

Who Is Hiding Now?

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Introduction

In considering the notion of a 'hidden curriculum', and why this may be necessary in terms of current teaching practices within Fine Art, this paper examines the possibility that for some a hidden curriculum has in many ways always been a part of the pedagogic planning and development of programmes and courses, acknowledging the weight of pressure aligned to core internal and external development within both the teaching of Fine Art and international developments within Fine Art practice itself.

Fine Art Education has at times necessarily, and at others been driven to shift its ground and therefore test its curriculum regularly over the last forty years and is now a many faceted and differential beast. Even in the UK the models of Fine Art curricula are multiple as Higher Education Institutions have either; been consumed by the current pedagogic theories, or at times become subsumed due to an integration within a larger institutional regime, or even purely by attempting to follow (often too closely) the most prevalent contemporary fine art trends.

This paper also looks at the ways in which the structure of a Fine Art curriculum, and also embedded within that elements of context, experience, structure and design, can develop different approaches to learning. Within this thinking lies some conjectural opinion, but also possible methods for

considering approaches, which access and permit students to actively engage in the development of independent artistic practices.

The Art School Paradox

To open, I wished to consider the notion of the Art School, or the Art School paradox (in particular reference to often large University led educational institutions within which many Art Schools now need to operate). The collapse or near disappearance of the small specialist institution, as Art Schools have become immersed within larger University systems has led to a reassessment of the curriculum and consequently the delivery of that curriculum. Forced to adapt to the multiple layers within a new culture of bureaucracy, programme, course and module writing and delivery through the constraints of those systems, the ideological aspects of fine art education have often been drained of their core interests, in essence the infiltration of a form of '*drift*', and I will return to this idea later in the presentation.

I am speaking here from the perspective of one of the last remaining, small specialist institutions or independent Art Schools in the UK, the Glasgow School of Art. The Glasgow School of Art contains the School of Fine Art, the School of Design and the Mackintosh School of Architecture as well as the Digital Design Studio. It has for many years operated and developed its own structures in terms of programmes, courses and forms of delivery. In the School of Fine Art we have one undergraduate programme with around 500 students, who apply to study within one of three departments; Painting and Printmaking or Sculpture and Environmental Art or Fine Art Photography. In effect even though the students are all studying the same programme (and courses) the indicative content and delivery embedded within the programme differs dependent upon the department of study. Alongside the undergraduate programme we have four postgraduate programmes, two of which focus upon fine art practice, the first the MFA is a two year interdisciplinary programme of study and the second, the Master of Letters in Fine Art Practice is a one year disciplinary focused programme with five distinct pathways, which include

Painting, Print Media, Photography and the Moving Image, Sculpture and finally Drawing.

There is a firm and very strong belief in the importance of historicism, tradition and belief in terms of the maintenance of a thriving, adaptable yet long-standing fine art curriculum and structure. This is not an attempt to ignore the currency of different types of artistic practice, but rather a central belief that there are (alongside new technologies, materials and audiences) fundamental aspects of learning embedded within fine art curricula which allow students to explore, test and critically analyse aspects of media, disciplines and ideas. It is for this reason that students must be able to engage within and across different areas of Fine Art practice with access to alternate methods and approaches for undertaking that practice. Within this it becomes apparent that a distinction needs to be made between historicism and traditions of Art School education and the vital inclusion of innovation and the deployment of new, at times often, radical strategies.

From a personal perspective I knew that I wanted to study at an Art School – I was not at that time considering this in terms of a University type of education but was enamoured by the aura of the Art School, what it meant, how it was perceived and the relatively liberal attitudes taken towards creative subversion. At this time obviously there were many more Art Schools residing outside of University structures and I believe it is important that there is a retention of this aura, or these characteristics in order to maintain (or in areas regain) what this means and the educational and pedagogic possibilities inherent within this type of construct.

An Art School education opens the possibilities for a very specific type of engagement with the contexts of making. In essence this relates to the learning environments constructed for the student/learner in order to enhance the contextual awareness of making (art)work within appropriate contextual positions. Art Schools have necessarily opened outwards to engage with vital external drivers for the creation of contemporary practices, whether these are political, social or cultural and the contexts for the positioning of modes of

practice that come from this. The mechanisms within the Art School, need to create the parameters for such activities and this is where the flexing of a curriculum and the pursuit of alternate and potentially loaded encounters takes place. Obviously, with an Art School residing outside the structures and mechanisms of larger University institutions the flexibility of movement (and therefore the impartation of aspects of the curriculum) can be determined in-action, locally and developed accordingly. The question of engagement should stem from the dynamisms forged through the curriculum, in the construction of networks, partnerships and collaborations available to students as they study. However, having said this it is also important to provide a position for the student to understand the rationale for why they should pursue certain types of practice and this can stem from the traditional medium aspects of artistic practice.

