Personal statement

When I imagine what photograph I am going to take, I think about every aspect in as much detail as I can. This is how I approach my work. I like to meditate on the possibilities *in situ*, planning the shoot quietly to myself in advance.

Whether I’m on a steep hill surveying a vast, mountainous space filled with slicing rocks as the warm sun just clips the peak of a cliff in the distance or standing on a seemingly mundane urban commuting path I ask myself the same question, *how can I see this differently*? What is it possible to make people *feel* here? How can I control this situation so that I can fascinate myself with the outcome? Then I start and I visit all of these possibilities in turn, making adjustments and adapting my original vision as I go along. When I am involved in this process it is wordless and immersive. But it is just the start of my obsession, which now continues similarly into post-production.

Whereas I meticulously play with the idea of each image in advance during recording and shooting, the post-production ‘play’ is an intrinsic part of the decision-making process. I believe I am genuinely experimental here. I love tinkering for hours; I will try thirty different ways of filtering, applying colour gradients, types of blur, aperture correction, experimenting with black and white with different filters, contrast levels - endless play with my original images. I am obsessive and this has been a barrier for me in many other aspects of my life; my Art GCSE was fraught with difficulties because of how I would micro-manage tiny aspects of my portfolio to the detriment of the bigger picture. I could not escape the drive to perfect everything in front of me which, with hand-made imagery held me up every time. Not so photography; the parameters of this medium, *my* medium, make perfect sense.

Not with language, nor any other art form have I discovered the degree to which photography has liberated my communication. It has given me a voice and the ability to play with an artistic medium. This is essential to me as an obsessive human who needs mindful, experimental time and also an art form that will show people what I find it so difficult to just *say*.

I love to tell my audience about our surroundings. Namely landscape, in all its splendour; the urban environment and its codes and conventions; the people I am surrounded by and their relation to the environment. The camera records their form for me to manipulate and enhance further. I illustrate the world around me with my pictures.

I love the work of Ansel Adams. His dedication to a concept of wilderness and truth in recording it. His endless dioramas with their razor-sharp clarity and punchy contrast. I have also been influenced by Peter McKinnon’s (slightly narcissistic) Instagram feed, where he changes his pallettes based upon seasonal colouring and creates narratives of his surroundings. Whilst there is no danger of me ever appearing in my own work, I admire greatly his technical wizardry when I comes to post-production.

Studying photography at degree-level will undoubtedly be a massive challenge for me. I recognise that it isn’t just about indulging my greatest passion. It is also about lots of stuff that I find hard. But it is too important to me to stop now.

Statement 2

Artistic subjects have been constant interests of mine and, in particular, illustration since I chose to do Fine Art and Photography at A-level. I was able to hone my research and analysis in art through skills developed in English freeing me to explore the practical experiences with more focus on creativity and my own skills, rather than just the artists I was studying. Artists and illustrators I see on social media in spire me to be constantly drawing my own illustrations. I favour working in traditional pencil and graphite but, despite this, I love exploring the freedom of working with new techniques and more expressive mediums such as oil pastels and charcoal. I am applying for this course to expand my skills and knowledge even further. Art and Illustration in all its forms intrigues me, as there are so many possibilities, techniques and options. Essentially, there are no set rules when it comes to illustration and that’s only one of the reasons why I want to pursue this course. Artists from Picasso and Matisse to children’s books illustrators such as, Axel Scheffler and Quentin Blake have influenced me in drawing and taking on different challenges and projects in my art. As much as I love to read, as a child, I always marvelled over the illustrations as they aided me in being able to visualise the story more clearly and I enjoyed the unique styles of each individual book and illustrator.

Photography has developed skills useful for illustration such as, when setting up shots, I need to consider composition of the image, how colours interact with each other and the lighting to create a pleasing image. Building an image that tells a story requires the creativity that is needed when finding ways to illustrate the written text in a children’s book, for example.

