

Artist as Superconnector Superconductor **How do we change the system?**



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This presentation considers a possible crisis facing art education. Spanning Primary to Post Graduate, there are shifts in the way young people are learning and how they are subsequently taught.

As a result of top down pressures to achieve grades, meet targets, with ever present competitive league tables and a push to comply, educational establishments are no longer encouraged to promote the value of the arts and priorities are increasingly shifted towards Science, Technology, English and Maths. Whilst the need for STEAM (Science, Technology, English, Art and Maths) instead of STEM seems obvious to us, we are still left fighting for our subject. The ability to think freely, take risks, question and learn with independence and confidence is becoming increasingly challenged. Creativity is being threatened by formulaic, box ticking processes and the push to conform. As a result, we question whether students are becoming more 'needy'.

We also recognise the necessity for resilience and solidarity.

Neediness

Drawing upon observations that range from work in primary settings, supporting secondary students and teachers, interviewing prospective under graduates, facilitating Year 1 BA Fine Art students and working with MA Creative Arts and Education and PGCE students, we highlight a culture of 'need' emerging. We recognise an increasing call for reassurance, guidance and direction. We consider how we connect to these needs and empower students to become stronger, independent thinkers. We look towards conducting approaches that flow with boldness, risk and self-reliance.

Resilience

We believe the arts increasingly make valuable contributions to society as a whole; embracing risk, failure and having the ability to problem solve has a long-term positive impact on self-esteem, confidence and general well-being. This is something we wish to encourage with our learners but also need to model. We want to conduct a flexibility that equips the ability to embrace change, innovate and inspire.

Solidarity

Gregory (2017) recognises the need to “unite, inspire and support art educators at every level of our education systems” (NSEAD, 2017). The All Party Parliamentary Group on Art Craft and Design Education, set up in 2012, allows a diverse group of visual art educators and supporters from other arts sector groups and organisations to discuss issues in a way that informs and influences current and future policy makers. NSEAD's regional network groups also strive to give educators space for collaboration and advocacy. These are pro active, self generating groups.

We wish to facilitate debate with peers that explore positive routes that help counter some of these challenges. **We** are the super connectors and conductors, with shared beliefs and values, who can make the difference if we strengthen our numbers and keep fighting.

Focus:

- **How do we work together to promote the value of the arts?**
- **How do we create spaces for teachers in school settings to connect, collaborate, and be creative in their approaches?**
- **How do we then enable students to become less needy?**
- **Where are the routes which will make this happen?**
- **How do we share and disseminate these?**

Reference Gregory, P (2017) 'Peter Gregory in conversation' (Interview), in *NSEAD, AD magazine Spring 2017*, Issue 18. Bath: NSEAD. p.22.

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Judy completed her practice-based PhD at Northumbria University, with her area of study concentrating on the Artist Facilitator role and collaborative practice within the context of artist-led learning programmes. She is Programme Leader for the MA Contemporary Arts and Education programme at Northumbria University. She also teaches on the BA Fine Art programme.

Her previous roles include Learning Manager at Creativity, Culture and Education, Learning Manager at Waygood and Programme Manager (Learning and Inclusion) for Liverpool Biennial. Before this she was Acting Head of Education & Public Programme for BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead.

Susan Coles

Susan is a freelance arts, creativity and educational consultant and artist, who works across the UK and abroad, in educational and gallery settings. She is also a visiting lecturer at Northumbria University and an Associate of the Big Draw/Campaign for Drawing.

She works with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art facilitating art educator networks for all phases of education. Susan was President of the National Society for Education in Art and Design 2013-15 and is current *secretary* to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Art Craft and Design in Education. *She has recently been elected to serve as a World Councillor, representing Europe, for the International Society for Education through Art.*