CHOICES

2010 residency

EXHIBITION

The Choices 2010 Residency Exhibition is a culmination of nine months of work from young people on the North of the Tyne Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISS). Working with artist in residence Tommy Anderson, the young people have engaged the themes and techniques of famous Pop Art pioneers such as Jackson Pollock, Peter Blake and Andy Warhol to experiment with visual arts techniques and explore their personal experiences.

The participants were also involved in the design of promotional material for the showcase and assisted with the installation of the exhibition; from preparing the walls and painting the space, to framing and installing the artworks.

Choices is an ongoing programme of arts activities for young people on the North of the Tyne ISS focusing on the aspirations and life choices of young people in the youth justice system.

Choices is jointly managed by Helix Arts and the North of the Tyne ISS.

About the participants

The young people who took part in this project were aged between 13-18 and were from a range of backgrounds. As part of their ISS order and involvement in the Choices programme they have the opportunity to reflect on their life choices and make decisions about new directions they would like to pursue.

About the Artist

Tommy Anderson is a freelance graphic designer, artist and facilitator. He works closely with a number of regional and national companies on a varied range of design projects including publications, branding and illustration. He is an established arts facilitator with several years experience working with arts based community projects and people of all ages and social circumstance.

North of Tyne ISS

The North of the Tyne Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISS) is managed by a consortium of local authorities (Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside) working with partner agencies it provides a monitored programme for young people within the youth justice system.

Helix Arts

Helix Arts specialises in the development of projects and initiatives exploring the role and potential of the arts in a social context. Long-term partnerships, particularly with the public and voluntary sectors, enable Helix to produce projects designed to engender broad participation, collaboration and sustainability. Established in 1983, Helix Arts has charitable status and is revenue funded by Arts Council England.

ACTION PAINTING

Jackson Pollock was a major figure in the abstract expressionist movement who developed 'action painting' – placing large canvases on the floor instead of using the traditional easel, and painting with forceful, rapid, impulsive brush strokes, or by splashing the paint directly onto the canvas. He also used sticks, trowels, pots of paint with holes in the bottom, and knives to apply the paint.

Inspired by Pollock's means of expressing his inner feelings through art, and using some of the methods and techniques he employed, participants were given the freedom to experiment and enjoy expressing themselves through the physicality of creating their own artworks.

Without planning or the use of source material, participants were encouraged to create abstract artworks based on an idea; how could feelings and emotions such as excitement, anger, and thoughtfulness be interpreted in the style of Pollock?

Participants experimented with different ways of applying paint to canvas, using funnels, straws, trowels, sponges and squeezy bottles. As well as typical acrylic and emulsion paints, new materials such as special luminous and metallic paints were also used.

