

Summer School: Artistic Responses to Architecture

Dates	Monday 22 to Friday 26 July 2019
Times	10:30 – 17:00 daily; Friday 10:30-19:30
Location	Harry M Weinrebe Learning Centre, The British Library and Clore Learning Centre, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
Level	All levels
Class size	Maximum 16 participants

Course description

Immerse yourself in a week-long investigation of the urban environment with unique access to the British Library and the RIBA buildings, and the collections they hold. We will explore and develop a wide range of artistic skills to help us understand architectural space and think about how we might reshape it in the future.

Alongside practical sessions of creative experimentation including bookbinding, drawing, photography and architectural model making, we will be supported by daily talks and show-and-tells from arts practitioners and curatorial staff at the RIBA and the British Library.

Whether you are contemplating a career in architecture or art, are already working in these fields, or just want to develop your creative approach and skills, this course will enable you the time, resources and expert guidance to refine your craft. Through guided exercises, using your sketchbook (which you will hand make on your first day) and group reflection, you'll develop fresh perspectives on the built environment in London and expand your artistic skills set.

Day One, British Library: The sketch book

On our first day we will focus on the sketchbook as a creative tool in responding to our environment beginning with a tour of our exhibition, *Leonardo da Vinci: A mind in Motion*. In the-afternoon we will learn the basics of bookbinding, where we will be introduced to a range of techniques before designing and binding our own sketchbooks for use throughout the course.

The bookbinding workshop will provide the opportunity to explore the similarities and differences shared by a piece of architecture and a book, in terms of structure, narrative, sequence and coherence, developing our own conceptual ideas, and learning established theories on the construction of books and architecture.

We will conclude with group reflection on our work. This is an opportunity for us to share ideas and constructive feedback, and develop our critical thinking and communication skills.

Day Two, RIBA: Photography through space

On day two we will be at RIBA exploring how we respond to architecture through photography. In the morning RIBA curator Valeria Carullo will introduce us to the RIBA's extensive photography collection – a fantastic opportunity to understand the potential of this collection as resource material for your future work. Valeria will discuss the different ways photographers, like Edwin Smith, have interpreted architecture and portrayed our human relationship to the built environment. She will also provide expert insight into specific photographic material to support the afternoon's practical activity.

In the afternoon, we will work through a series of photographic exercises that will encourage us to explore the RIBA's iconic building and its surroundings. We'll consider architecture in terms of narrative, and identify the different elements of the building which provide this sense of narrative. Throughout this activity we will develop our observational and compositional skills from a photographic point of view and learn how we can take control of what the viewer sees in our photographs. It will also sharpen our conceptual thinking in how we approach and present our environment as storytellers and researchers.

Day Three, British Library: Words in places

We will be back at the British Library for day three exploring responses to architecture through text and spoken word. Within the context of the British Library building and its surroundings, a series of listening and drawing tasks will encourage us to reveal the relationship between architecture and text. Dispersed amongst these tasks will be talks from a poet, reflecting on their process of responding to architecture through text, and a curator's introduction to the British Library's Oral History Archive, including the voices of the British Library architects, Colin St John Wilson and MJ Long, who will discuss their intentions for the building as we explore it.

Vital to responding creatively to architecture is our ability to listen, to observe, and to immerse ourselves in an environment. Today's tasks will pursue alternative methods for describing and responding to architecture, developing our observational skills, our drawing skills and our ability to respond to our environment.

Following some group reflection at the end of the day, we will visit our *Writing: Making your Mark*.

Day Four, British Library and RIBA: Drawing

Starting at the British Library we will walk to RIBA and draw along the way. As we walk we'll immerse ourselves in the urban environment, focusing on developing our observational skills and exploring how people exist amongst and interact with buildings

When we conclude our sketching walk at the RIBA, we'll undertake an architectural model making workshop. This workshop will strengthen our practical skills in model making and working with 3D materials, whilst continuing to develop our conceptual thinking.

Day four will end with group reflection

Day Five, RIBA: Leaving your mark

Our final day will draw together the different aspects of the course through the challenge of an open brief, which you can respond to either individually or collaboratively. The brief will allow you to draw upon the skills and knowledge you have acquired during the week to test your creativity within the constraints of a limited timeframe and selection of resources.

Choosing a situation, an observation, and/or a feeling that has emerged for you during the course you'll respond through the creation of an intervention somewhere in the public spaces we've visited on the course or at the RIBA. This intervention can take any form, something placed, an action/performance...

Your interventions will be recorded through film and photography and displayed alongside your sketchbooks at an intimate event that evening at the RIBA. You will come together with the other course contributors as well as your invited friends and family, to reflect on the week's work and discuss how we can develop our practices following the summer school.

Tutors

The course is led by **Liam O'Connor**, a visual artist working between the UK and Mexico. Liam works across many disciplines including; drawing, photography, installation and performance, exploring our physical and imagined relationship with the city. Liam is dedicated to supporting peoples' creative development, and he believes the use of simple artistic techniques provide a richer connection with our environment and each other.

Our practical sessions will be supported by daily talks and show-and-tells by RIBA and British Library curators, tours exploring the architectural design of RIBA and British Library buildings, and off-site visits to explore inspiring architecture nearby.

Previous skills, knowledge or experience

No previous experience is required to attend this course. Whether you are contemplating a career in architecture or art, are already studying/working in architecture or art, or just curious to develop your artistic skills and approach, this course will provide the opportunity to:

- Develop a range of practical artistic skills, including bookbinding, drawing, photography, architectural drawing and architectural model making.
- Develop communication and critical and conceptual thinking skills, through the use of the sketchbook and daily group discussions.
- Develop fresh perspectives on the built environment in London in order to understand how we occupy space.
- Be introduced and gain an understanding of how to access and interpret the invaluable archives at both the RIBA and the British Library.

- Have complimentary guided visits to British Library exhibitions *Writing: Making Your Mark* and *Leonardo Da Vinci: A Mind in Motion*.
 - Develop new connections with peers and experts from the RIBA and the British Library.
 - Gain tailored advice and support from a range of curators, practitioners and artist Liam O'Connor throughout the week.
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Facilities and refreshments

Please note that the Learning Centre's in both locations will open to participants 15 minutes before the stated course start time.

Tea and coffee will be provided at the beginning of each session.

Lunch will be provided. Please let us know if you have any dietary requirements by emailing AdultLearning@bl.uk as soon as you have booked onto the course.
