

‘Salvage not Scrap’

1) Name of institution

Glasgow School of Art (GSA)

2) Name of the initiative

Salvage not Scrap

3) Initiative outline

GSA Salvage supports students and staff to source, reuse and recycle materials used in our Degree Shows, rather than scrapping them. It is about making the absolute most of what we can find, what we are given, exchange or reuse. It shows that the best environmental solution not only helps nature, it reduces financial costs, makes for deeper practice, uncovers more solutions, is more beneficial to local and sector partners, builds relationships across all levels and allows ‘good’ to happen.

4) Context/history/need for initiative

GSA Salvage was a ‘living lab’ formed and designed by students at GSA as part of a SOS-UK and British Academy programme called SHAPE (showing humanities and arts students how they too can have a positive environmental impact). Supported by GSA staff, students from across design, art and architecture disciplines co-designed an approach to materials and artworks reuse that would be engaging for GSA students and staff.

Using online surveys with students, interviews and visits to key staff and sites, the student collective created ideas focused particularly on our end-of-year Degree Show exhibition which generates large amounts of materials and art works, many of which have been historically skipped.

5) What happens

GSA Salvage supported students and staff to source, and reuse and recycle materials used in GSA’s Degree Show, rather than scrapping them. Students negotiated the use of a Portacabin as a reuse hub; worked with studio and technical staff to fit around how materials and artworks are already collected, stored and distributed, created comms, and helped reduce rather than increase staff workload.

6) Green Skills developed or applied

Skills such as UNICEF’s technical and transferable skills were already deeply rooted in GSA practice: for instance, critical thinking, analysis, adaptability, problem solving and innovative thinking all shone through in GSA Salvage. Students arrived at the project with strong interpersonal, co-design and project abilities; transferable skills that have grown as the project has developed.

7) Contributions to leverage points

LP1: Natural resource & just transition solutions. GSA Salvage aims to make reuse more of a social norm within the GSA curriculum and programmes and for students to have a greater appreciation of the impacts of practice

LP2: Stakeholder communications and engagement. Students taking part in GSA Salvage have had to contact, negotiate and work with staff and academics at all levels as well as local organisations.

LP3: Green, Just and Inclusive policy and advocacy. GSA's strategic commitment through its newly written Environmental and Social Justice Framework facilitated the group interacting with staff who often willingly supported the work.

LP4: Products/services, Partnerships, Procurement. New partnerships were made within and outside GSA, for example with the Circular Arts Network, who collect, store and redistribute arts materials.

LP5: Organisation model innovation and transformation. Many subject areas at GSA are natural re-users, for example Silversmithing and Jewellery. In addition, when making and research are conducted through a social and environmental justice lens, we deepen that practice when students question what they are making and why.



8) Impact, successes, challenges

This project shows that arts students have a pivotal role to play in Green Skilling and Jobs. We need creative people both to emotionally connect us to issues we face, and to redesign our systems bit by bit. Over a short period, they designed the project from their own ideas and created a presentation and explanation of their approach and what GSA Salvage meant to them. GSA was widely acclaimed at the SOS UK national SHAPE conference in Cardiff.

As in any organisation, staff roles and procedures, health and safety and estates management were already existent. GSA Salvage was a 'new kid on the block' with only a few weeks to establish working relationships. It succeeded and went from zero to full speed over only a few weeks, and it will change and grow as an initiative over time.

9) Advice for others

We often have environmental and social justice written into our top-level strategy, but a reality gap between this and staff and student expectations and aspirations can exist. Initiatives such as GSA Salvage help to bridge that gap.