

NAFAE Conference Proposal: The Hidden Curriculum

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and

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Proposed session type: Presentation (but flexible/ happy to discuss)

Abstract:

Q-Art (see www.q-art.org.uk) is an organisation for current and prospective students, staff, and early career artists that aims to share practice across art schools and break down the barriers to art education and the contemporary art world. We do this through a programme of open crits across UK art schools, an annual exhibition, books/videos, panel discussions, and workshops.

The hidden curriculum and the mystery of how the art world functions has long been at the centre of Q-Art's enquiry and was the reason I set up the organisation as a BA fine art student at Goldsmiths – to deconstruct and demystify these areas. As I applied to art school I remember being faced with a series of questions: What was it that really separated the art schools – beyond the PR and the myth we circulated as students? What gets taught in art schools and why does contemporary art look like it does? How is art 'judged' by gallerists/curators and how might any of us 'make it' as an artist? When I was in art school I had more questions: Why is the curriculum as it is? How does it differ across institutions and would I be a different artist if I went somewhere else? Why is there such a focus on self-led learning? Why are we not taught art history or how to make things? Why don't I know how to talk about art but others do? What kind of art are we meant to be making? How do tutors assess work or tell what art is 'good' art?

The field of art has long been framed as one that is all about asking questions. However, I agree with Rowland (2003) who says that there is a difference between positive ambiguity and vagueness, and who warns of the danger of 'a hidden curriculum open only to the privileged few' (2008, 142).

I propose a talk that further explores these questions, tensions, the motivation behind Q-Art's activities, and the organisations impact. Now I have begun a PhD new questions are surfacing, this time about what exactly a PhD in the field of art is and can be...

Bibliography:

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Vaughan, S; Austerlitz, N; Blythman, M; Grove-White, A; Jones, B – Anne; Jones, Carol, A; Morgan, S; Orr, S; Shreeve, A. (2008) *Mind the gap: expectations, ambiguity and pedagogy within art and design higher education*. In: Drew, Linda, (ed) *The Student Experience in Art and Design Higher Education: Drivers for Change*. . Drew, Linda, ed. GLAD. Jill Rogers Associates Limited, Cambridge. Pp. 125-148.