



Press Release

10 January 2013

Ex-offender turned artist visits Buckingham Palace to receive the prestigious Butler Award

Steven Ellis a student on the BA (Hons) Fine Art course and graduate of the Access course at Leeds College of Art has won a Butler Trust Award for his work with offenders and ex-offenders. This is the first time the award has been given to an ex-offender as it is usually given to prison governors, probation officers and other working professionals.

Presented each year by Royal Patron, The Princess Royal, and awarded independently, [Butler Trust Annual Awards](#) are the most sought after awards for people working in correctional settings in the UK. The Butler Trust receives over 240 nominations a year and Trustees granted only 10 awards and 20 commendations in total.

The Ceremony will be held in March at Buckingham Palace and celebrates the achievement of Award Winners and recognises outstanding dedication, skill and creativity by people working in prisons, probation or youth justice settings across the UK.

Steven Ellis spent time in prison where he studied art and design and gained a grade A in GCSE art and a Level 3 fine art qualification at distinction grade. From prison he applied to Leeds College of Art and completed the two year Access course on his release. Through his studies Steven recognised the role art can have in supporting the rehabilitation of offenders and as soon as he could, he started volunteering with DISC ([Developing Initiatives Supporting Communities](#)) in Leeds.

Steven started out as an offender representative, speaking out for his peers at events and forums. He shared his recovery journey and helped to inspire others to see hope and potential to turn their lives around.

Steven ran drop in sessions and became a peer mentor. Steven then developed the idea of a Recovery Art Group and secured funding for six months. It became a rolling six week course and Steven provided the support and teaching for others to realise their talents and develop their skills. The art classes help service users to find a way to express their journey and acts as a form of therapy that promotes confidence and social inclusion. The classes are in conjunction with supporting the service users' recovery from drug dependency.

More than 75 people have taken part in the group which has far outlived its initial six month funding and has been successful in signposting service users to further education, including the Access course at Leeds College of Art. DISC is now in the process of taking on 8 degree level students from various courses at the College to support the growing Recovery Art Group.

Steven says: *'Art as a subject is an excellent vehicle that promotes self improvement for people from all walks of life and the Access course plays a pivotal role because of its approachability for the mature student and the support it offers to people with complex backgrounds.'*

Mark Weeding, Chief Executive of DISC said: *'Steven has made a fantastic contribution to promoting recovery within DISC services. He has established an art group that exhibits all that is best about providing both the opportunity for constructive and creative activities and real opportunities for people to share their experiences and express their feelings and concerns. He is committed, supportive and brave and is an inspiration for our offenders, and our staff.'*

Sam Broadhead, course leader Access (Evening) course said: *'The Award is a great achievement and we are very proud of Steven'*. Adam Stone, course leader Access (Daytime) course Leader added: *'Steve's award is*

thoroughly deserved and it is an inspiration to all Access students. This achievement reflects Steve's hard work, determination and tireless enthusiasm to make a difference and we are all very proud of his success.'

Garry Barker, BA (Hons) Fine Art Course Tutor continued: *'Steven recognises that making art can be wonderful life affirming experience and one that can be used as a transformative vehicle. His achievements are fantastic and his continuing commitment to use the skills learnt on his own personal journey, to help others begin theirs, is exemplary.'*

ENDS



Editor's Notes

Leeds College of Art

Founded in 1842, Leeds College of Art is an innovative institution that has changed the way art qualifications are taught and structured in Britain today.

We combine academic and vocational excellence in all our undergraduate programmes. Our focus is to put student's talents to practical use, so their creativity is channelled towards a successful career or postgraduate study.

Our students and staff create a unique community of vibrant, ambitious and deeply creative artists and designers. We are based in Leeds, an internationally acclaimed centre for teaching and learning in addition to being a leading hub for creative and digital industries.

www.leeds-art.ac.uk