

Paper for NAFAE Annual Symposium - Austerity, Adversity, Art?

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Title: Precarious practices, precarious futures

20 minute presentation or Pecha Kucha

What are the essential skills art schools should equip their students with in a time of long lasting austerity measures and precarious employment? What does it mean to be an artist working in current social, economic and political contexts?

It has been proposed we live in an age of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) that promotes individual autonomy and creativity, however, in reality there has been a growth in flexploitation and precarisation (Dezeuze, 2017), a rise in zero-hour contracts and downsizing. The majority of students graduating from art schools end up operating in what has been termed the 2nd economy (Roberts, 2015), working in isolation and living precariously on a variable income. How do we prepare students to endure the demands of a 2nd economy workplace? How does this precarious condition influence the types of work they make?

In this paper we will discuss the outcomes from a series of student led workshops aimed at developing an awareness of and strategies for navigating these precarious economic conditions. We examine the pros and cons of the rise of the Artepreneur or culturepreneur (Harvie, 2013) and argue for more collective labour relationships initiated through greater transdisciplinary activity that begins in the art school.