I took part in a filmmaking workshop at my local university and thoroughly enjoyed my experience there and what I achieved through the workshop. I partook in the acting and editing portions of our 3-minute film and, despite the acting being something out of my comfort zone, I pushed through with the support of the team that I worked with. This experience led me to appreciate film making more and the process that it takes to make a film; it also enabled me to become more confident personally as well as progress my skills in story boarding and design work. The experience reinforced my desire to study Illustration rather than media and photography/cinematography based courses.

Away from my studies I enjoy indulging in animated movies and television shows as, consistent with my youth, I like to develop my own skills by learning from content I enjoy and taking in the unique styles and ‘set of rules’ for exaggerated or not so accurate anatomy and movement. I like to take inspiration in other ways than just the artistic drawing style and attempt to storyboard my own plots and characters when I have free time. The idea that someone can make a story from anything has always stimulated me and I want to develop these ideas further at university. Aside from my creative hobbies I do partake in sport activities such as tennis, swimming and more frequently jogging. I think that these activities help me in relaxing and knowing when to take breaks from work when it can be stressful.

I believe my future lies in illustration and an artistic career, as I am highly passionate about it and I believe I have skills to realise my dreams. To conclude, I hope I have demonstrated my enthusiasm for illustration and why it is a good fit for my skills, knowledge and abilities. I am excited to start this new journey of studying and I am glad that my A-levels in Fine Art, Photography and English Literature, as well as my personal interests, led me to this university course.

Statement 3

Illustrations have fascinated me for a long time. When I was little I was an avid reader and loved to look at picture books and the accompanying illustrations. For me, the illustrations brought the characters alive and allowed me to see them in a way their descriptions couldn’t; I could picture the story in my mind with a clear image of the character. It has been my goal in life to be an illustrator from a young age, originally I wanted to be an author, and, although I’ve still retained a passion for writing, illustrations appealed to me more, especially narrative illustration.

Formerly in art, I mostly used lead pencils and acrylic paint, but last year I began to experiment more with different types of media to find new ways to communicate the visual language of my art. Sophy Williams has influenced my artwork. I love her cover illustrations for Holly Webb’s animal books, and it was these that inspired me to draw animals. My coloured animal drawings resemble Williams’ cover illustration animals. I really liked coloured pencils and used them to draw life-like portraits of animals. The bright colours of the pencils enabled me to capture some of the character of the animals; the many shades of the pencils meant I could convey the light and dark tones more effectively than grey pencil. I could control the layering and blending of the pencils much easier than acrylic paint to give depth and tone to the drawing. Each individual stroke of the pencil can be seen, which makes the fur of the animals more realistic and the overall image more striking.

I developed my observational drawing skills in still life classes, teaching me a lot about proportions and angles. I used a mixture of white chalk, charcoal and blue pencil to replicate the three main tones of the model; they combined really well to give my drawing depth and emphasis of the angles and proportions of the body.

Outside lessons, I have a friend equally enthusiastic about art and English. We work together to produce cartoons of characters from books we have read in English. Most of the time they are characters from Faustus or Frankenstein; we often depict them acting in scenes from the books or in separate comical depictions. Doing these cartoons is a good way for me to relax and they are useful for revision.

English literature has helped me develop my critical analysis and writing. The use of these skills has helped me with my critical theory in art when analysing and evaluating either artists or my own work. When writing a critical paragraph on Faustus for English about the use of dark humour in Act 4, my analysis was specific and concise whilst flowing well. In history, source analysis has contributed further to critical analysis and essay writing, alongside developing independence by adding depth to my class notes outside of lessons.

The expedition and residential section of my Gold DofE required me to demonstrate teamwork and communication skills. On the expedition it was vital that there was good communication to ensure everyone felt okay and managed the terrain. Volunteering in the local Red Cross Bookshop has exposed me to a number of different genres and art styles on the illustrated covers. As a senior prefect, I mentored in Y7 and Y8 English sets developing my leadership skills and self-confidence as I supported the students. Finally, outside of school I volunteer to help an organisation called ‘Messy Church’, which teaches children bible stories and moral lessons in fun, endearing ways. My flair for art means the senior volunteers often turn to me to do any illustrations or designs for props or crafts, which uses my creative and imaginative skills with the children.