The participants worked as a group to prepare the workspace, and also in sharing ideas on mixing paints to create varying shades of colour, different consistencies and textures. They worked reactively with the artworks, and also experimented with creating patterns in the paint whilst still wet, by holding up and moving the canvases around, allowing the paint to drip and colours to combine.
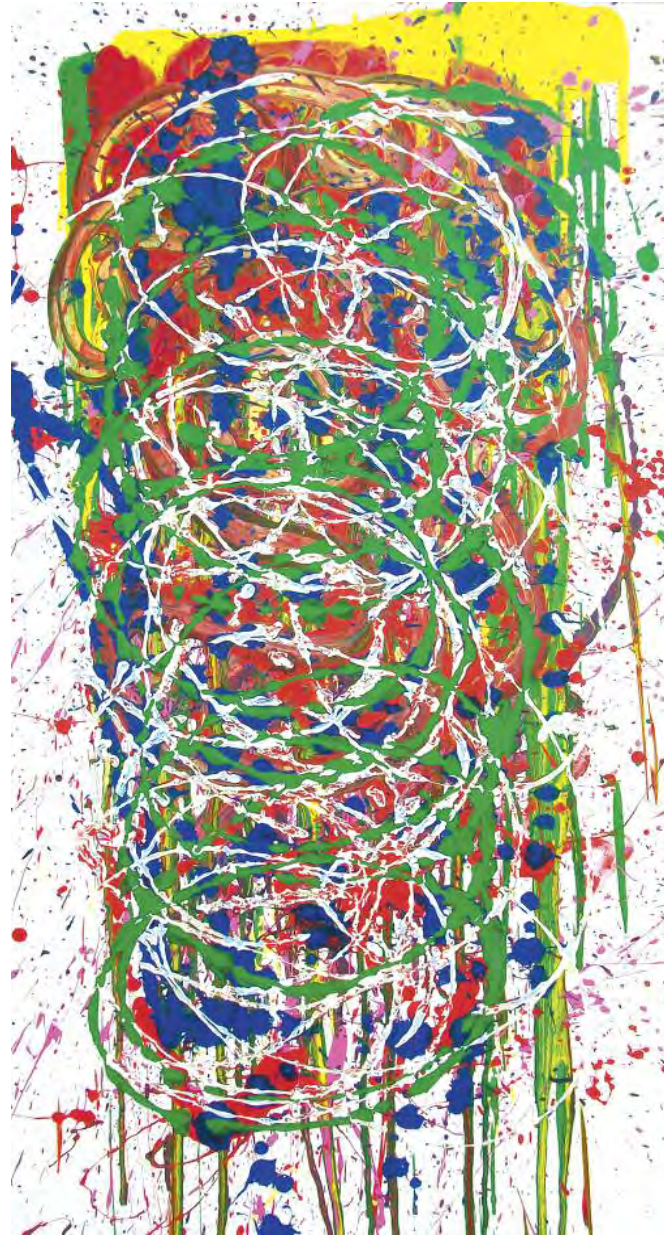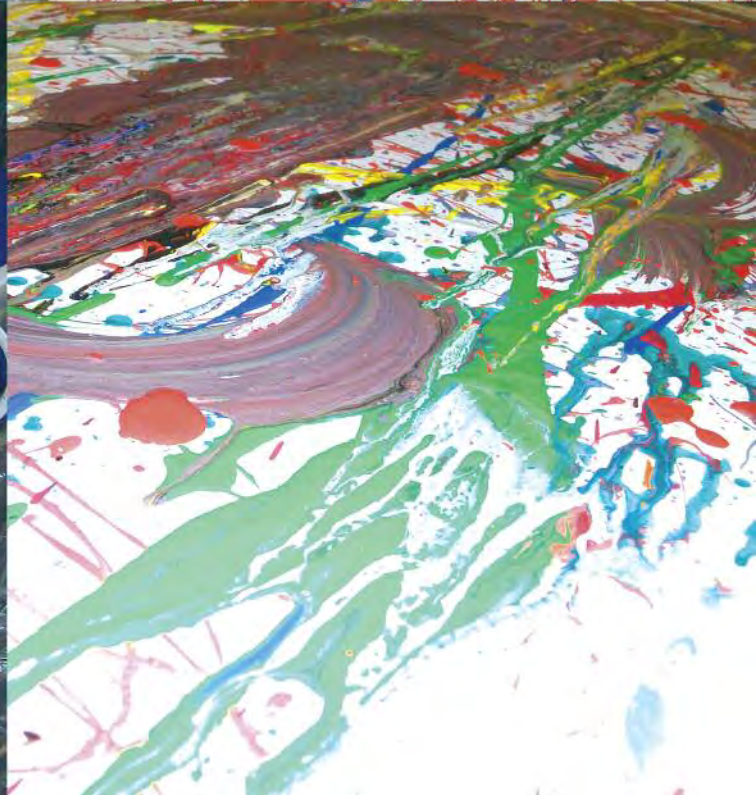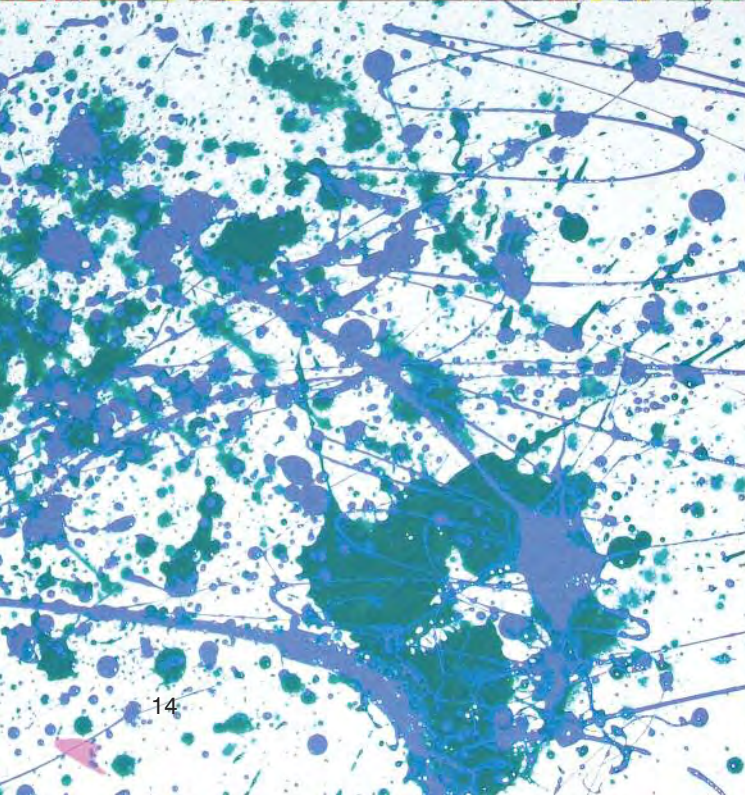
"It's not just splashing paint around and that, you have to feel it and think about what you're doing and put yourself into it"

PHOTOGRAPHY

Pop Art sought to reflect the social values and environment from which it sprang, and in visiting and documenting a number of local areas including the Ouseburn in Byker, Newcastle Quayside, Wallsend dockyards and Tynemouth on the North East coast, the participants were encouraged to look closer at their environments and capture what they discovered.

Some of the images have been presented as they were captured, some were used to create a cut and paste montage; and others were incorporated into typographic pieces.

