

EDUCATION

Second school event gives pupils a hands-on introduction to the art world

Arts Scholars John Benjamin, Viv Lawes and Cynthia Sparke represented the Education Committee, together with our indefatigable Clerk, Alan C. Cook, on April 25th at the second school event launched by our Company.

This is a significant initiative for the Arts Scholars, partnering schools with auction specialists to help young people engage with a potential course of study and future career. This ongoing project, first trialled in Canterbury, is central to the committee's mission and proved to be an extremely successful collaboration with Guy Schooling and his team at Sworders Auctioneers.

The saleroom of their flagship premises in Stansted Mountfitchet welcomed a group of around 25 Year-10 students from Birchwood High School, a state secondary located nearby. Attendees were invited to sit amongst Louis Vuitton trunks, 20th century furniture, pictures, lighting and electric guitars to hear Guy's introduction and discover the packed programme ahead.

The full day was a standout success thanks, in large part, to meticulous planning by Sworders' Claire Hayter, who arranged workshops aligning with student interest in design, jewellery, pictures, silver, interiors, marketing and photography.

Sworders' specialists rotated small groups through these sessions, as well as offering a 'Basic, Better, Best' competition and virtual money to spend at a mock auction. Bidding was fierce,



Above: Viv Lawes and Guy Schooling get the day under way.

whether for pictures, ceramics or jewellery and the authoritative bang of the gavel may well have inspired an auctioneering future amongst the guests. A generous sandwich lunch kept everyone going through the afternoon, ensuring energy levels remained high right up to the students' return to school.

Viv provided an animated introduction, breaking the students up into teams to consider what art means, where they have come across it, and what makes it valuable. As a skilled educator, she had them identify the various components that make up the ecosystem of the 'art world'.

John and Cynthia then spoke a little about the Arts Scholars and our place within City Liveries. They added recollections from their own careers to illustrate multifaceted opportunities presented by auction, museum, publishing, lecturing, insurance and television work.

The students posed insightful questions, offered thoughtful responses, and demonstrated lively enthusiasm, whether identifying hallmarks, peering through a microscope, generating marketing materials, or outbidding their peers. Most are already engaged with studio art, history and other related subjects as they work towards their GCSEs next year.

The school mentioned that the event had been oversubscribed and, at the time of writing, a parent had already emailed to thank the auction house for extending the opportunity. Further feedback is expected and, with the opportunity to apply for work experience, there may be future points of contact with Birchwood School.

The day was extremely well received and provides a working template from which to consider future career days of this type. Partnering students with an auction house and the chance for this particular age group to consider a future while actually seated in a busy saleroom seems a winning formula.

How better to demonstrate the breadth of opportunity available in such a fast-paced and evolving workplace?



Above: learning about hallmarks.

Cynthia Coleman Sparke