

As someone who has spent the last thirty five years lecturing at many of the country's leading universities from Goldsmiths, London to regional universities in Manchester, Liverpool and many others I have personally witnessed the demise of creative courses in both further and higher education, most notably the recreational evening classes that mostly now insist on working towards a qualification, not something most people want.

It has taken some time for people to adjust to the higher cost of private courses as there are no subsidies. There has however been a growth in pottery in part due to the Great Pottery Throw Down, of which I am Series Consultant. I have seen first-hand the over subscription of these types of classes, e.g., Turning Earth in London. This type of course is reliant on a permanent studio space, equipment and having to sign up for extended periods of time to fulfil the ever growing need normally found in town and cities.

There is however a growing demand for short courses offering the whole experience of a rural idyll where one can not only indulge the thirst for skill and knowledge but also heal the soul. To be able to draw and paint in a wild flower meadow, to dry your pots in the sun, to raku fire your pots outside or maybe even build your own kiln? We are ideally suited in that we have the wonderful countryside but we also have the road, rail and air links that makes all this possible. This makes the position of Louise and Marks' facilities second to none, let alone the creative talent in the area that can be drawn on to provide the teaching, which is mainly overlooked.

All this is within a few miles of Stoke-on-Trent with its history and world class museums, but having the advantages of Leek with its eclectic mix of shops for some retail therapy plus pubs, bars, and restaurants. As many of our politicians constantly refer to 'the future of the country is in the hands of our creatives' now more than ever it is falling to the private sector to deliver it.

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