Images of signage, hand drawn type, road markings and aged posters and public notices were also collected and used within compositions.
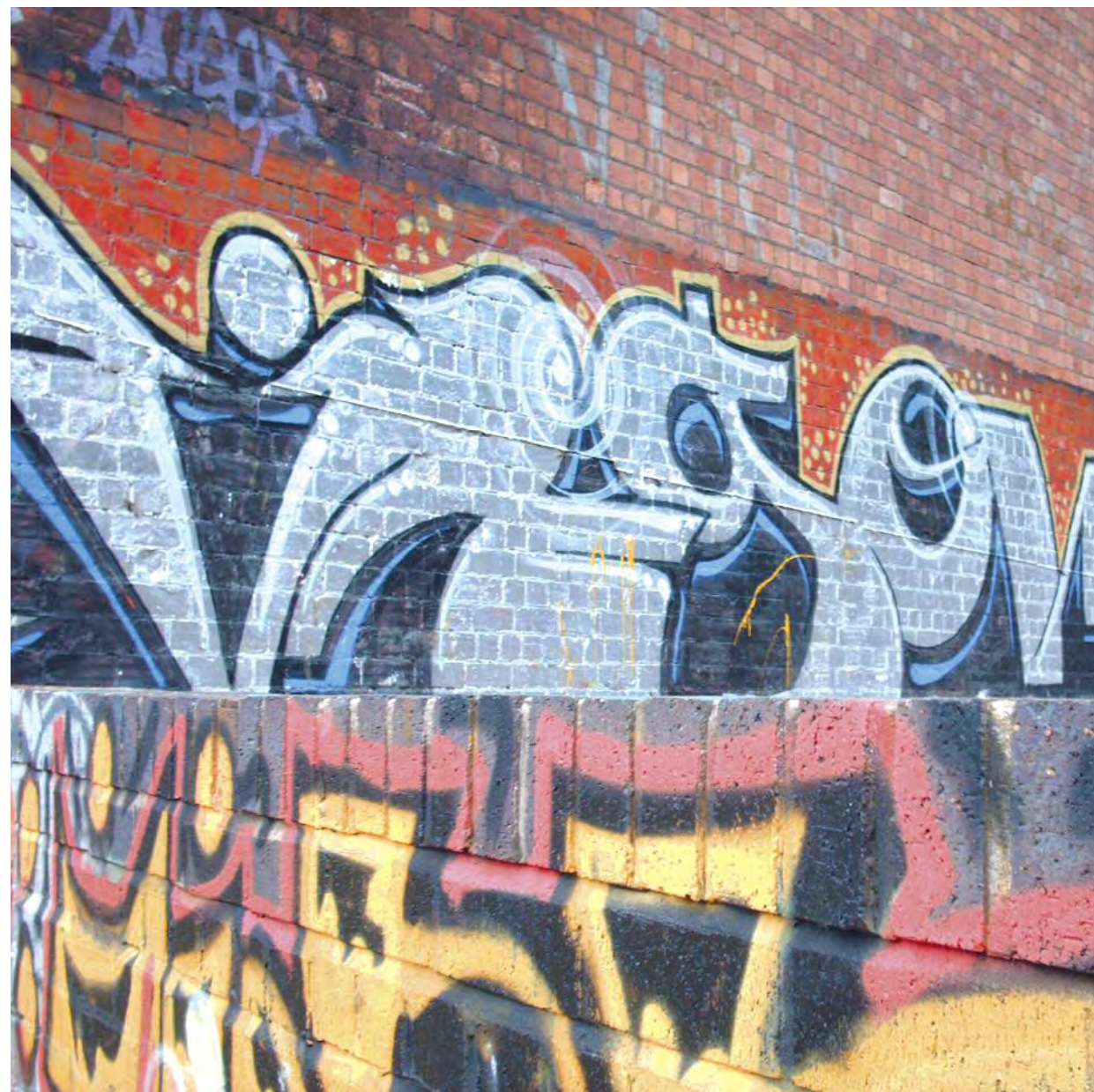
"I really like doing this kinda stuff, I liked it at school – I love art"

TYPOGRAPH↑

Although handmade lettering has always existed in art, experimenting with it as an integral part of a design, essentially an image in itself, was explored successfully by a number of 60s designers such as Victor Moscoso, Martin Sharp and Lee Conklin. Contemporary typographers such as David Carson continue to push the boundaries of experimentation, with the aim of communicating both the idea and the feeling of a design with an imaginative use of typeforms and image.

This idea was explored as a progression from the Pollock workshops; in the same way that participants were released from constraints of traditional painting methods during the Pollock sessions, working creatively with typography encouraged the participants to express themselves with a freedom and experimentation that challenged the notion of 'standards', and prompted them to think about how an idea could be communicated more successfully by addressing the aesthetics as opposed to just presenting the information.

The subject of typography was explored in three stages, beginning with calligraphy and simple mark making. Participants then looked at creating typographic compositions using materials such as letraset (rub-down lettering), stencils and rubber stamps. From there, participants created an entire alphabet by physically producing printing blocks and printing the letterforms themselves. This alphabet was then scanned, and a digital font produced.

