

Science meets Art in Gateshead

An innovative Science and Art project has been created to respond to the needs of schools delivering the Advancing Physics 'A' level course. The Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead, has worked in partnership with Cramlington Community High School, to develop resources that enhance the delivery of this course.

As part of the teaching resources, teachers are advised to assemble a touchy-feely box of objects that encourage students to link material properties with their applications. The Learning Team at the Shipley have recently procured a collection of handling objects, for use with schools and colleges, that relate to the Gallery's collection of Contemporary Craft. Makers often choose to work with a particular material, exploring its properties and potential, consequently they often have a profound empirical (rather than scientific) understanding of that material's properties. The objects that they make can exemplify what can be done with materials in a visually arresting, and often innovative, fashion.



The Gallery staff and teacher decided to work together to develop a lecture on materials and applications for the Advancing Physics course, to be illustrated with the handling collection. The lecture covers textiles, ceramics, glass, wood and metals.

The lecture provides a good introduction to show what students could be aiming for in their presentation coursework. In the coursework students are asked to critically link the physics of a material with its uses. They can also include a discussion of how the material came to be invented, discovered or exploited. The lecture includes a discussion with the students how the aesthetic qualities of a piece of artwork are enhanced by the material properties.

In this case, a member of the Gallery's staff has a formal background in Engineering and Metallurgy. Although not all museums or galleries have staff with a science background, many museums do offer Loans Box services that colleges use. Loans Boxes often include historical objects (with supporting information) that teachers could use to spark students' interest where mundane, contemporary objects might not.



Further information on this project can be obtained from Bruce Davenport at the Shipley Art Gallery on 0191 477 1495 or email: bruce.davenport@twmuseums.org.uk