

PORT·REGIS



Art - an experiential subject

Lucy Tabberer Head of Art

Lucy Tabberer completed her Fine Art BA Hons in Painting at Norwich School of Art and has worked as a professional painter and teacher since graduating.

She taught GCSE and A-Level Art and worked with excluded teenagers before becoming Head of Art at Sandroyd, followed by Hanford School, before joining Port Regis in 2022.

Lucy paints from a studio in her garden, working under her maiden name Lucy Bentley. Her work is inspired by things that give her joy – primarily the garden! She has exhibited her colourful narrative paintings widely in galleries and is currently writing and illustrating a children’s picture book as a collaboration with her daughter, Otilie.

Lucy has been the Artist in Residence at Horatio’s Garden, Salisbury Hospital (one of the school’s charities) over the last few years. This summer she will be running art workshops for patients and their families, using the garden as inspiration. Lucy spends much of her free time visiting galleries and studios and gaining ideas to bring back into the classroom.

“Art gives children a spark”.

~ Catherine Milner: “The importance of Art in Schools” (The Telegraph in June 2021)

Art - an experiential subject

Art is an experiential subject. It is huge, exciting, messy and unpredictable. It is quiet and loud and joyous, and at times frustrating, but it can also inject hope, joy and a sense of enormous self-satisfaction, whilst giving children freedom of expression.

Art at Port Regis

In creating an art department, I wanted to present a creative space that was more like an active art studio than a classroom. At Port Regis we are blessed with a phenomenal space - better than many senior schools - and the rooms are filled with past and present artwork, displays of objects and artists all of which provide stimulus and inspiration for the children. How we learn is as important as what we learn, and we are lucky to have the space both for a large main table, allowing for collective group work, as well as surrounding tables which allow children to work in different areas of the room. We also have an ample selection of easels which allows children to develop their ability to work "vertically" and gives us the space to display and admire their pieces as they are drying or in progress. Having work on display builds the children's confidence as well as the aspiration of those in younger years.



The colour and interest created by these displays makes the space an exciting environment to work and visit - we often give "tours of the Prep School Art gallery" to the Pre-Prep children, which regularly end up with a practical session!

We also exhibit and showcase the pupils' artwork around the school: sculpted paper birds create a large installation in the main house, clay pieces and huge self-portrait paintings are displayed in Upward, and the Dining Hall is full of large-scale paper mâché work and a variety of paintings from all age groups. Our Lower School recently helped make a collection of large fish for the school play - an exciting project to be involved in, especially as they saw their work on the stage!

"Having taught GCSE and A Level, I now love the freedom the prep years offer".

~ Sine Riley-Moore, Ceramics Teacher

Anyone who visits our department will soon see that Ceramics at Port Regis is so much more than 'just pots'. We have a separate Ceramics room with two kilns, wheels and two specialist Ceramics teachers: Sine Riley-Moore and Ellie Forward. Sine studied Ceramics at Central St Martins, London, and Ellie trained in Fine Art and Visual Performance at Dartington College of Arts - where she specialised in Sculpture and Installation.



We have all taught in senior schools and love being able to use our experience to nurture and stretch the pupils' skills. The children work in rotation, spending 6 months on each subject (Art and Ceramics), learning skills and techniques to a very high level. We design our projects around a yearly theme and as such, each year, the students' experiences change. This enables them to maximise their potential and enjoy their own personal journey.



In ceramics, with each piece made, we aim to build on the skills gained the year before so that when a student leaves the Port Regis Ceramics Department, they can confidently slab build, coil, imprint, model and glaze independently. One of our ceramics teachers, Sine, says: "As a teacher you get such a buzz when a student who left many years ago stops you and says, 'Do you remember the ceramic piece I made when I was here? It is still on my parents' mantel piece'".

Similarly, in art, the joy of capturing something observed, or imaginatively creating an idea, getting it down on paper and developing it is a very special experience.

