

Paula Chambers – Abstract for NAFAE conference, Austerity, Adversity, Art?

Strategies for Teaching Sculpture: The Economics of Material Production

When even plaster, wax and latex are beyond the means of students living solely on the basic maintenance loan; how can we as educators in Fine Art Sculpture encourage and facilitate material-led making processes. Students studying sculpture as a specialist practice face specific dilemmas in relation to material production, how to afford the basic 'stuff' of their intended output. Skip raiding, or the use of found objects as the material basis for sculptural production is one way students produce work for relatively little financial outlay, although this tends to take up space often in short supply. Miniaturization and maquettes for unrealizable projects is another way to limit expenditure, but this strategy of production tends to limit also students' ambition and haptic understanding of the manipulation of materiality so vital to the production of sculptural objects. Non-traditional materials offer potential, building supplies, stationary, food waste and the detritus of home for example. Ephemeral or performative practices suit some students, but not others. Some share resources or recycle materials from workshop sessions. This paper presents a range of making strategies undertaken by students studying sculpture under financial burden, to produce innovative and contemporary artwork in a time of economic austerity.

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