albers. With the final image depicting an artist who inspired me back in my secondary school years, Leonardo da Vinci. It is a collaboration of inspiration coming together to form a single piece.

7- Bees are a great example of the positive effects collaboration can have. They may be small but they play a vital role in the world around us. They work together as a hive to pollinate plants, making food for themselves and ensuring our survival in the process. Its lovely to think that something so small can have such a big positive effect on the wider world.

8- We have been contacting each other as a peer group through Level 1, 2 and now 3 of the BEd (Hons) Painting programme and we are keen to share how we have moved from organising a digital exhibition about 2 years ago, to creating a physical book of original artwork that was sent around the country last year, to now preparing for a physical exhibition due to take place in Stroud in March 2027 based around the Theme 'Memory of Self'.

Sarah Johnston
What it's like to Transmit







Instagram - @debmas23 @verrant
@sallypatdrawsstuff @rebecca.chew.372

Sarah Johnston
What it's like to Transmit





Instagram - @debmas23 @verrant
@sallypatdrawsstuff @rebecca.chew.372

Hilary Lawler
The Fringe Project







Instagram - @therealsuperhilbo

Felicity Talman
Living Collaborators









Instagram - @felicitytalmanart

Pages 9–11

9- We are Transmit, one of nine interdisciplinary groups formed during OCA tutor Diana Ali's Keeping Up Momentum: Pushing the Envelope workshop in February 2022. What began as a chance meeting has evolved into a thriving creative partnership spanning over four and a half years. Our group brings together three current OCA students from the photography, painting and drawing pathways, alongside a creative arts alumna. Meeting regularly online and via a very active WhatsApp group has been key for discussing new projects, progress on existing collaborations and for just supporting one another through thick and thin. Over the years, our collaborations have explored an eclectic mix of themes and inspirations, from poetry, haiku and orchestral music to junk-shop still lifes and the lyrics of a dark and poignant contemporary French song. Most recently, we've been exchanging handmade zines. Each person created an initial zine and posted it to the next member of the group, who responded to the existing images before passing it on again. The result is four richly layered, collaborative books, existing as little reveries far from the madding crowd, where expression and kinship are paramount. Our story proves that collaboration doesn't have to be complicated - team up with others and begin - you might be surprised where it leads! Contributors: Deborah Masters, Kevin James, Rebecca Davis and Sarah Johnston

10–Collaboration is key to the theme of The Fringe Project. It is a series of sketchbooks released into the wild for the purpose of people all over the world to engage with and contribute to. I contributed these images to Sketchbook 16.

11–My work explores collaboration through an ongoing relationship between myself, the plants I draw, and the materials I use. The plants are not staged or passive subjects; they are living collaborators that influence the direction and development of the work through their own forms, movements, and changes over time. Working directly from life, I return to the same plants repeatedly, allowing sustained attention to become a form of conversation. Through direct observation, I respond to subtle shifts in growth, structure, and presence, allowing the plant to guide the development of the drawing rather than imposing a fixed image upon it. Charcoal, erasure, and collage are central to this process. Layers are removed, reconstructed, and reconfigured, allowing unexpected marks and fragments to become part of the work's evolution. The irregular forms of my collaged pieces reflect the complexity and unpredictability of natural growth, where no two structures are identical and change is always present. The final works hold traces of this collaborative process, revealing moments of interruption, transformation, and renewal. Through attention and time, drawing becomes a way of entering into a relationship with plants; not as objects to be depicted, but as active participants within the creative process.

Katherine Pilling
A Collaboration with Nature

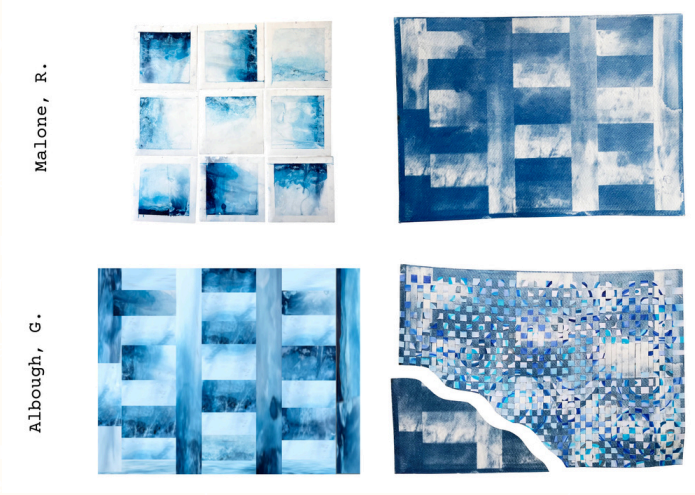


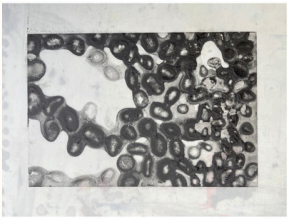




[Visit Katherine's website]

Gillian Alborough, Ruth Malone and Charles Worvill
River Collaboration





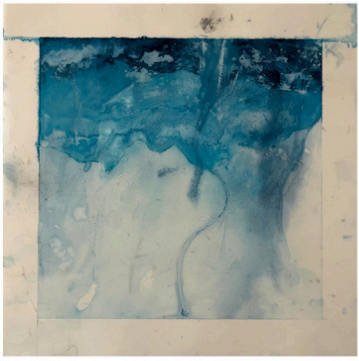
Malone, R.



