

# The Associates

Many of the students who begin GSA in Year 2 or 3 have come directly from HE-level courses at further education colleges. GSA works with colleges to facilitate collaboration and support progression as well as providing information and support for applicants and entrants from college.

Since 2015/2016 GSA has run an Associate Student Scheme, with Glasgow Clyde College's HNC Art and Design.

This Scheme is designed to support eligible Home fee status students to progress into Year 2 of participating GSA programmes.\* In 2019 the first cohort of Associate Students graduated from The Glasgow School of Art. A similar Scheme with Forth Valley College's HND Sound Production began in 2018 and will see its first Associate graduate from BDes (Hons) Sound for the Moving Image in 2020.

SUSAN BRECKENRIDGE was 48 and a parent of five when she joined the pilot Associate Student Scheme and became one of the first students to enter GSA's second year through this route, as well as one of the first Associate Students from Glasgow Clyde College to graduate.

Before joining, Susan had applied to portfolio preparation programmes and had been advised, due to a lack of a portfolio, to first apply to a portfolio skills programme. After successfully studying Portfolio Skills at the Cardonald campus of Glasgow Clyde College, Susan then progressed to the HNC Art and Design at the college's Langside campus. That's when joining the GSA Associate Scheme was suggested.

"It was the pilot year," recalls Breckenridge. "Their only stipulation about joining was that I had to apply to second year, and I remember that it was a guaranteed interview for GSA, but not a guarantee of an offer."

"When we were working to establish the Scheme," says Elizabeth Beidler, Progression Manager for GSA, "it had become clear that the foundation diploma model – an exploratory year of 'figuring out' before going directly into second year was the best model for us to do at scale."

Local college Glasgow Clyde College had worked with GSA previously and according to

Beidler had an outstanding record on their Advanced Portfolio Preparation course, with many of their graduates progressing to Year 1 at GSA. Hoping to apply a similar approach to the college's existing HNC Art and Design, fate stepped in when staff from the portfolio preparation course were assigned to the HNC. It was at this point that GSA approached the college and the Associate Student Scheme was established.

"So started our pilot year," says Beidler. "In the first year we got ten students to GSA second year".

Susan was one of those initial ten. "Before going to college I didn't know where to start," she says. "Prior to that I had studied psychology, not an art-based course, but then every job I have done before is a job involving art in some way as a way to express yourself. I've worked in mental health, I've worked with children, worked with adolescents, people with additional needs and art is something that I've always used as a method of working in those jobs."

"I wanted an art degree, and the Associate Scheme offered the chance of a direct route into year 2 as well as being able to experience what GSA life was like."

"A big part of the Associate Scheme is working out what's the best fit for students when applying to GSA," agrees Beidler. "One of the most important things

is experiencing what it's really like to be on the programme, to visit a studio, to participate in a crit, and to see generally if it's the right programme and the right fit for the student." Beidler says that often students wanting to go to art school are not clear on the different subjects that are available, and often don't have any experience of them.

Susan was one such student. "I wasn't always drawn to sculpture," she says, "but at college one day we were asked to bring in household objects to make a sculpture. I had been getting some electrical work done in the house, so I brought in a whole load of these pieces of wire and bits of string and they said 'create a sculpture that represents something important to you.'"

"People were making sculptures of cars and TVs, and without really thinking about it, I started to twist these wires together to represent relationships and families, and some of them had more embroidery thread wrapped around them because those relationships were really intense, and other pieces were quite loose... I made it and my lecturer came over and I said, 'that's my family, that's what that represents'. And he said 'do you realise this (medium) is what you should be doing from now on?'"

"I had known I wanted to do something, I just didn't know what medium, until that point."

"It's not about 'getting in to art school' – it's about propelling yourself, ready, into second year."

Breckenridge then went on as an Associate Student to look further into studying and successfully applying to study Sculpture and Environmental Art at GSA.

