

Barber's Education Team Scoops Top Award

Posted on Saturday 28th July 2007

The Education Programme at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts has been recognised for its quality with a prestigious national award.

The University of Birmingham-based gallery has been given the Sandford Award for Heritage Education – placing it alongside top national institutions including Hampton Court Palace, the Tower of London and Dulwich Picture Gallery, as well as regional museums such as Aston Hall, Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings and the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter that also hold the award.

Inspectors Eric Steed and Wilf Weeks spent a day at the Barber in May. In the morning, they watched Education Officer Brian Scholes and Gallery Assistants Edwina Mileham and Corinne Harrison lead a visit by a Year One class from Little Sutton Primary School as they explored the subject of Portraiture. The children enjoyed storytelling in the galleries presented by professional actors Annamation then drew their own portraits. In the afternoon, Mr Steed shadowed a life drawing class for adults led by Brian and his team with artist Terry Mullett.

The inspector praised every aspect of the visit, from planning, organisation and how the activities were tailored to the National Curriculum, to resources and facilities such as the paintings in the gallery, the actors' costumes and the siting of the Education Room. He also approved of how the team interacted with and managed the children and adults, the way they helped the children and adults understand the collection, and the quality of the tuition.

In his report, Mr Steed said: 'It would be difficult to improve the content or quality of the programme offered to the Year One class. From the moment they were greeted by the trained guide, to the individual assessment of their own portrait drawings before they left, the children were engrossed in their learning and participation in the activities presented to them.

'The presentations – including input and movement – were seamless. There was no time for pupils to drift off because the pace and interest levels were kept so high,' he continued.

His only suggestions for improvements were that the team should continue to explore collaborating with education teams at other galleries to help evaluate each other's visits, and that the Barber should invest in some storage containers to hold some of the resources for the workshops.

Brian Scholes said he was delighted by the inspector's findings.

'Our education programme at the Barber has evolved over a number of years and we're always looking at ways we can improve,' said Brian. 'The fact that we are almost completely booked up for workshops throughout the school year, as well as for our adult art classes, is evidence that we must be doing something right, but it's great to have it recognised by the experts.'

The award itself will be presented at a national ceremony in mid-November.

Ends

For further information, or to arrange an interview with Brian Scholes, please contact Barber Institute Press and Marketing Officer, Andrew Davies, on 0121 414 2946/07769 958114 or andrewdavies@barber.org.uk.

Notes for Editors

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts has had an education department since the early 1990s. It also housing the University of Birmingham's Departments of History of Art and Music.

The Education Department organises free schools visits throughout the year, as well delivering twenty ArtReach! Education outreach visits into inner-city schools throughout Birmingham annually,

Adult workshops, and a variety of holiday workshops for children aged from five to eighteen years, are also offered.

Families are also catered for with Art Alive! drama performances throughout the year, not to mention the annual Family Open Day, held on the first Saturday in June each year.

For further information, visit the website at www.barber.org.uk.

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