Genericism v Disciplinarity or Tradition v Innovation

To be truly innovative in terms of the curriculum and delivery of a Fine Art education is an ongoing and complex issue. But, I strongly believe that this is beholden upon a flexible notion of doubling, a doubling that coalesces the (often polemically perceived) elements of tradition and innovation in order to find radical series of potential for the learner and the exploration of new possibilities of practice whilst at the same time grounding the learner in the understanding of techniques and the potential of practice. This can be read in multiple ways and different institutions have moved towards alternative types of engaged practices within Fine Art, whether this stems from a disciplinary focused perspective or a more generic mode of delivery. In order to understand the complexities of different disciplines or media, a generic understanding of Fine Art practice can often lead towards a debilitated product or outcome, or simply a deep rooted confusion as to the required understanding of specifics, whilst alternatively by focusing upon the more technical and skill based perspective there are similar (although oppositional) sets of results. An often-used word in relation to Fine Art curriculum as can be seen in many of the recent (and not so recent) periodic reviews of Fine Art in the United Kingdom is the notion of interdisciplinarity and many institutions

have changed their curriculum specifically to focus, upon and attempt to enhance, interdisciplinarity.

However, it could be said that in order (for a student, or learner) to critically analyse and then substantially address and propose a position from or within a particular discipline it is important to have gained a core understanding and knowledge of that particular discipline in the first instance. This conforms to a tri-method approach, inclusive of the philosophical notions and practical potentials of disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and indisciplinarity. Structured within this is a methodological understanding of the potentialities of Fine Art practice and potential for learning Fine Art within an Art School context/environment, whether through a generic or disciplinary mode of delivery.

Rosalind Krauss in 'A Voyage on North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition', with particular reference to the Preface of the text, proposes and stakes a claim for the dispersal of medium or disciplinary positions, against the puritanical, or essential drivers from a Greenbergian medium specific critique. This can be read as a shift from the traditional and to use Krauss's phrase 'loaded' reference to the term medium, where it is nothing more than 'an unworked physical support' with its own internal 'plurality'. However the notion of disciplinarity I am proposing here does not directly relate to what many may see as an antiquated notion of purity of medium against other media, and maybe the suggestion of a post-medium condition is closer to the final proposition I will make in this regard and also closer in that regard to a post-interdisciplinary or post-inter-media discussion as well.

Essentially the claim here is for the maintenance of a curriculum, which allows a rigorous investigation of media and disciplines, an approach that does not countenance interdisciplinarity, but rather moves towards a more open and accessible interdisciplinarity which is garnered from an individual (or independent) specific and focused perspective. This allows for the context through which these approaches are undertaken to interact with new and

innovative modes of practice - accessing the full potential of artistic practice stretching across media and disciplines. In essence this is the position structured through the notion of doubling mentioned previously. A cycle through which students can engage with practices and understand specific positions in order to critically analyse those areas, through alternate processes of deconstruction, change, divergence, subversion and radicality that become generative of new practices. This suggests that an investment in the more traditionally considered aspects of curriculum, effectively materially focused, can be productive of alternate new methodological ways of thinking of practice and it is fundamentally possible for this to be embedded (or hidden) within a Fine Art curriculum. It is also important to state that disciplinarily focused structures allow for an extended and in-depth analysis of a particular medium, this notion of understanding traditional values does not need to be subversive of the medium itself whatsoever, but can instead provide the time needed to invest in a specific way of working that generates a rigorously invested energy through which the work not only seeks new developmental approaches but also fully understands and confronts those of the past.

To explore this further accesses the potential of interdisciplinarity, and although relatively conjectural I would propose that interdisciplinarity that is drawn from a defined position, in contrast to one that is forced is more productive in understanding the contextual constraints through which artists necessarily work. Essentially this returns to the question of generic Fine Art programmes or specified disciplinary focused departments within Fine Art programmes. It is clear to see that all disciplines or models of practice cannot be structured in this manner, however the point behind it is that through the critical analysis of a clear and in-depth understanding of the positions and the conditions of respective media an interdisciplinary approach can be engaged with. This is a model where the relative constraints of different media become a valuable and adaptable tool in which to engage with materiality (and for that matter immateriality) as contemporary fine art practices.