Calligraphy Techniques

Working with professional calligrapher Chris Bowen, the participants were shown how to use pencils and calligraphy pens. They were introduced to gothic fonts and the techniques required to create these letterforms – assembling the letterforms to create their own name.
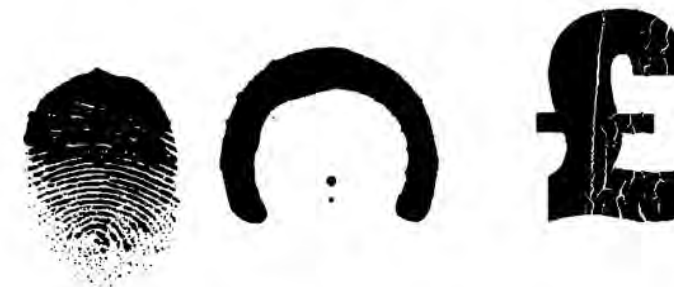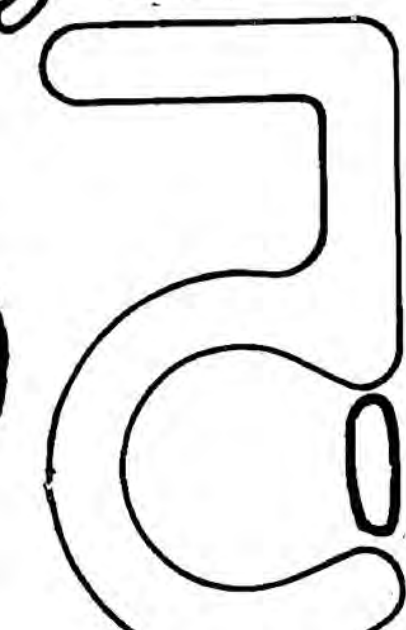
i'm FasTeR tHan

Å ʌʌis khaN

in roundone £

Creative Composition

Using a variety of techniques including letraset (rub-down lettering), rubber stamps and stencils, the participants produced creative compositions of poetry devised by a previous 'Choices' group.

Participants were encouraged to find alternative ways of using letters, numbers and other symbols, such as how the number 3 can also be rotated to represent the letters E, M, and W.
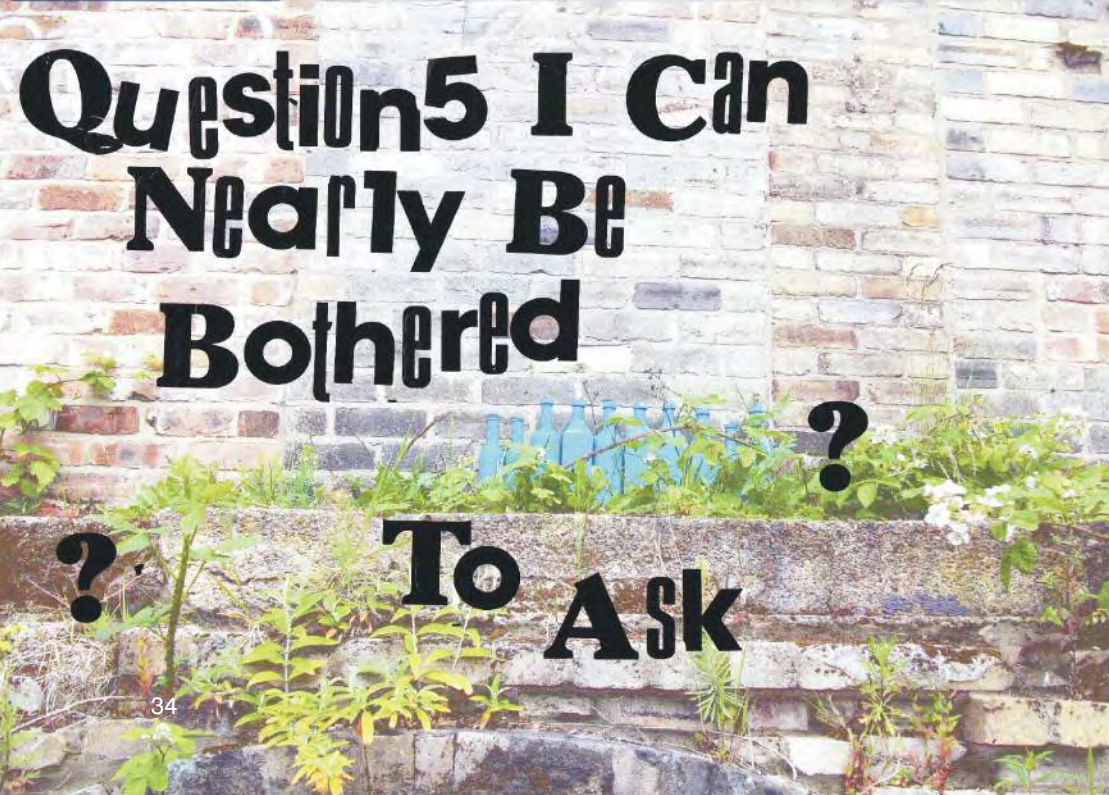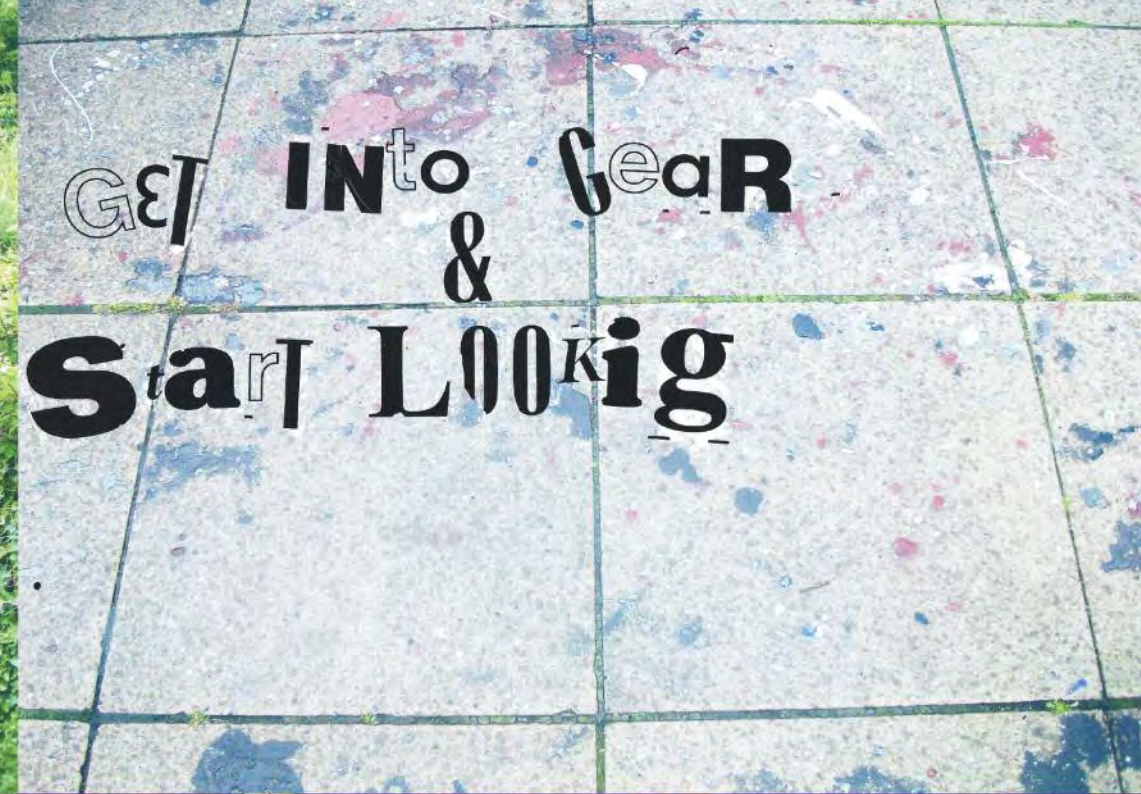
GET MYSELF WELL KNOWN

