Thousands drew a whale – and broke a world record for charity

Thousands came together to Draw with Rob for the largest ever online art lesson.

You may have heard of the #DrawWithRob online art lessons led by children's author & illustrator Rob Biddulph which have been captivating kids and parents around the world during lockdown. The classes have racked up 3m+ participants and counting so far, and this week it was announced they went one step further by breaking the Guinness World Record for largest ever online art lesson.

– conceived by talent investor Entrepreneur First in partnership with Rob and supported by publisher HarperCollins – initially hoped to attract 10,000 participants to make history from home with a class that was free to join for parents and kids. The Guinness World Records confirmed yesterday though that **more than four times** the required amount took part, with 45,611 participants from the UK, Europe, Asia and beyond taught how to draw a blue whale, itself a Guinness World Records title holder for 'Largest animal'.

Overjoyed at the news, Rob Biddulph commented: "When I first started the *#DrawWithRob* classes back in March I had no idea they'd lead to a Guinness World Records title – but here we are! The support I've received from everyone – kids, parents, grandparents and beyond – has been overwhelming. I wish I could personally thank each and every individual who has taken part in the classes, and in particular the 45,611 people who've broken the record with me. I hope I've helped to inspire people of all ages to continue creating beautiful artwork long into the future."

Many of those who took part had uploaded their creations to social media following the event using the hashtag #ArtWorldRecords. In addition to bringing people together, the challenge has so far raised a total of £51,970 for high impact charities working in the fight against COVID-19 recommended by . This includes contributions from companies whose employees participated in the attempt as well as generous donations from the public, in addition to a winning auction bid of £970 for the original drawing created by Rob during the live event.

“I was approached by the team at Art World Records who needed someone to be the face (or the hands!) of their attempt at the largest ever online art lesson,” Rob told *Digital Arts* ahead of the attempt. “Due to the popularity (around 14 million

impressions on YouTube so far) I guess I was a good fit.

“They wanted to organise an event that brings people together, and art – drawing in particular – is a great way to do that. It’s also something that is great for mental health, so (it’s perfect) for it (to have happened) in Mental Health Awareness Week. Personally, I find that I enter an almost meditative state when I draw. I can just switch of the part of my brain that is thinking about all the difficulties and problems, and focus on the sketch. In these strange and stressful times I firmly believe that it can be a real balm for people.”

Being a Guinness geek, it didn’t take much convincing for Rob to take part.

“I loved reading *The Guinness Book of Records* as a kid,” he reveals. “We used to get a copy every year for Christmas. I was also an avid viewer of *Record Breakers*, hosted by Roy Castle. I never dreamed I’d ever have a chance of breaking a record myself, so I was super-excited (about it)!”

But how did Rob’s session get masses of people to come together and smash the record, regardless of artistic prowess?

“The way that I teach people to draw my characters means that everyone, regardless of their artistic ability, always ends up with something that they’re really proud of,” Rob explains. “I believe that everyone can draw, it’s just that sometimes people need a little help with the order to do the drawing in. That’s where I come in.

“What (was) really important for this record attempt is that everyone had to stay with me for the full half an hour, otherwise they wouldn’t count towards the final total.” Rob didn’t think that too difficult, promising another of his enjoyable lessons and a chance “to see your very own masterpiece slowly reveal itself in front of your eyes, and then, at the end of it all, you will (hopefully) be a record breaker.”

“As Roy Castle himself famously said,” Rob reminds us, “a little bit of dedication is all you need…”

Art World Records is hosting the logos of all pledging companies and project ambassadors on their site following the successful Guinness World Records attempt. In addition, all participants will receive a digital certificate to download commemorating their involvement in breaking the Guinness World Records title. Supporters can further contribute to the project by visiting to donate.

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