Returning to Rosalind Krauss, it is important to note the notion of the 'expanded field', and although this was originally cast in the guise of sculpture, has been hijacked (although this is possibly too strong a term) by other media in order to express a method for crossing territorial boundaries. Interdisciplinarity thus constructed as a formulation of those things that are connected across the boundaries of perceived media constraints is a vitally productive force, and one which can be sought through structures prior to, and subsequent design of, the curriculum, however knowledge and understanding of the constraints through which artwork can be made and the often vitally subversive nature of this making practice are, I would suggest, paramount at the formative contextual stage of engagement, or encounter through the studio (inclusive of the technical and other aspects of activity).

As a return to the original conception of disciplinary structures (within a Fine Art pedagogic environment), and alternative strategy, which in many ways aligns with the propositions laid out above is indisciplinarity – not from the perspective of something which is simply unruly, or even naughty – the notion is one proposed in an interview by Jacques Rancière, which looks at a revitalisation of the core aspects of disciplinarity through a radically different lens. This could be read as a type of *return* to disciplinarity – in essence the building of the tools for war:

In-disciplinary thought is thus a thought, which recalls the context of the war, what Foucault called the 'distant roar of battle'. In order to do so, it must practice a certain ignorance. It must ignore disciplinary boundaries to thereby restore their status as weapons in a dispute. (Jacques Rancière)

Indisciplinarity in this sense constitutes a 'productive' form of reestablishing the grounds for disciplinarity stretched in order to extend the positioning of different media, whilst constituting at the same time a persistence of the medium rather than an all encompassing generalism through which a specific medium can be subsumed within alternate media.

Disciplinary thought says: we have our territory, our objects and the methods, which correspond to them...

...This does not mean that they are null and void. It means that they are weapons in a war; they are not tools, which facilitate the examination of a territory but weapons, which serve to establish its always uncertain boundary. (Jacques Rancière)

Once again this focuses upon a transition and transformation through the discipline yet re-organises the constraints in order to maintain the primacy of different disciplines or media.

The potential of indisciplinary encompasses more than the interdisciplinary approaches of working across media (or disciplines), as suggested it inherently seeks those actions, possibilities or constructs which reside in-between things. Therefore it cannot be cast retrospectively into an all encompassing unit of genericism and an acceptance of an all integrated system, rather it would seek alternate subversive positions from a space in which these can be articulated within and outwith medium-specific potentialities. An important aspect of this pertains to materiality and the questions that need to be raised in connection with materiality in relation to disciplinary, post-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and indisciplinary structures.

The Modularisation Complex

One of the more complex organisational issues relating to curriculum within current Fine Art education relates to modularisation and often conformity to regulations structured and set outwith the programmes running the courses. Modularity is not always the most appropriate way forward in terms of the preparation, development, writing and delivery of a Fine Art curriculum. It can and in my experience often does hinder progressive pedagogic strategies and the development of individual or independent innovation and progressive learning that moves beyond the strategic learning principles often demanded (or at least followed) within a modularised structure, where a less modular emphasis (focusing upon development of individual and independent growth and expression) can lead towards higher learning being achieved on the part of the student. Where this may fly in the face of much that has been written upon the development of curriculum (in particular modularised curriculum)

within Fine Art it is clearly evident that many institutions are fighting to restore, or reconsider these positions in order to retake the ownership of the curriculum in order to develop modes of study (and also delivery) that pertain more closely to the ideals of contemporary Fine Art education and the needs of students through their study.

This is a complex suggestion and one that certainly would not be supported by all. Embedded within these complexities lie different issues, which have to be consistently addressed, for instance the amount of time dedicated to practice (whether this is studio focused or not), how much of the delivery should look at the contexts of practice, research and the theoretical importance which is interrelated. Alongside these questions rest other issues including how much of the curriculum should be shared, or should alternative perspectives externally to the subject being studied be offered as well (this might include elective modules for example)?