Worvill, C.

Instagram: @boroughartist
@ruthsills_drawing
@lookinganddrawing

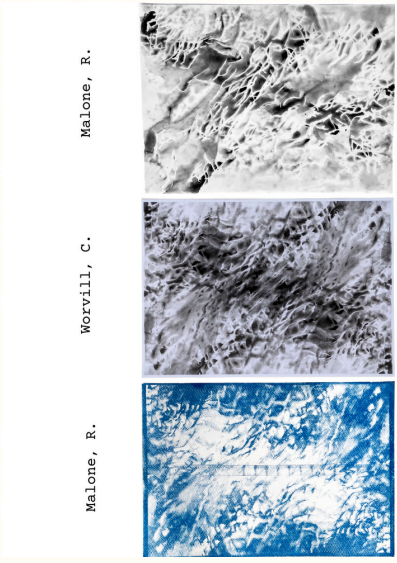
Gillian Alborough, Ruth Malone and Charles Worvill River Collaboration



Malone, R.

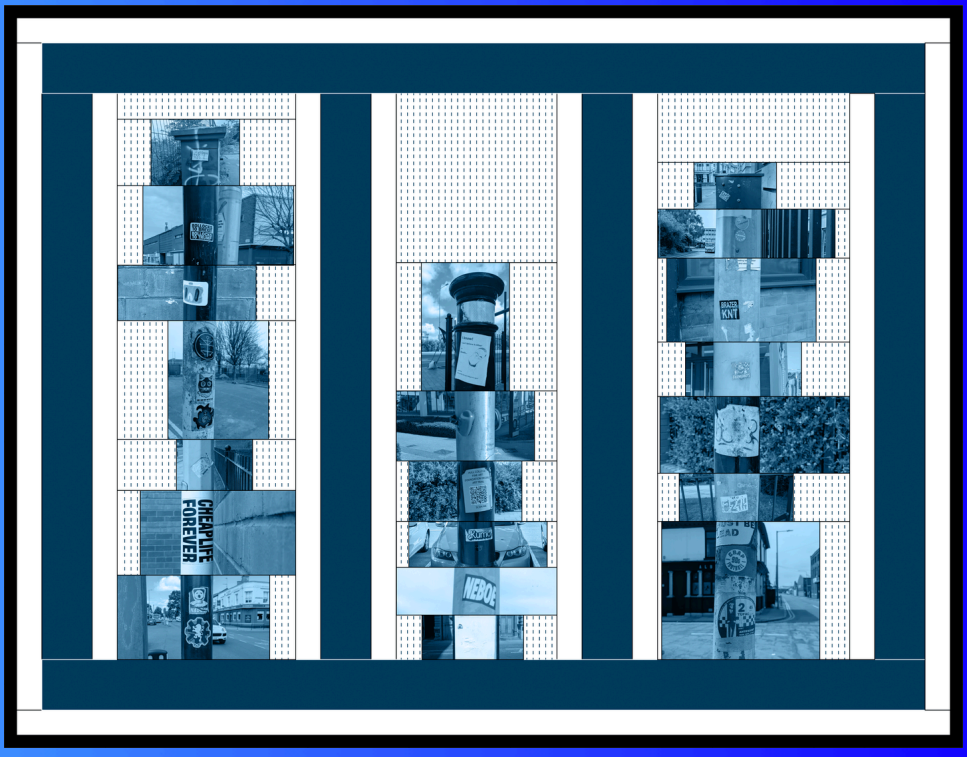


Alborough, G.



Instagram: @boroughartist
@ruthsills_drawing
@lookinganddrawing

Bad Soup
Pillars of the Community



Instagram - @bad.____.soup

Nina Cruse-Vallard
An Interview with Will Woods

The Student Voice Festival was held in July, and in one of the workshops I had the opportunity to meet our Principal Will Woods. Over the period of an hour we had a chance to ask as many questions as we wanted… and I sure made use of that time! Other attendees had questions about policies and course structure, but I wanted to know about OCA's plans for the future.

