

## London College of Fashion, UAL

### Community Innovation

Creative Collaborations//Design+Make  
(in collaboration with Art Against Knives)

#### About the project

##### Summary

The LCF Social Responsibility team has been working with Art Against Knives, a charity that works with at-risk young people living in areas of London affected by violent crime. Our project invited a group of AAK participants to a ten-day leatherwork course at LCF, empowering them to build the skills and confidence they may need to access education, employment and training.

##### Project partners

London College of Fashion, UAL  
Art Against Knives

#### The results

##### The problem

In 2014 there were over 3000 knife crime assaults causing injury in London, while violent crime in London has risen by 22% since 2013. It is the belief of London College of Fashion (LCF) and our partners, Art Against Knives (AAK), that in order to prevent young people from becoming both victims and perpetrators of violent crime, we must provide opportunities and interventions early to enable long-term change within communities. We established the Design+Make project to engage with hard to reach young people (18-24) from areas of high deprivation within London, offering them an exciting and relevant creative opportunity that would otherwise not be accessible to them.

##### The approach

We developed a partnership with Art Against Knives and collaboratively designed the pilot project Design+Make. Facilitated by Professor Dai Rees, a leading leatherwork artist and MA Artefact course leader at LCF, the project sought to engage a group of ten young people through an interaction with our educational facilities, tutors and technicians within the LCF leather workshops. The group were equipped with the skills to design and make their own leather bag using traditional handcraft leather techniques. They were also taught

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of the arts  
london

##### Profile

- LCF is one of 6 colleges which comprise UAL
- LCF has over 500 staff & 5,500 students
- UAL has over 2,000 staff and 19,000 students
- LCF is located over 6 urban London sites.

*Category supported by*



research and creative thinking skills that helped to inform the design development of their bags and took part in group discussions throughout the project.

## Our goals

The overall intention of the project was to encourage the participants to work within a supportive and creative educational environment, a place that was completely unfamiliar to the whole group. We sought to equip the young people with the skills to design and make their own leather bag using traditional handcraft leather techniques, facilitating an increased understanding of environment, individual circumstances and the choices available to the young people, engaging them in the prospect of Higher Education and inspiring the confidence within individuals to explore new opportunities.

## Obstacles and solutions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging participants in an unfamiliar environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participants were encouraged to work within a framework where they could explore and communicate the positive and negative aspects of their environments and the consequential impact on their lives.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting positive life choices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participants acquired the skills of historical British craftsmanship required for the hand production of traditional leather goods, requiring the use of hand tools only, including knives, and demonstrates a positive purpose for these tools in a professional practice.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging increased social awareness among staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff volunteered their time for the project which was significant, as this gave them the opportunity to evaluate their teaching practice and how this can benefit students and our wider community.</li> </ul>

## Performance and results

The participants attended every session of the course. Most of the participants had a history of not applying themselves to courses, particularly when it comes to education. It was moving to see them turn up every day full of enthusiasm and in some cases even request to stay later so that they could keep going with their work.

The participants all completed their work. Although we did hope for this to be the case, we had discussed at the beginning of the project whether this would be a realistic expectation. Through their hard work and passion for the course, they all managed to complete their bags on time, a very proud moment for the all participants and the staff involved.

## The future

### Lessons learned

Due to the success of the pilot, this will become a flagship project for the College with the model providing an opportunity for replication across the university and other institutions. This model can be used as a basis to engage other Higher Education establishments with local gang related charities or outreach programmes on a national level. This model can also inform a practical engagement with young people in order to help them realise their own creative potential and their place within the creative industries.

### Sharing your project

The success of this project has featured in presentations made by the Head of College and the Director of Social Responsibility at national and international conferences. It is also widely shared internally through the

college's digital channels and internal presentations in order to inspire and engage staff and student support for future projects.

## What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

To win a Green Gown award would be an outstanding achievement for London College of Fashion, UAL. As a University we are working hard to embed principles of sustainability into everything we do. When our work is recognised in this way it really helps to galvanise staff and students and underlines that the work we are doing must continue and that we're heading in the right direction.

## Further information

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Art Against Knives: <http://www.artagainstknives.com/>

Better Lives is a term we use here at London College of Fashion to describe the work we do that uses fashion, as a discipline, to drive change, build a sustainable future and improve the way we live.

London College of Fashion, UAL Better Lives Stories: <http://www.arts.ac.uk/fashion/about/better-lives/>