A further experienced gained as an Associate that Breckenridge remembers clearly was the experience of joining critical studies lectures. "That was really good," she says "When you have that utopian picture of what GSA is, and then you go and realise that actually everyone is in the same boat, they don't understand everything the lecturer says, and the wordcounts are scary for everyone. I think to go into that environment meant we didn't go in to second year thinking, 'we have no idea what's going on', we came in knowing exactly what we had to do. The prep that we got from college, and from the Associate Scheme with the transition, was really useful."

"It also prepared us for the work ethic you need. At College you've got a lecturer on your back all the time. When you come to art school, that is not the case, it's more self-directed learning. So we found that we were far more able to cope."

"At art school the 'no parameters and no boundaries' can be scary. It's like freefall, so to have the advantage of having had some experience, and a wee bit of maturity, is helpful."

Beidler agrees that a degree of experience is helpful for the journey ahead. "This (Scheme) is for people ready to go into second year. It's not about 'getting in to art school' – it's about propelling yourself, ready, into second year."

"I think that there's some misunderstanding about studying an HNC generally. It is at the same level as a Scottish first year. In the Scheme, we see the HNC as a replacement for first year at GSA in order to progress directly to second year and it is important that people understand the implications of that fully."

"For some people it's the right route in, but it isn't right for everyone. It certainly isn't an easy way to get into art school. Remember that they have additional coursework as part of the Associate Scheme, activities to attend at GSA, the three stage Admissions process,

and they're doing all of that on top of what is an already a very demanding HNC course."

"If you're not ready to enter art school straight from school or are unsure of what to study, portfolio preparation courses provide the opportunity to explore while expanding your knowledge and skills. They are a great option for prospective applicants who would prefer to enter art school in Year 1. Whereas Foundation diplomas and HNCs and HNDs provide the foundations for entry to Year 2 or 3."

But the rewards for the right students on the Scheme, and for Beidler, are enormous.

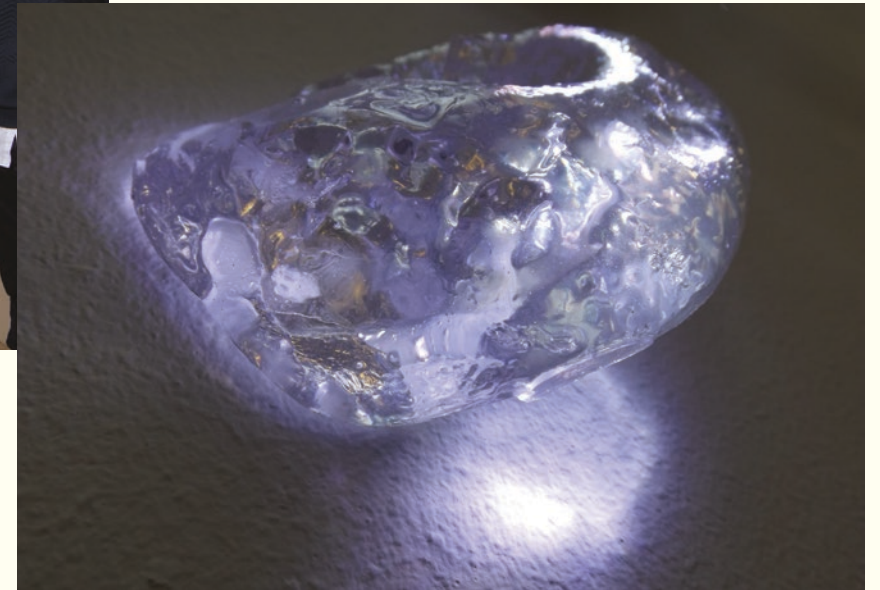
"I really love when someone comes in thinking they know what they want to do, and ends up really happy doing something else entirely. People who come in saying 'I just love drawing, I want to be an illustrator' then end up studying and loving product design having had no idea what that was before. It's those things that are pretty great."

"I also love seeing the people who maybe wouldn't be here otherwise."

"Meeting people like Susan who came in, having done community

**Left:** First cohort of graduating Associate Students pictured with their HNC tutors from Glasgow Clyde College and the GSA Progression Manager

**Below:** Entwined, Susan Breckenridge Sculpture and Environmental Art 2019





# Party Hears Two

Matthew Manao (Painting and Printmaking 2019) and Kieran Flaherty (Textile Design 2019)

Did you find the transition between College and GSA an easy or a difficult one?