Will Woods kindly listened to my ideas for what I'd like to see from OCA in the future including my desire to see more short courses. As a budding learning technologist I was interested in his thoughts and his experience in this sector. Emboldened, I asked for an interview.

Many of our readers will recognise your name, but can you tell us a little about yourself and how you made your way to OCA?

I grew up in Northern Ireland during the troubles so inclusion has always been important to me. I was in a cohort of students who were probably the first generation to reduce the divide which led eventually to the Good Friday agreement and peace. We did many cross-community projects, so inclusion has been part of my DNA I guess. I went to a good school but didn't enjoy it at all and left with poor grades. I then went to a local FE College (tech) and found the freedom there along with excellent teachers which allowed me to redo A levels and go on to Uni. That experience of second chance never left me, and I was then fired up to try to give others a second chance through education. I did some work experience at the Open University during my degree and went back there after graduating and stayed on in education, working at Warwick, Sheffield Hallam but mainly OU before eventually finding my place at OCA. I've always worked in education, but the first six years were in a research group and the work was mainly with industry partners across 55 different countries so my early work has involved finding the sweet spot between business and education.

You are one of the few senior managers I know in education who has a learning technology background rather than a purely academic background, do you think this experience has shaped the way you lead at OCA? Or given you a unique insight in the role?

Absolutely. Research and Learning Innovation were key aspects of why I enjoy my work and although I could have pursued a purely academic career I really enjoyed how we applied our knowledge to create real world solutions. I was a beta tester for Microsoft and Google, and I made animations for BBC OU TV programmes. I created applications which became the genesis of the Open Science Lab at the OU, allowing people to identify new species and create maps of endangered species. I helped establish the first virtual learning environment (VLE) at the OU and at Warwick and Sheffield Hallam. I helped to create OpenLearn and probably most importantly at OCA I worked with our dedicated teams to transition the organisation to digital approaches so that we could continue to teach, operate and support students during the pandemic. These are all examples of which I'm very proud but they are only possible because of dedicated teams who understand the context of how creatives engage with technologies.

Visit Nina's website

Nina Cruse-Vallard
An Interview with Will Woods

What do you think our biggest strengths are at OCA? And where do you think we need to grow?

Our biggest strength by a long way is the dedication of those that directly support our students, this includes almost everyone at OCA but involves a multitude of touchpoints between the different teams, tutors, front line HQ staff and back-office teams to support a single student through their journey. It's something we continue to try to improve but it's fundamentally solid and, in many ways, better than any other open access provider.

Where we need to grow organisationally is probably in acceptance that the world around us is changing - particularly so since the pandemic. We see more younger learners studying with us. We see more that want to study at a faster pace. We also see more students coming to us who are neurodivergent, more with learning disabilities, more with financial challenges, more who are carers. Some of these things are in tension with each other but fundamentally we need to adapt how we teach to the world around us. We are doing that, but it will take some time to get everything right.

What have you learnt at OCA? And has your experience at the Student Voice Festival (or any student engagement events) inspired any ideas or reflections?

The two things I've learnt to do more since joining OCA are active listening and reflecting. We have some challenges that require many people with different opinions and views to come together. Sometimes there is too little empirical data and therefore the only way we can make any sensible decision on a way forward is to find a consensus of opinion. We are getting more data but there are still a lot of assumptions being made about our students so the more experiential knowledge we gain the better. That leads me on to Student Voice Festival – it's wonderful. Every year I meet a group of students and hear more about how studying feels to them, which is quite often refreshing and inspiring. This year we talked about some of the work we were considering to improve the first stage of study to assist students ahead of their first assignment when they are more likely to drop out. It was good to hear suggestions from students on what they would most value, some of these ideas will make it into the pilots this year and so we'll see if they help other students.

I know you have a background in serious gaming, what do you think play and/or experimentation brings to education?

Play and experimentation are critical in creative education, taking risks as a student and trying something new is how students can really develop their practice. As an educator is also about creating an environment that allows students to take risks, so the scaffolding needs to be right to create a safe space for play and experimentation. Our tutors do that really well. We also use elements of gameplay for serious situations. I have used Lego in the past to explain Learning Design with different blocks representing parts of the learning journey and that is an example of play and visual storytelling. For another example, about a year before the pandemic we did a disaster planning session to test our resilience, and I used 'zombie apocalypse' as one of the test scenarios, at the time it was a lot of fun but also allowed us to consider how we would operate remotely and distributed. This was then successfully implemented a year later under a very extreme circumstance. That is just two of many examples of using gameplay for an important purpose. We thrive on play and it opens the creative parts of our brain so we should do it more often.

Thank you Will Woods.

ocasa.org.uk

@ocastudentassociation

Our next theme will be ‘Still’.
Submissions will be opening soon via the ocasa webpage.

OCASA
Different together