

# BTEC

## Art and Design

### Learner of the Year

#### Lily Robinson

Kirklees College



Lily Robinson is a hugely talented young artist with an outstanding work ethic who inspires others by her example. Her attitude and achievements are even more remarkable given that she lives with complex medical issues that leave her in constant pain. Helen Balbontin, Subject Programme Leader at Kirklees College says: “Despite living with a devastating injury, Lily’s practical work is extensive, skilful, detailed and original. She is a creative, hardworking and caring young person. Her work ethic is impressive and she inspires others by her example. She never complains about her physical pain, even though I know this is a constant in her life.”

Taking a Level 2 BTEC Diploma in Art & Design Skills, Lily is on track for distinction in all components of her course, Lily’s work is of an exceptional standard, going beyond the criteria for the level. This is reflected in her achievements outside of college; she runs a small home décor business that was commissioned by a high-end gift box company to make supply products

for a Christmas gift box that was distributed worldwide, and has been selected to participate in a local Arts festival dedicated to textile artworks.

Helen says that Lily played an important role in the success of the class’s move to remote learning during lockdown. “Initially many students were reluctant to engage, but Lily’s confidence in sharing images of her work in the class chats and her willing attitude to speak up in digital lessons motivated her fellow students and raised their standards. She showed them how much better the lessons were if everyone took part and supported each other.”

Additionally, Lily is the Vice President and EDI officer of the Student Union, setting up a number of student interest groups including LGBTQ+, and increasing student engagement through her use of social media platforms. “She is a fantastic advocate and supports causes on behalf of students,” says Helen. One such example was a ‘Wall of Unity’ project, set up by Lily in response to the BLM

movement, where staff and students made posters and took a pledge. She then helped host podcasts, interviewing staff members on their pledge.

As part of her SU role, Lily was even selected to participate in the interviews for the next Principal of the college. "Lily took this responsibility very seriously and her performance was outstanding. Feedback from the candidates was that they had never experienced such a robust and well plan interview from a student!"

After a severe injury put an end to her career as an elite gymnast and she was further diagnosed with other disabilities that prevent her from doing everyday tasks, Lily's mental health suffered, and she dropped out of school with no qualifications. However, with the care and support of the Art and Design staff at Kirklees, Lily has thrived, and is now well on the way to achieving her new dream of working in the fashion industry. "I started on a foundation course with no qualifications," says Lily. "Now almost two years on I'm receiving distinctions in my course and now doing my GCSEs in Maths and English. I feel I'm an example that you don't always need a mainstream education to get to where you want to be."

Of her course, Lily says: "This course specifically allows me to learn new techniques and pushes me out of my comfort zone, whilst still letting me produce work that reflects me. It has helped me to discover the possibilities within the art and design sector and understand the routes to how someday I can make my dream a reality. My tutors have given me opportunities to help me achieve this goal of mine and are helping open up doors.

"I challenge myself to produce my best work at all times, so I thoroughly research the unit that I'm doing and investigate in depth the artists or new techniques that I'm trying. Although some days I can struggle with my disabilities I push myself to overcome these boundaries."

Summarising, Helen says: "Lily has embodied the core values of the college during her time with us and made a significant contribution to her course and the student experience within Kirklees College. Excelling in her Art and Design studies and actively encouraging and mentoring her peers, Lily continues to inspire us all with her achievements. A true star!"