

## **Repercussion of art school tuition fees: Internships for Young Artists at professional artist's studio.**

There has been much written recently in the press regarding cuts to higher education funding and increases in tuition fees. Many of our finest art institutions are worried about the future. Richard Noble of Goldsmiths has expressed his fear 'that no matter what departments like ours do, higher education will be less available to members of the working class. I think a lot of kids will look at £45,000 of debts and just think: 'this is just not worth it.' As a consequence we won't recruit in a wide enough pool and miss out on talent and interesting people.' And Paul Thompson rector of the Royal College of Art says 'Our biggest concern is how attractive will postgraduate course be to students who will be graduating with £60,000 of undergraduate debts.'

There is equal concern from parents and their would-be student offspring regarding tuition fees. The cost of a degree in Fine art costs about £30,000, plus living costs. Couple this to the fact that less than one percent of art school graduates find work as artists and that their salaries rank among the lowest 20% of graduate salaries in the country, and a career in fine art achieved via the traditional routes looks less than appealing from an economic perspective. I'm also acutely aware from my own experience of living in a small market town that the effect of high up-front costs is compounded by rurality.

In these tough economic times there must be another, more beneficial way for young artists to train and set themselves up as working artists without the burden of a huge debt at the outset of their career.

Naturally, there will be ongoing debate about the real value of a degree; yet alternative ways of studying and gaining valuable knowledge & experience are already springing up around the country. For example in Lincolnshire a group of social science academics have set up a centre for learning where students can study at degree level and contribute to academic studies in exchange for a fee based on their salary or for no charge if they are unemployed.

I have always thought that, aside of discussions about the merit of my art, my own career offers an alternative to a degree. I have found that there is a very good living to be made in art. Taught chiefly by my own family, lacking an art degree (mine is in Landscape Architecture) and going against the grain by painting in a traditional style, requests for my work have been steady and growing for over fifteen years. Demand now happily exceeds my ability to supply.

My career has mirrored the movements towards high quality micro-enterprises in food, beverages and manufacturing of the last two decades. Encouragingly, the younger generations seem to be very tuned into more holistic approaches to business, and I now receive very regular requests for working visits to my studio in Lincolnshire.

All these combined factors have moved me to formally offer internships to 'Young Artists' designed for those interested in a career in painting within the traditional style you see in my work - sadly still an unfashionable method of painting at art school.

From November 2012 I am taking on up to five Young Artists aged 18-21 for year-long periods of training and work. The Young Artists will assist me in the many essential but minor aspects of running a studio. They will work with me on the simpler aspects of my paintings (backgrounds etc) giving them the opportunity to learn and practice my oil painting techniques under pressure. They will also assist in marketing, exhibiting and selling artwork. Much of their time will be spent compiling their own portfolios and starting to earn money from commissions. They will set up as self employed sole traders, and I will help them to manage their cash flows and accounts until they understand what it means to be self-reliant as a small business. The first Young Artists have finished a trial week and start in November.

There is a small fee that covers all costs including food, accommodation (if needed), materials and travel but there is a large degree of altruism in this endeavour and my great hope is that they should cover their costs and be better equipped to become a selling artist than most art school undergraduates.

So, I am currently accepting applications for both residential and non-residential placements available for 2012 (one place available) and 2013 (four places available). Acceptance is on the strength of a portfolio and performance in a study week.

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*James Gillick (www.gillick-artist.com) is a traditional painter, and son of the social critic Victoria Gillick. He is represented in London by Jonathan Cooper, also selling in the Counties, in China, and the US.*