KiCKeD oFF the FLooR

heADINg strAIGhT INto the stORm

CROSSINg the bRIDge

GeT INto GeaR
&
StaRt LOOKig

Question5 I Can Nearly Be Bothered To Ask ? ?

KeepS Going Round & RounD & RoUNd O O O

It's the RuZZing I alwayS WanteD To maKE

BlAcK ClOuDs beHiNd me

## Designing, cutting and printing typeforms to create a digital typeface

After designing simple typeforms for their initials, the participants used linoleum blocks and specialist cutting tools to create their own unique printing blocks.

Test prints were produced, and the participants were then asked to devise a way of using the blocks to create an entire alphabet, resulting in some thoughtful and creative outcomes. This was a difficult task particularly because the participants had to visualise the blocks backwards, which is necessary in order to produce blocks that print the correct way on application.

The entire alphabet, including a number of variants for each letter and numeral, was then printed using combinations of the linoleum blocks, printing inks and rollers.

After making a selection from the resulting prints, the 'Choices Regular' and 'Choices Alternate' typefaces were created. The typefaces were then digitised and are available as fonts for both Mac and PC platforms. The fonts can be downloaded at www.baselineshift.co.uk / choices.

Both 'Choices Regular' and 'Choices Alternate' have been used for headers throughout this book, as well as for the promotional material for the Choices 2010 art exhibition.
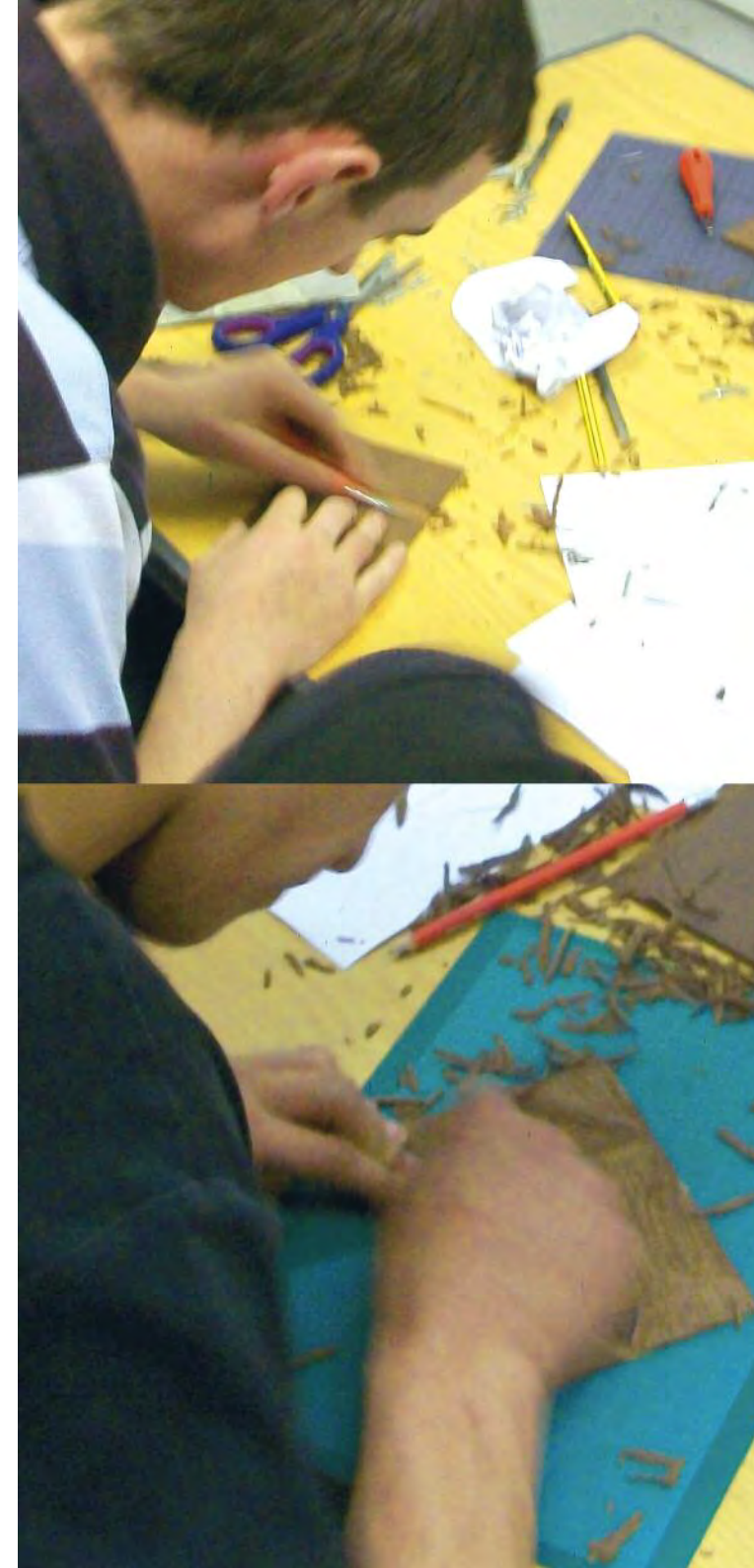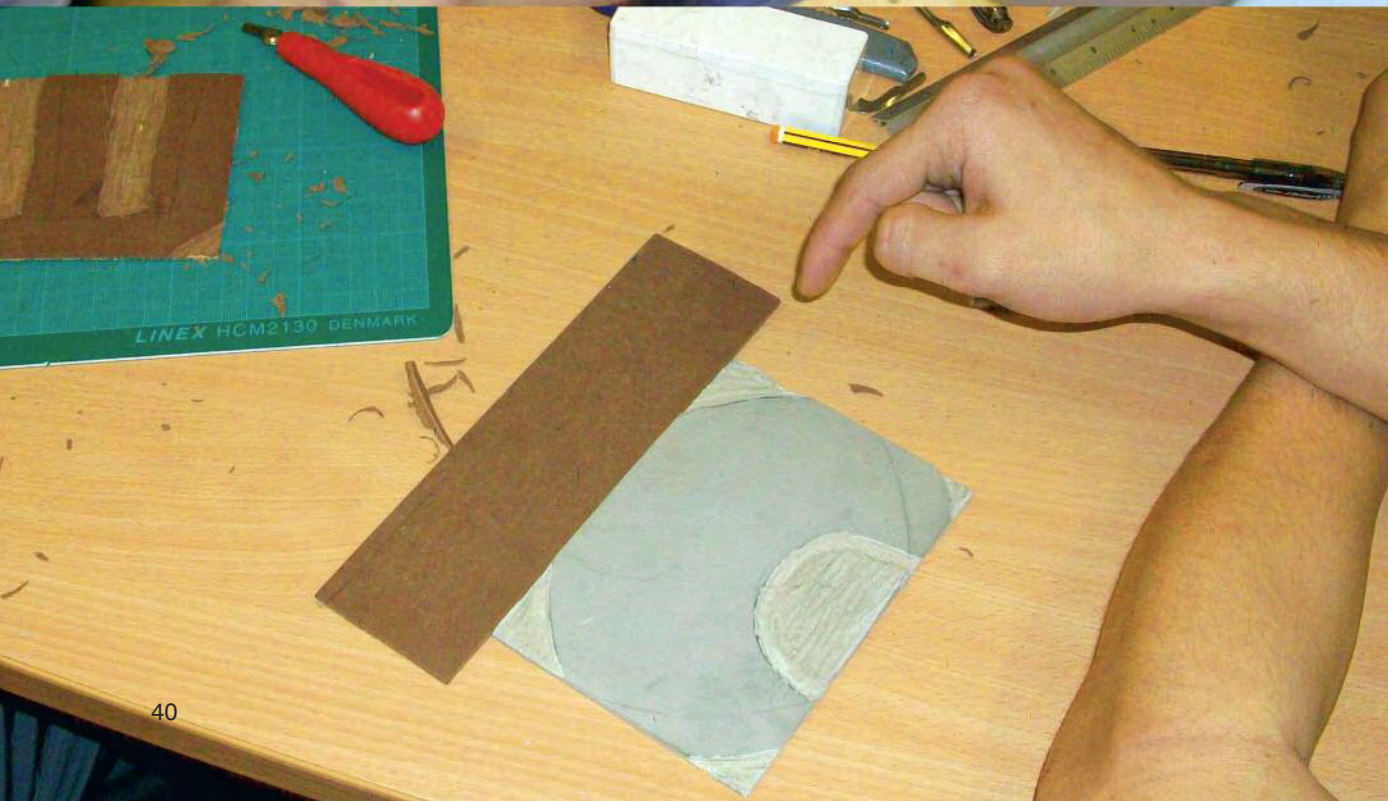
choices

