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Title: Urgent and Emergent Practices: Establishing Connections and Feedback Loops

This paper questions how art schools and art students operate externally as social and political agents creating connections with civic, cultural and commercial networks. We will do this by examining two projects in which students have engaged with communities both at a local and international level.

We will argue that to survive in a post-conceptual world it is no longer viable for Fine Art courses to simply provide a space for self-absorbed makers of luxury goods feeding a bourgeois fetish. Fine Art courses and art schools in general should be more concerned with creating trajectories between the social, the political and aesthetic. In many ways, they must learn to both embrace and be critical of neo-liberalism.

Whilst schools and courses are in flux a new generation of students are emerging. Adept at scaling their practice from internal, to local to peripheral. A body who are eager to engage with local community stakeholders whilst simultaneously travelling through networks where ideas, aesthetics and criticality is endlessly copied, reinterpreted and redistributed.

This paper proposes that a student's training should take them beyond the limitation of insular disciplines into broader, more diverse activities that help them to operate successfully as critical engineers within social and political systems.

Students need to learn how to navigate between antagonistic positions as well as being generators of positive meaning. The paper is critical of many community and public art projects that art schools often endorse, agreeing with Claire Bishop that much of these practices tend to be so morally and ethically wholesome that they become void of any form of criticality. Drawing on examples such as Tania Bruguera's propositional art project Asociación de Arte Útil and how artists now operate within post-studio conditions the paper interrogates how the art school, Fine Art courses and student body interact and connect with social and political infrastructures.