Public invited to experience Kingston School of Art's degree show through innovative new online platform

The creative work of talented emerging artists, performers and designers from across Kingston School of Art is being showcased through an innovative new online platform designed to encourage discovery and exploration.

The custom-built website, which allows visitors to visually and aurally explore the range of creative talent on display through a striking colour-wheel and soundtrack concept, will host the final project work from Kingston University's art, design, architecture, performing arts, curation, critical studies and creative industries, culture and communication, and writing students.

The Kingston School of Art Degree Show has long been a rite of passage marking the completion of three or more years of study, experimentation and creative accomplishment. With the traditional in-person show not being possible this year due to the pandemic, the opportunity to explore alternatives within the digital space has led to the creation of the new site- offering new ways to interact with and explore the work produced this year.

"It was important we captured the unique atmosphere of the physical Degree Show, where there is something new to discover, engage or interact with around every corner," explained Kingston School of Art Dean Mandy Ure. "In what has been a challenging year for our students and staff, I am very proud to see the diverse, innovative and though-provoking work of our students on display through this platform. I'm really proud of the resilience of our student body – they have found new and inspiring ways of working and showcasing their creativity."

Part of the process required finding different ways to connect courses and students in a similar way to how they interact in a studio environment. In the workshops at Kingston School of Art, designers can be found next to architects and fine artists, illustrators and photographers, each influencing and collaborating. The problem lay in creating a website highlighting discovery, where projects naturally fall into course categorisations and therefore limit visitor pathways.

One of the solutions was the creation of a search function with all the items uploaded into a colour-coded system, which can be accessed on each page of the site through a colour wheel. Artists assign each of their works a predominant colour, grouping them with peers from across the art school. This enables sculpture to sit alongside graphic design, creative writing and music. Work can also be tagged with one of 500 keywords, leading to a plethora of styles and processes sharing space.

Another interactive element of the website has been the use of sound. Each artist has been able to upload sound files to accompany their artwork. Some of the young artists have uploaded themselves discussing their work while others have used sounds from around campus to soundtrack their work, adding depth – the digital world melding with the physical.

The site can also be navigated with the more traditional course structures and through events and collaborations, with each student assigned their own page with which to showcase their work.

The Degree Show project was helmed by KSA's Head of the School of Art and Architecture, Professor Alistair Payne, who enlisted the assistance of two of last year's graduates, Molly Cranston and Giacomo Moroso, in generating the look and feel of the degree show's web presence. The current students were also able to add their voice. In addition, the designers brought on to make the website a reality, Mireille Burkhardt and Kieran O'Connor of Bob Design, are both graphic design graduates who have also taught at the art school.

"It was important the site was made by people who understood the sense of community at Kingston School of Art. We wanted the focus to be on the students, we wanted it to stand out from the crowd – it's about fun, about celebration and allows the students to define their own space within the Degree Show," Professor Payne explained. "The grouping of students was also very particular, it is representative of the courses, but also cross-course collaboration, which is at the heart of Kingston School of Art's ethos."

Following a challenging year for students and staff, Dean Mandy Ure was keen to express her gratitude to those that had contributed to the creation of the website. "I'd like to thank everyone who helped to make the Degree Show a reality. Staff and students pitching initial ideas, designers and web developers turning those ideas into reality and the students, without whose work the website simply wouldn't exist," she said. "I encourage visitors to be playful with the website, interact, engage and explore the astonishing work of our final year students."

- Find out more about Kingston School of Art.
- Visit the 2021 Degree Show website.