I mentioned earlier the term '*drift*', used to explore the shifting ground of curriculum activity through heavily modularised structures imposed by Universities that often fit to alternate types of study (at times concentrated upon very large group lectures) yet do not necessarily conform to fine art curriculum, in fact it is the other way around where fine art curriculum are forced to conform to the norms of the institution. There are many interesting ways of negotiating these parameters, however the *drift* away from the characteristics, or even new more radical methodologies developed to support fine art students within these constraints is often detrimental to the ways and modes of delivery in which academics would like to be actively involved and in which they would wish their students to be working. This drift is bureaucratically led and often institutionally forced, however, and this returns to the discussion of the Art School and the paradoxicality of its current position, where Fine Art curricula need to be constructed through flexible, non-rigid parameters in order to open the most creative conditions, and for that matter contexts within which students can understand and begin to create their own identity as artists and engage with an individually constructed artistic practice. This also opens a position through which the student can engage

with the world and understand that the external encounters are as important as those which are constructed internally.

In reflecting upon the notion of the hidden curriculum and a perceived need for this type of practice I would like to introduce a couple of interrelated thoughts which present some of the ways in which a curriculum can be delivered, these relate less to what that curriculum itself might be, more to modes of delivery, considerations of learning environments and the construction of a space in which the learner becomes the instigator responsible for constructing their own knowledge. It does however constitute, in my mind, a mechanism through which the curriculum can be taught (whether this is to be perceived as hidden or not).

That which is Hidden

The Importance of Reflection, Techniques and the Encounter

If we were to consider that the technical being the 'thing(s)' taught and the practical the 'method' involved in that teaching process – the moment of the *encounter* with the learner – producing the teaching process within which any reflection-in-action has to take place (reflection-on-action, inevitably, is the reflective process concerned with the practitioner considering the encounter after it has taken place). Reflection-in-action can be considered as a form of technique (in terms of teaching), which will be explained as considerably different to the notion of the technical.

In 'Questions concerning technology', Martin Heidegger proposes the difference based in the particularity of technique and the technical. For Heidegger the notion of technology has a very specific meaning, which he describes under the Greek terms *technikon* and *technē* and both terms are important here. But first another term used by Heidegger, *poēsis*, should be explained. Heidegger describes *poēsis* as a 'bringing-forth' this is the bringing-forth of the work (the 'irruption'), and in teaching terms, I would suggest, this

'irruption' can be seen as being generated at the time of the encounter with the learner, through the learning environment instigated by the teacher.

Heidegger states, "bringing-forth brings out of concealment into unconcealment"; this is revealing - *alētheia* - the revealing of truth (the technical aspect of the work and the subject being taught). Heidegger goes on to suggest that technology, and in that respect the technical, is basically a revealing. But, where in this does a difference exist, for Heidegger, between the technical and techniques? If we see these two terms under the 'umbrella' of technology then should they not have a very similar meaning in terms of 'production' – production being the learning of the student? Heidegger suggests that there is a very important reading of *technē*, linking the term to an 'opening up' which he describes "reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another".

These propositions, I believe start to open out the possibilities within which a student's learning and therefore artistic practice can be developed. Obviously Heidegger does not refer to pedagogy or even Fine Art within this text, so these thoughts are being transposed in order to position a way of considering a type of engagement or positioning within the delivery of a curriculum. The idea of bringing from concealment to unconcealment (a revealing) is not necessarily about being taught, rather it proposes a position through which the learner can open the doors to ways of thinking and making that construct difference as a primary way of thinking forwards. In effect it is possible to see techniques as methods for thinking through, the creation of the new, in essence the structure of technical possibilities and the bringing-forth (into being) of new possibilities.

The Learning Environment and Individual Contextual Positions

The learning environment constructed for art students is also a vitally important area, the student's learning can be enhanced through the teacher's understanding of the environment constructed for the student to learn. If the

teacher considers the environment as a place to enhance deeper learning from the student, then how should the teacher apply this focus? From an Art School perspective focusing upon the studio environment within which a Fine Art student will create their work, the environment for learning and the structure of that environment is crucial and acts as the context through which the student will learn, engage with ideas and develop their own voice through the complex and multiple opportunities available to them. The aim is to construct an environment as a context within which the art student can begin to establish (and maintain) their own form of learning in constructing an independent and flourishing artistic practice. I would also like to mention briefly at this point the importance of the studio as a site for not just learning, but making. I mention this due to the overwhelming loss of studio provision (by this I refer to the many institutions who have been forced to reduce their studio based footprint due to estate costs, and other reasons), taken into account in relation to modes of teaching, student numbers and the permanence of studio against those programmes that can and do operate with large student numbers and minimal estate footprint, again this refers to the operational style of many universities and the economic environment we find ourselves in. However I believe that the retention of studio (and space for critique, project rooms and exhibition areas) is vital to maintaining a thriving community of student artists. The dissolution of these spaces negates the community aspects of Fine Art engagement within an Art School environment, it also has impact upon ambitions for students, at times solely due to minimised space being inadequate to undertake larger and more ambitious projects. Fine Art cohorts and the communities developed have created exceedingly good networks and the retention of the conditions within which these communities can develop is vital, not only for the programme but also after graduation, where to use Glasgow as an example, we find that the community within the Art School is supportive of and supported by the wider community of artists in the City, many of whom are graduates themselves. In fact it is the Art School (and the communities developed through the studio based contexts for learning) that has defined and enabled these external post-graduation networks and communities to so successfully develop.

