

Set free from Foundations

An Art foundation course is no longer the prerequisite to an Art and Design degree that it once was. Strong creative A-levels and a new emphasis on the quality of a candidate's portfolio have changed entry requirements, explains *Candida Cave*, Principal of Hampstead Fine Arts College

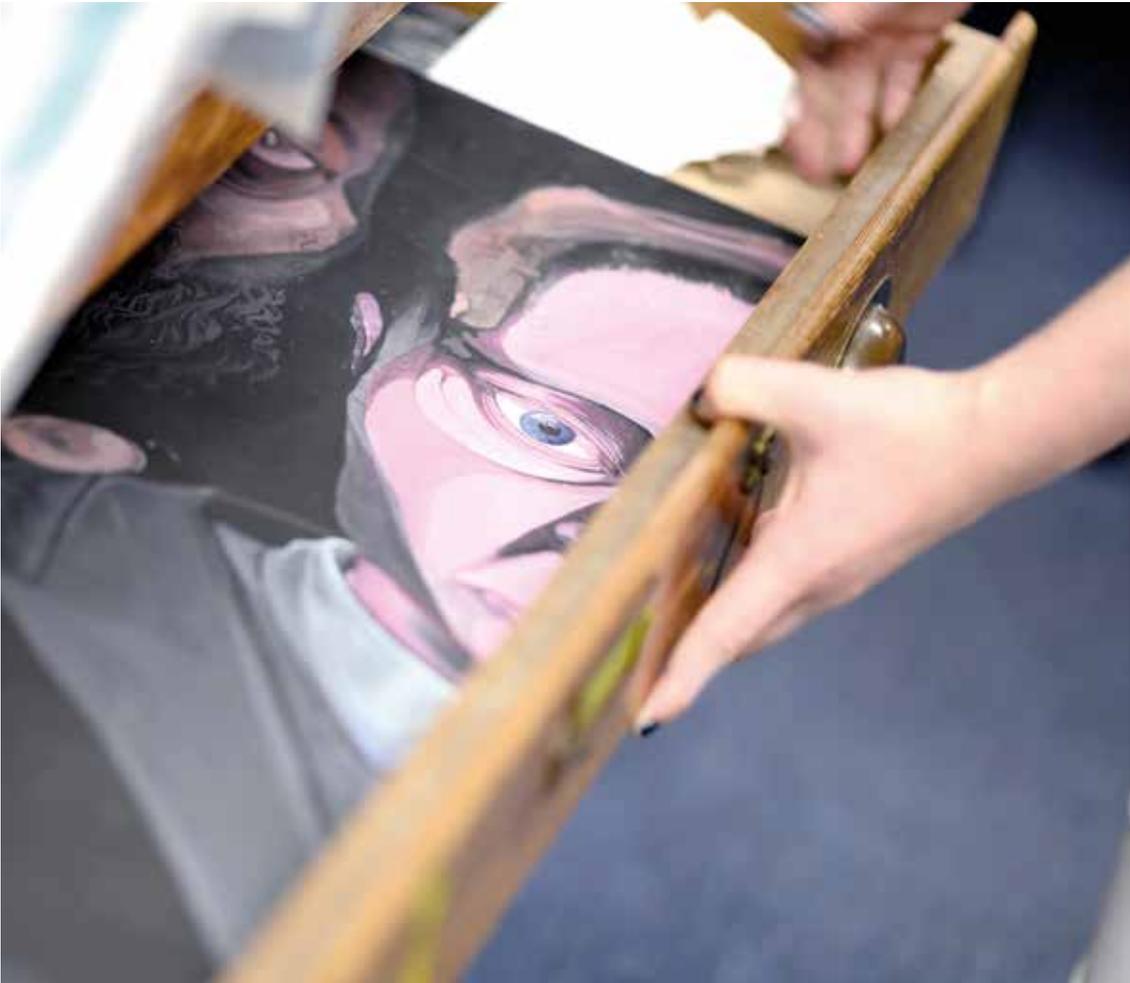
Most colleges used to require students to complete a foundation course before embarking on degree course in Art and Design. This is no longer the case; universities are increasingly offering places to students fresh out of Sixth Form. A contemporary creative A-level is an ambitious and wide-ranging qualification which, in many ways, replaces the traditional Art foundation course. The range of methods and approaches, the depth of conceptual understanding and analysis mean that students are often ready and able to move straight to an arts degree when they complete their A-level courses. The emphasis now is on the quality and maturity of the portfolio — a collection of work that can demonstrate the rigour, creative independence and cultural awareness of a young person more comprehensively than a stark grade.

Our students have this year been offered places on degree courses without a prior





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foundation course in Painting, Sculpture, Illustration, Graphic Design, Fashion, Textiles and Photography. Fine Arts College (FAC) offers a choice of four stand-alone Art and Design A-level courses: Fine Art, Graphics, Photography and Fashion and Textiles. We advise prospective art students to take two of these alongside two academic subjects. This enables them to build up a portfolio of work over the two-year course, and also achieve outstanding A-level grades, a necessity for acceptance onto the most prestigious courses at, for example, the Ruskin, the Slade, Central St Martins and Chelsea.

FAC students have been very successful in moving directly to degree even at the most prestigious colleges in the UK and abroad. Here are some of their stories:

Nina came to FAC from New Zealand taking Fine Art, History of Art and Photography A-levels. She flourished in the open, ambitious atmosphere of the college and began experimenting with sculpture, video and performance taking her themes from personal experience and parallel historical biographies. The Slade School accepted her straight from Sixth Form on the basis of her powerful portfolio and accompanying commentary and her high A-level grades.

Eliza will be starting her Fine Art degree at Chelsea School of Art after leaving us this summer. Her work combines the benefits of the regular life-drawing that we offer with an ability to make manifest her fertile dream life. Her paintings and sculptures share the narrative dynamic of much contemporary painting.

Alice joined FAC when she moved to London from Trinidad. She is taking Fine Art, Textiles and History of Art and has won a place on the Textile Design degree at Glasgow School of Art. She wishes to bring together the expressive potential of Fine Art with the processes of craft. Klara is to study Fashion Design at the prestigious Kingston University; she has made exciting work at A-level in varied media including painting and video that casts a critical eye over her native Russia. Elena, who has excelled at Art and Graphics, is to study Illustration at Anglia Ruskin. Her work employs sensitive draughtsmanship to convey emotionally intense content.



Success is not confined to the UK. Imogen is moving from London to Parsons New York this autumn. Her work combines intellectual, even scientific subjects, with personal history. She uses a broad range of methods and media, from painting to customised furniture, and has made arresting objects that examine medical and emotional difficulties and challenges. Talented Textiles student, Saskia has won a scholarship to Parsons Paris to study Fashion.

Since opening our fashion studios in 2018, fashion has become an increasingly popular career for our students. This year Mia and Afnan will study it at Central St Martins, Aimee at Nottingham Trent and Lola will join Klara at Kingston. Kingston is a popular destination for our leavers and it's here that Livia will study Photography and Aisha, Fine Art.

Some students choose to follow a foundation course if they are undecided on their specialisation. This year students have been accepted at CSM, LCC, Kingston, Ravensbourne Morley College and City & Guilds.

Entrance to art degree courses is extremely competitive and to produce a portfolio that is capable of opening doors takes commitment and hard work. Students are expected to be enthusiastic and highly motivated, visiting museums and galleries, keeping a personal sketchbook and attending our open-studio sessions and weekly life-drawing evening classes. ■

Candida Cave is Principal of Hampstead Fine Arts College, widely recognised as the leading pre-university arts and humanities school in the UK