A b c d E F G h I J K L m
N o P Q r S T U v w X Y Z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

choices alternate

A b c d E F g h i J K L m
N o P Q R S T o v w X ↑ Z
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

SCREEN PRINTING

As one of the founders of the Pop Art movement, Andy Warhol's simple, larger than life, high contrast silk screen prints captivated millions. His paintings were of packaged consumer products like Campbell's soup cans, and striking depictions of twentieth-century celebrities, such as Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and Elizabeth Taylor.

The work of Warhol was explored in order to expose the participants to a style similar to that of the current stenciling trend, but that does not involve the use of aerosol paint, and can be produced from practically any source imagery.

Although the process can be a time consuming one, from capturing an initial image and transferring it to a screen, to pulling the final edition of prints, it can be a very rewarding experience.

During a photography session in Newcastle's Leazes Park, one of the participants captured an impressive image of St. James' Park that would be used to create a screen print.

The image was taken to Northern Print in Byker, and working with professional print maker Helen Donley, the participant was taken through the entire process of creating a screen print.

This involved masking out sections of the photo to create stencils, filling in specific areas with paint that blocks out the light when exposing the screen, creating the screen, and finally pulling a multi-coloured screen print in stages, producing an edition of several prints.
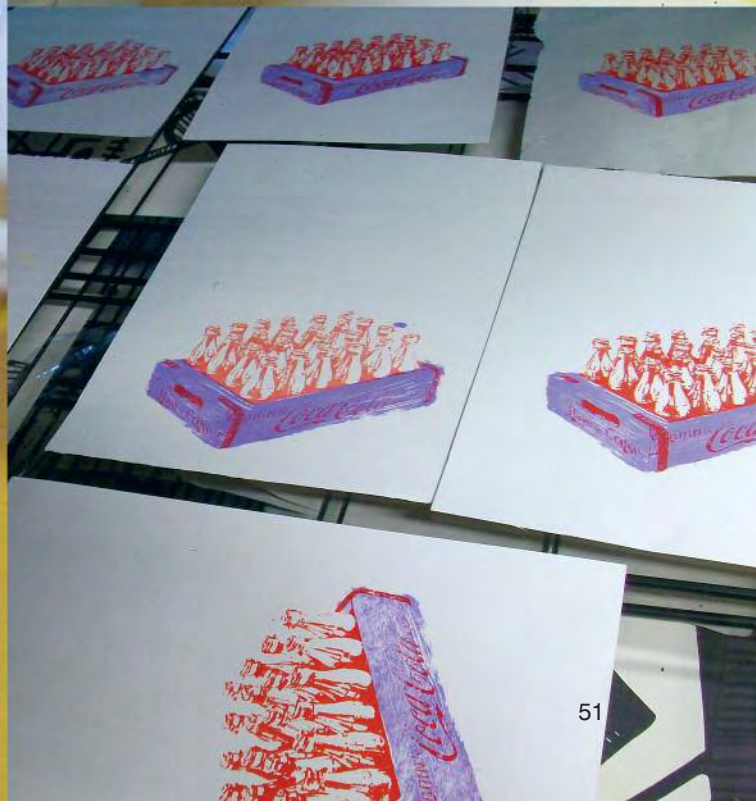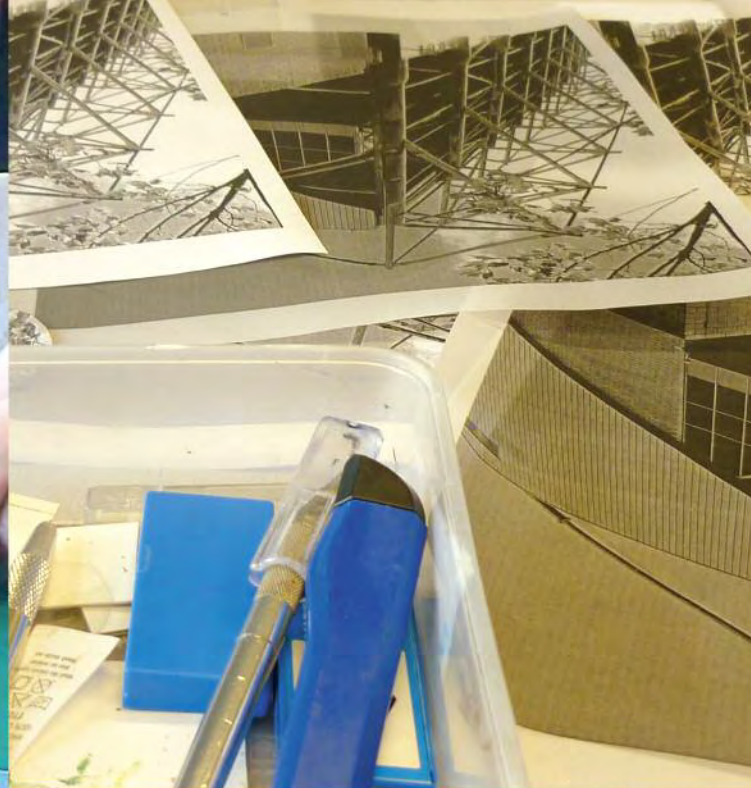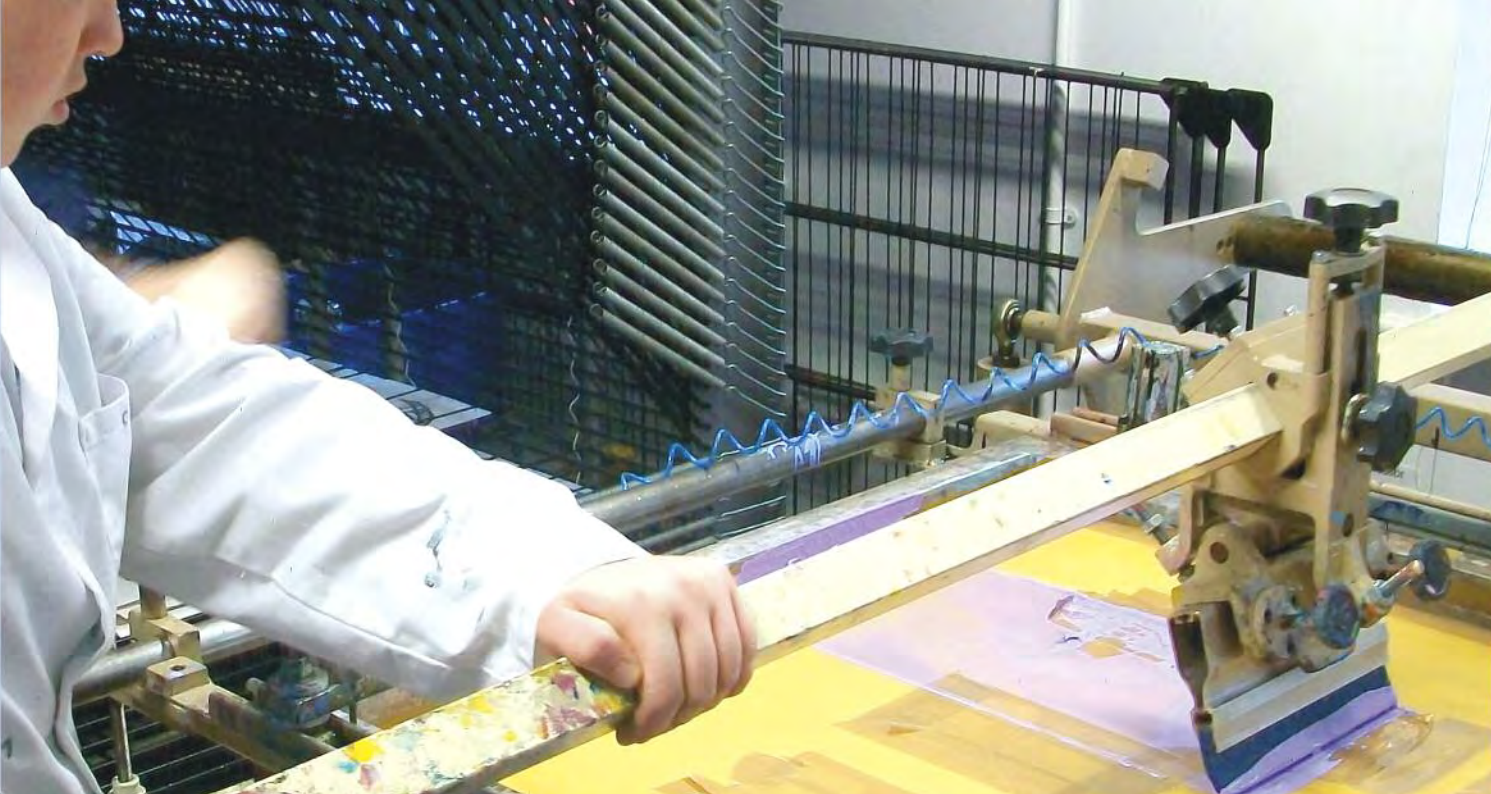
"*I was feeling canny radge when I came in* (to ISS) *before, but this has helped me concentrate on something, and it's calmed me right down*".

COLLAGE

Inspired by the use of 'found' materials in the work of Pop Art pioneers such as Peter Blake, Robert Rauschenberg and Richard Hamilton, the participants were introduced to the notion of creating art from discarded and unusual items.

The participants used jigsaw pieces, old toys and board games from charity shops to produce a large group composition depicting a surreal yet intriguing environment.

The completed composition was photographed by the participants using digital cameras with a close up macro lens, combined with lighting and coloured gels. From these photographs a selection was made and the group worked to frame the pieces using a variety of second hand frames, they planned the layout for the artwork and installed the finished pieces themselves.