

## **Watershed Case Study: Alchemy 2004**

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### **Arts, Education and Young People at Risk**

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Watershed works with young peoples' support agencies to provide creative digital media learning projects for disaffected young people from all parts of the city.

**ALCHEMY is a web site featuring two recent programmes.**

**For more information go to: <http://www.dshed.net/digitised/alchemy/index.html>**

#### **1. VJ Workshops**

Participants were young people in Bristol at risk of exclusion from mainstream education, working with various organisations such as Connexions West of England under the Positive Activities for Young People initiative, and with Bristol Youth Community Action through the Bristol Youth Offenders Team. During all workshops young people were supported by key workers and members of Watershed staff.

These workshops engage young people through video jockeying. Music and images are sampled or created from scratch, manipulated and combined using a range of software to produce new and innovative performance pieces, which can be played in the Gallery section of the website. The workshops develop creative and technical skills and self confidence through participatory activity and the opportunity to work with leading experts in the field. Workshops ran at Watershed; The Park, Knowle West; the Juice Bar, Laurence Weston; and Fonthill School, Southmead.

#### **2. Animate+**

An innovative opportunity for 12 young people from different communities who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) to return to learning through a creative process. The programme offered the opportunity to learn Flash animation, web and games design, and also included workshops in video film-making, sound and digital image production and 3D model animation. Small groups worked with a dedicated tutor, project co-ordinator, support worker and expert practitioners, using up-to date, high quality equipment within a creative and supportive environment at Bristol's Harbourside media centre, Watershed. The approach was to work with participants to help them develop technical skills and understanding, realise their creative potential, and achieve the standards required for the nationally recognised qualifications available. The project was funded through LSC's Education Unlimited initiative and delivered by Watershed.

9 young people who began with few if any qualifications, completed a 6 month programme and all left with OCN level 2 qualifications having produced digital animations, a web site, a game, and in some cases video films. They also took away with them an increased level of confidence and maturity. At completion 6 of the young people had applied to daytime college courses, (4 to media related subjects, 1 for a music course, 1 for business studies) and 4 had been accepted, 1 provisionally accepted pending space. One student was applying for an animation evening course and was looking for work. The remaining 2 students had registered with New Deal and were looking for work.

#### **What the young people said about the experience:**

"I'm enjoying being on this course at Watershed as it's a nice environment, there are good teachers and you actually learn things."

"It's good - you get to keep your own ideas here, instead of having them taken over by teachers like in other places"

"It's helped me get back into education"

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