A MANIFESTO FOR ART CRAFT AND DESIGN EDUCATION

The run up to a general election will always prompt political parties to revise and prepare individual manifestos; as declarations of intent to offer new policies to affect and carry out change, and why that change is needed.

As May 2015 approaches manifesto writing is already underway and the Society has been proactive in contacting the various policy units to offer advice and guidance for the future of art, craft and design education within this context.

We have now been invited by the Prime Ministers Policy Unit, the Liberal Democrat Manifesto Working Group and the Labour Policy Review team to contribute our views and to influence emerging policies.

We are busy now compiling materials and evidence. To best support our subject we have decided to prepare our own Manifesto for Art, Craft and Design Education, as both substantial advocacy and to layout our stall for policy makers and stakeholders.

We are not alone, the Crafts Council are proposing a Craft Education Manifesto which we welcome and will contribute to. We will encourage artists, makers, designers, and organisations and colleagues from the creative and cultural sectors and industries to support our vision.

But the voice and vision will be that of teachers and lecturers of art, craft and design, so we are asking for your thoughts, ideas and involvement in what the Manifesto should contain and say.

A good starting point is the NSEAD ‘alternative’ purpose of study.

The NSEAD believes that a world class art, craft and design education provides and inspires personal expression, personal understanding, creative and practical responses, promoting imaginative risk taking to provide solutions to our material, emotional, social and virtual worlds.

A world class art, craft and design education will engage, inspire and challenge children and young people, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to participate in, experiment in, invent and create their own works of art, craft and design.

Children and young people should be able to think creatively and critically.
They should investigate and evaluate a wide range of creative outcomes from the past and present to develop rigorous understanding of the many disciplines within art, craft and design and how they shape our history and future.

This will enable children and young people to contribute as confident citizens and future professionals to the culture, creativity, economic success, leisure, material and emotional wellbeing of our society within both national and global contexts.

Our subject is art, craft and design. We embrace three disciplines that can both stand alone and overlap as new virtual, material and hybrid practices emerge.

A definition is always a challenge, for what it includes and for what it leaves out. But to advocate for our subject does it help to define similarities and differences? Drawn from the NSEAD alternative curriculum glossary…

Art refers to a diverse range of human intellectual and expressive activities and the outcomes of those activities. Within this context art is further defined as visual art and includes painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, photography and work made using digital media.

Craft can be defined as intelligent making. It is technically, materially and culturally informed. Craft is the designing and hand making of individual or batches of objects and artefacts, encouraging the development of intellectual, creative and practical skills, visual sensitivity and a working knowledge of tools, machines, materials and systems.

Design shapes ideas to become practical solutions and propositions for customers and users. Design is all around us, everything manmade has been designed. The majority of designers work in teams, following a design brief and a process towards realising a commercially driven product, building, system or service.

What do we want to achieve for art, craft and design education? Drawn from the NSEAD Strategic Plan we have some starting points, to include…

We want to ensure that all children and young people across the UK can access a world class education in art, craft and design enabling them to engage and participate in all the disciplines within the subject as artists, makers and designers; as confident audiences of historic and contemporary exhibitions and collections; as critical consumers of ethically and ecologically sound products, systems and artefacts and as confident citizens and future professionals to contribute to the culture, creativity, economic success, leisure, material and emotional wellbeing of our society in both national and global contexts.

We want to ensure that the value, depth and breadth of art, craft and design in education, and on the curricula at all phases is made explicit to all stakeholders by ensuring teachers, lecturers and cultural sector educators have all the up to date resources and advocacy they need to champion the subject

We want to position and advocate for the greater definition, value and inclusion of craft and design within art, craft and design with dedicated focus groups, agencies and industry individuals to trigger national debate, and to identify exemplar practice and provide appropriate resources and support. We acknowledge that reducing the subject to ‘art’ diminishes its rationale and status.
We want to keep a watching brief on initial teacher education at primary, secondary and post-compulsory levels to ensure teacher trainers and emerging teachers of art, craft and design access high level subject and pedagogical support.

We want to expand the professional development programmes to extend teachers awareness and understanding of the relationship of art, craft and design to the creative, cultural, and digital and heritage industries.

We want to champion and support the role and ambition of the teacher of art, craft and design who wishes to continue their own creative practice alongside their work in the classroom.

We want to overcome boys’ underachievement and the performance gap between genders within the subject.

And we will be clear to say, beyond the classroom and studios, why art, craft and design education is vital to our cultures, our society, our economy and ourselves.

The Manifesto for Art, Craft and Design Education, currently a work in progress, intends to lay out a clear vision for the subject that will celebrate, signpost, promote and defend and ensure art, craft and design education has the position it deserves in the twenty-first century.

If members wish to contribute we would be delighted to hear from you.

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