**MM:** For me, the transition between College and GSA was an easy one. We had our college friends join us so we didn't feel alone starting GSA. Also a lot of international and English students also started in second year, so most of my peers were all in the same boat. Being in student halls was definitely a good idea to start life at GSA.

**KF:** GSA expects certain things from their students which I felt, in the beginning, went sort of unspoken. I initially struggled to meet the expectations I was set by the programme and therefore lost confidence as my second year progressed. Transitioning into my third and fourth year, however, I learned what it was that the tutors were expecting of me and it became easier. I was able to adjust to the way in which I was expected to present my work and what was necessary to succeed. I feel this information however, if I had asked, is something I would have been told more explicitly.

How did the Associate Student Scheme help you?

**MM:** We had workshops with Elizabeth that really helped with getting to grips of what GSA was like. She's been a consistent point of communication in case we have any questions about our chosen courses and life at GSA. The Associate Student Scheme definitely helped to solidify my wanting to go to art school.

**KF:** I definitely would have still applied to GSA without the Associate Scheme but I feel it was very beneficial as it allowed me to create a relationship with the School and familiarise myself with the department I would eventually become a part of.

What would you say would be the main difference that you found between your college and the art school environment?

**MM:** Studio, time and freedom to explore. There is a clear difference in how college and GSA run their course. I feel like at college, it was a very school-like environment – 9am until 4pm, with a lot of tutor input. We only had desks in college and as a painter this was a big change from studio spaces at GSA where you can do basically whatever you want and be messy. Your first year really is the time to make mistakes, explore, and take advantage of the facilities; lectures and artist talks; societies; cross-disciplinary activities and the library.



Obscura  
Kieran Flaherty,  
Textile Design 2019



Maharlika  
Matthew Manao,  
Painting and Printmaking 2019

What advice would you offer to students joining us from College this year?

**MM:** Just be as open as possible, explore the facilities GSA offers, join societies, don't limit yourself to anything. In fine art, you can almost literally do anything. Explore creative branches you've never really tried. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Just go out, make friends and make the most out of your time in art school. Also GSASA puts on great nights out...

What was your experience of Degree Show? Was it what you expected?

**KF:** I had a very positive experience at the Degree Show. It was enjoyable talking to people who were interested in my work and explaining my ideas and the processes involved with my practice. It was also extremely valuable as it allowed me to practice these skills which I would later use at the New Designers exhibition in London.

**KF:** If you need help, ask for it. I struggled a lot in my second year with adjusting to what was expected of me and I feel a lot of this would have been alleviated if I had reached out for help when I needed it. A simple email and a ten minute conversation can help out loads so I would greatly encourage students to seek help if they are struggling.

## Joanne Dawson

Queens Park Arena  
(Glasgow)



**Joanne Dawson (Painting and Printmaking 2015) was commissioned by Inhouse Events CIC with support from Johnson Tiles and the charity Sustrans, to create a mural for the Queens Park Arena in the south side of Glasgow.**

A real community project, the artwork design was created after consultation with local business owners and primary school children including Milk Cafe, Finn's Place and Cuthbertson Nursery and Primary School, who were all asked to describe what the park was used for and what it symbolised to them, hoping to capture its spirit.

Talking about the project, Lydia Brownlee, a teacher at Cuthbertson Primary said: "Children from every age group came together to share their ideas and drawings in Joanne's workshop and are excited to see the finished design. The workshop was a brilliant opportunity for children to talk about how they view our neighbourhood and community, as well as learning image-making skills as they created their own community zines."

"The making of Queens Park Mural has been a greatly fulfilling experience", says Dawson, "and truly a collaborative project from start right through to implementation. I'm delighted to have shared the process with pupils, residents and organisations from the local area and I hope it's enjoyed for many years to come."

*Top: Queens Park Arena mural  
Image credit: Malcolm Cochrane*