## Katharina Lorenz

Role: Associate Professor in Classical Studies, School of Humanities, Faculty of Arts

Research Interests: I am interested in the visual cultures of Greece and Rome, and my research focuses on the use and function of visual media as means of transmitting aesthetic or social information, ideologies and cultural knowledge. I am particularly concerned with exploring modern theoretical approaches to the media, visuality and perception, and how they can be adopted to the study of Greek and Roman art.

# Developing Visual Literacy for studying and employment in the School of Humanities

### What was the teaching and learning challenge this initiative sought to address?

It is really about visual literacy. The things I teach rely very heavily on visual resources, and we didn't have the means to produce these types of resources in the Department. I had come from an institution where these resources were available to students and when I started here, I could see the difference between the Nottingham students and my previous students and their ability to deal with visual evidence.

### Why do Archaeology and Classics students need visual literacy?

Our students go into a really wide variety of sectors when they graduate. The publishing sector, or even the education sector, value visual literacy as much as the museums or art historical sector. Whatever the students choose to do, it is always helpful to have these skills because we are such a visual society.

### What did you purchase and how did you set it up?

Becoming familiar with the visual aspects of the past is an essential part of studying Classics and Archaeology. The Showing Seeing Centre offers a stimulating environment in which to practice this. Housed in three rooms throughout the Archaeology and Classics Building on University Park Campus, it gives access to a wide range of tools to create, modify and assess visual material.

One of the rooms is a seminar group room where students can scan images and trial presentations on a large LCD screen. They can also play computer games. We have some Playstation equipment, for example, where students who are researching the representation of Classics in modern media



**Student Poster (Elizabeth Harrison & Nicola Pearce, June 2007)**

can look at games like Civilisation and God of War. In another room, we have facilities for students to borrow laptops which have a wide range of state-of-the-art graphics software on them. They can also make use of our growing library of digital images.

Posters are routinely used by students for coursework assignments, and by staff to showcase their research throughout the Department and at conferences. The large format printer and scanner and associated high-end software we offer in the third project room means that the quality of the posters is now much higher.

The Bioarchaeology Lab with its low- and high-power microscopes provides facilities for teaching and learning in relation to the identification of archaeological remains (plant materials, animal bones and ceramics). These facilities allow us to teach key diagnostic features to larger groups of students across several compulsory and elected Undergraduate courses; and we can offer the imagery produced in these as identification packages on WebCT for learning and revision.

### What are the learning and teaching outcomes that the technology helps facilitate?

In Archaeology and Classics, portfolios are part of the mainstream assessment criteria and always have been. But now we can make them better quality. It has made a real difference. We have managed to get additional funding to employ MA student-tutors to run sessions at the beginning of modules explaining how to use the technology. There is still some way to go in terms of making students aware that there is a value in choosing to create your own image rather than simply downloading one from Google, but at least we have made a start!

### What do the students get out of it?

I run a module on mythological images in the ancient world. It has 16 year-three students, and a presentation forms part of the assessment criteria. It was noticeable that in the first presentations the images were not particularly good and the students didn't focus on them in feedback sessions. But as the year went on, things changed. The peer-feedback during the presentations began to focus on the images, on whether people were using good or bad images, on the right backgrounds etc. I hope next semester that they will have gained expertise and will perform even better. I can see improvement already. It shows a real generation of knowledge and expertise developing, and a critical engagement with the images and their role in the presentations.

### Are there ways the technology could be used by other disciplines?

We want to roll this out across the Faculty, and even the University, and build an image database for teaching and research.



A student using the facilities in the Bioarchaeology Lab

"This represents an opportunity for us to have an impact on the teaching culture in our disciplines, which is great"

It has also put us in the position on both a teaching level and a research level of being able to collaborate with people outside the University. For instance, I am attending an HEA Workshop in Warwick to talk about the Showing Seeing Centre. This represents an opportunity for us to have an impact on the teaching culture in our subject area, which is great.

**What future plans do you have?**

We are thinking in the future about collaborations with partners in other U21 institutions in the area of cultural heritage, technology and 3D documentation. And again, the facilities we have developed have put us in the position to do that.
Together with two colleagues in Art History, I am currently implementing new 3D modelling facilities and an image database for the whole faculty which is funded through a £150,000 grant from the Capital Investment Fund.

I have also started to do a collaborative project with colleagues at Humboldt-Universität in Berlin on different approaches to analysing images in German and British ancient art and classical archaeology and on how academics and professionals in each country deal with visual evidence. Having the financial support to innovate has helped shape these discussions. My hope in the longer term is that we will create students who develop expertise in these areas and become our graduate students. It is already working to a certain extent.



**Students working in the Showing Seeing Centre**

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