

SELF-ORGANISED – DE-CENTRALISED BEHAVIOUR WITHOUT THE REWARDS

By encouraging critical thinking in, and for, student's education it is our hope that what is discovered through critique will result in the development of a variety of well-rounded, critically aware and insightful creative individuals. However, if we as educators do not use our own criticality and pause to observe, and interrogate, the rationale behind the growing trends in our students' ideas, their work and their behavior, we will unfortunately have missed a valuable opportunity to address some fundamental issues. Some of which are; our institutional values, our approaches to learning and teaching, our prejudices and our academic assessment criteria. What I will outline in this document is my belief that an urgent enquiry into student de-centralised behavior is now an academic necessity as it appears that a number of our 2015 Fine Art graduates, those who took the initiative to extend their practices, were not academically rewarded for operating outwith the institution and creating collaborative opportunities, networks and communities. As student attributes go, these skills that have long been viewed as integral to a rich and rewarding (sustainable) arts practice. So, why do they now appear to have less value? Are students penalised for our lack of understanding? Is our teaching relevant? Is the curriculum appropriate, and does it support new approaches to learning? Is de-centralised behavior indicative of student's educational and institutional disenchantment? Is it an attempt to usurp institutional ownership? Are recent student demonstrations in Central Saint Martins, and the injunctions against students from the University of the Arts London, testament to the above statements?

“The idea of rooting contemporary art practice in a world view in which one does not accept the institutional norm can – in a positive way – be to refuse its claim to power, but – in a negative way – it might as well not be addressing the power relations in which it is inscribed.” Maibritt Borgen (2013)

Self-organisation within the context of Contemporary Art is not a new phenomenon - its origins began to emerge amongst proactive artists in the late 1990's, where intolerance to 'norms', resistance and disillusionment motivated a plethora of self-mobilised arts practices and activities. However, if we fast-forward to the 21st Century, what are the *real* reasons for the current rise in student self-organisation? By broaching the subject of self-mobilisation, self-organisation and de-centralised behavior with six recent graduates, I hope to discover why they all chose to self-organise, and to find out if the rationale to operate outwith the institution was, in part, due to issues relating to their expectations and their experience of Fine Art education today.

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