

Proposal for 'The Hidden Curriculum'

Abstract: The Art School, the Art Student and the Post 1992 University

Our presentation aims to address a number of the symposium questions:

- *How far does the reality of the delivery of fine art courses match the written descriptors that universities and the Quality Assurance Agency require of us?*
- *Have Quality Assurance frameworks meant that the real curriculum has moved under the radar?*
- *Is there such a thing as an internal and external curriculum in fine art?*
- *What effect have the QAA Art & Design Subject Benchmark Statements had on the nature of fine art provision in the UK?*
- *How do students understand and negotiate our complex delivery systems? What do they see as the course?*
- *Do we need to subvert regulatory frameworks and systems in order to facilitate the kind of learning that is particular to a fine art education?*
- *Has the artist/educator lost out in the process of standardization? Where are the spaces for flexibility, experimentation, disruption or subversion?*

Our paper sets out to investigate the persistence of the romantic idea of the art school as a bohemian, anarchic, environment in which students challenge mainstream culture and follow their own creative path juxtaposed with the reality for most students of joining art courses contained within the accountable, modulated, regulated, health- and safety-conscious world of the post-1992 university.

This mis-match of expectations is further complicated by the formative art school experience of teaching staff, many of whom attended an art school not a university; finding themselves justifying institutional teaching and learning protocols that often feel alien to themselves, to their subject and in conflict with their students' expectations of an art school education. This can lead to the bizarre situation in which neither students nor academic staff, have much belief or confidence in the academic system they are expected to work within. A lack of alignment amongst students, academic staff and institution can result which puts added strain on the teaching and learning environment.

A heightened and productive example of this mis-match can be witnessed in the area of performance art. Performance art stars like Chris Burden who arranged to have himself shot in the arm (Shoot, 1971) and nailed onto a Volkswagen Beetle (Trans-fixed, 1974) are now part of art history – a history our students need to know about. But what happens when our students become interested in developing their own performance work in direct relation to these groundbreaking examples? What are the ethical issues at stake when one person's self-expression is another's self-harm? How far can experimentation be allowed to go within the parameters of the duty of care? How do you write a risk assessment for 'Shoot'?

(444 words)

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