In returning to the teaching within an Art School I would like to mention John Biggs who suggests that a student's learning is best established through learning activities where their approach to learning is reformulated, away from the classic notion of 'rote-teaching', or the 'acquisition of knowledge, towards the notion of educative conceptual change'. The dominant aspiration of this *technique* focuses upon the student constructing their own learning, and this is absolutely linked to the particularities of the environment constructed for their learning – connecting the environment with active learning and engagement from the student. In contrast to feeding the student information, in which they simply remember the knowledge imparted, the student is put in a position through which they can creatively construct their own learning. It places the act of learning firmly in the student's path, but it is the student who needs to negotiate his or her own learning and the construction of their artistic practice. In order for this to take place the environment offered to the student must be flexible and open, in essence a constantly shifting space through which the student will engage with the development and construction of an artistic practice.

This then establishes a situation where the teacher must progress from an environment through which generalities override specifics. General teaching approaches only maintain the hierarchical structure of surface, strategic and deeper learning practices. In order to try to destabilise this, different approaches to the teaching environment and therefore contextual positioning need to be considered.

Non-Linear Learning Environments (Abstract Behaviour)

A certain level of abstraction is needed at an early stage, in order for the learner to question what they perceive to be different paradigms for practice and then potentially think through a paradigm shift, either theoretically or practically and for this I am referring to Thomas Kuhn's text 'The Priority of Paradigms'.

I would also, finally, like to put forward a proposition for a non-dialectical method of thinking concerning teaching and specifically learning focusing upon the notion of a fluid contextual and reflectional position on behalf of the learner, where, to refer to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the learner could potentially be seen as operating in an in-between space of context and reflection - a possible rhizomatic interface, where there is continual movement in order to re-establish particular contexts for practice whilst at the same time re-negotiate the concrete aspects of prior work in order for change and the generation of the new, or as David Kolb may suggest, active experimentation.

The connection here between context (and this includes the environment for learning as it is formative in terms of experiential learning) and reflection is important for shifting the paradigmatic structure of prior learning techniques. The notion that the learner is actually an *interface* of potential, in contrast to a 'sponge', shadows the idea based in active participation linked to constructivism, yet it establishes different methodological agencies for learning.

The abstraction outlined above within this approach relates to the potential for students to actively engage in their own learning and as described earlier within this presentation this is also dependent upon the environment constructed to enable this practice and the context within which the student engages with the making of practice. The fluidity of this thinking works against the static and linear platforms of rote learning, towards a more experiential and productive space within which the essential aspects of the curriculum can be delivered. The notion of 'in-betweenness' has been raised and this is important again in constructing the types of learning environment and contextual positioning that is required.

Summary

This paper has sought to outline a number of ideas, which could potentially shift approaches to learning through different methods or modes of curriculum delivery, inclusive of, yet not unique to the possibilities embedded within

current Art School education. The paper has also outlined the importance of the Art School and explored the rationale for seeking the retention of the characteristics and importance of its aura as well as environment to act as a platform for creative practices to emerge.

The question of discipline over the generic alongside tradition and innovation has also been discussed, proposing a particular set of ideas (described through a doubling) that can enable subversive and new thinking and therefore practices to be generated, in essence as a mode of curriculum delivery, but also as a structural device through which students engage with different practices. Within this alternate options were outlined seeking to offer new methodological possibilities available to enhance studio-led activities and tools for learning and subverting thinking from specific positions in order to alter the conditions of artistic practice.

Finally a secondary double notion embedded within the learning environment and context that implies (or supplies) how we can draw aspects of learning, or artistic practice out from that which is concealed. In essence this stands alongside the idea of a hidden curriculum, one in which the student begins to undertake their own learning and development.

In conclusion, the emphasis throughout the paper has been on the restoration of key attributes of learning within an Art School environment, whilst promoting new and alternative strategies for expanding the possibilities available.

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