

What is the role of written practice within contemporary fine art education?

What is the role of written practices within contemporary fine art education? In the last 23 years art schools have seen an increase in the written articulation of learning, and understanding of intrinsic processes, necessary to the contemporary artist. Not only have programmes of study been more comprehensively described through subject statements and constructively aligned learning outcomes, but also art students are now required to demonstrate an ability to write artist statements, outline and describe research processes, and be able to imaginatively project and describe future ideas through proposals for work a yet not realised. 1992 saw the assimilation of art schools within the University system and writing as the 'language' of the university has abutted against accepted and understood long held methods of educating visual artists. This difficulty and uneasiness of assimilation was clearly evident within the outcome of the recent research exercise, which found only 18% of outputs submitted to unit of assessment 34 were practice based. A pejorative view of this statistic would be that there is a lack of confidence across the art and design sector in the articulation, through writing, of practice as research. If this suggestion is evident, and is the case across Fine Art programmes, how is writing practices taught within studio courses? And particularly how can research be taught to undergraduate students within Fine Art programmes? This research paper looks to answer the question 'what the current situation of writing and employment of language is within UK art schools?' This paper challenges the view that research and writing, as exemplars of University education, have marginal place in Fine Art education and instead proposes a more integrated model for art education that presents writing, reading, and theory as practices within, and alongside, dominant visual methods. (word count 293)

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