By going to university, I would be able to refine my illustrative skills and engage fully with my passion to illustrate written ideas or concepts. After university, I hope to progress to become a freelance illustrator and help enlighten people with drawings the way illustrations enlightened me.

Statement 4

I love art for the freedom it gives me to create work that I can feel proud about, and the ability to create anything I desire in my work. I like that it allows me to express my emotions and feeling towards a topic, a product, and the world itself through my creations, giving me the ability to comment on how I feel about an object whilst creating it graphically. I also enjoy following a brief set for a piece of work, taking what a client wants for their item or product, and creating something that they desire that fits their needs and wants. In my artwork, I like to experiment with different materials, such as ink and thick acrylic paint, combining with Photoshop to produce high quality pieces of work. I love looking at the art of artists such as Basquiat and Ralph Steadman for inspiration in my art, with dark and often violent themes contrasted with abstract drawings and vibrant colours, but I also like the works of Lichtenstein and Warhol for their vibrant colours and simplistic, geometric designs. I would love to continue creating this wide range of work into Higher Education, producing different designs for different products and clients for their exact needs. I would love to develop this kind of work further in a university setting, giving me the experience to create high quality, professional work and give me experience for working in graphics in the future.

I am interested in learning more about Typography, Illustration and Animation, as these are elements of graphical art I have little experience with, but would like to explore more as these would be valuable assets in my knowledge of graphics. I would also like to expand my knowledge of using Adobe Suite software, as whilst I am proficient in Photoshop – I also have some experience of Illustration and inDesign, but would love the opportunity to expand my knowledge of using the software to produce higher quality pieces of work, taking advantage of the software in full to improve my artwork and create better pieces.

Outside of my education, I am heavily interested in Fashion, and also Skateboard in my free time. I really like fashion for the individuality it can give me, and how I can express myself through my clothing and wear outfits that make me look great and stand out. In my time outside of school, I have worked hard on personal art projects and in the work place, earning commendation for my work by my Managers for my productiveness and enthusiasm in my roles whilst working in multiple stores, such as Marks and Spencer’s and Urban Outfitters. My temporary jobs outside of school have allowed me to Develop my skills at working in a team and also being able to work alone, giving me the ability to be independent in what I am doing and not have to rely on others for help, whilst also being able to work well with others to reach a final goal. Working has also allowed me to learn to work under instructions of another, which helped me in my personal mural project, as in both situations I had to work under someone else’s instructions and guidelines. I have worked with my local council on a graffiti art project, volunteering to create a mural to be put up outside of the local community centre to commemorate the centennial anniversary of World War 1’s end. The brief given and what we designed gave me great experience in designing to a consumer’s expectations, giving the customer a design they will love and that fits their requirements. I enjoyed working in this way, and would love to move this style of work into higher education and my future career.

Inside my school, I was elected by my peers to be a leader of my House, running and participating in events such as Sports day, a House Music presentation and a House Bake-off competition. In these events, I gained skills in leadership whilst working with younger students, organising these students to be where they need to be, and encouraging them to participate whilst trying to fill every gap in the event, working under pressure and to deadlines, and balancing my work as a leader with my studies, as I was helping run these events whilst producing my final coursework for my three subjects, giving me experience in prioritising parts of work whilst putting others in the backseat to finish my projects that I am involved in to the best of my abilities. I also gained leadership experience in running an Art Club for year 7s and 8s in my first year of sixth form, where I organised what art the students in the class would create, as well as making sure they had the right materials and that the class ran smoothly.

I am applying to graphical design for my degree as I enjoy creating a product that will be practical in application and aesthetically pleasing, and creating artwork that has a reason for existing, such as a product box or an advertisement. I would like to continue this style of work into my career, and I know that the skillset developed at Higher Education are vital in this becoming a reality for me.