Innovation and Tradition

We are excited to introduce smartboards and laptops with styluses into the department, which will enliven the experience of looking at art work and experiencing mark-making and drawing in a different form (as the artist David Hockney has done). Mixing innovation with tradition enables us to broaden our students' experiences. However, the main focus will always be the practical "hands-on" learning that we all believe is paramount in the department, not just for the development of skill but also for the children's well-being. Learning to draw and to work with clay and paint takes a great deal of practice. There are no short-cuts. Improvement comes from immersion in the project and the process of making and doing. In an age where we are surrounded by technology, we believe it is important to pause and make time to practise those skills that require us to observe, experiment and imagine, nurturing our dexterity by exploring hands on tasks, using a different part of our brain.

We teach with lots of demonstration and enthusiastic praise, and we count ourselves very lucky to be able to share subjects that are seen by so many of our students as 'fun'. When a child has understood a technique, then learns by



by experimenting with the materials, the joy is evident – both in the child and the teacher! We feel everyone has the right to be creative and we enjoy passing on the 'wonderment' of the subjects and materials to the children – helping them maximise their creative potential. Art and Ceramics will test you, inspire you and teach you things you did not know you could learn and of course science also plays a part!

Progression

As a painter, colours and how to make them are a fundamental part of the job. I teach the children how to mix their own colours; young children will delight in seeing what mixtures they can create, learning opposite and complementary colours. They learn to understand and translate the world around them through a visual form and this requires planning, preparation and confidence. Learning to draw is key. From there the children can develop their ideas and emotions, using their visual language to express themselves, and feeling rewarded by their efforts.

We have strong links with the Pre-Prep and Nursery. We run Arty Afternoons with Years 1 & 2, who will come to the Art Room for a few hours and create large painted responses to an artist or learn new techniques and discuss being an artist.

They enjoy using the Ceramic Rooms and will often come into classes to show their art-work to the older children. Due to their regular visits, the Pre-Prep children not only enjoy the space the Art Department offers but they also feel comfortable there, so the transition into the Prep School, when the time comes, is less daunting. We have been to many of their Art History assemblies led by Mrs Fuller, and have taken part, even dressed and interviewed as Picasso and Dora Marr!

Throughout the Prep School, children of all year groups have the opportunity to attend Ceramic and Art Hobbies in the afternoons and evenings, where they make and create in small groups.



These hobbies complement the Art and Ceramic lessons, so skills and techniques build as the children progress through the Prep School. In addition, the Art Room is always open during break times, lunch times and recreational periods for children to come and access their sketchbooks or finish work.

By A Form, they have learnt how to self-evaluate their design choices and interpret the world around them, consolidating their own visual language. Current work in the Ceramics Department shows the impressive progression from E Form's wonderful elephants, to D Form's slab-built circus tent boxes to C Form's ceramic balloon wall hangers, all showing improving techniques and designs.

The scholar groups begin in B Form (Year 7) where the children are invited to join an evening hobby, help build more skills and interest and start to



collate work for the portfolio needed to go towards an art scholarship. They use materials in imaginative and curious ways, using inspiration from various artists and developing ideas they wish to pursue. This journey is intense: visiting galleries and participating in workshops held in the Art Room at school to develop thematic techniques, sometimes with visiting artists, all of which add exciting and unusual extras to the folios.

Passion

This year we are planning a huge whole school painting project called 'The Big Splash' - Mrs Mills and I are leading this with our hobby groups. It is an outdoor painting bonanza to incorporate and celebrate the natural world and its animals at Port Regis, including all the dogs, goats, guinea pigs and doves.

Teaching art and ceramics is not just a job but a passion that we, as practitioners, really enjoy passing on to the children, hopefully instilling a lifelong love of creativity. We care deeply and passionately about our craft and teaching the children at Port Regis to draw, create and explore through a range of materials is truly rewarding and a wonderful job to have.

Lucy Tabberer
Head of Art
lat@portregis.com

