

Annual Conference, 19 March 2011
British Museum
NSEAD Presidential Address

Introduction

My name is Andrew Mutter. As President, it is my very pleasant duty to welcome you to the National Society for Education in Art and Design Annual Conference.

I would like to thank you all for coming and for prioritising the conference in your busy schedules at this difficult time. Your attendance here demonstrates just how important the work of the Society is.

I would also like to thank the British Museum for hosting the conference – we are very grateful for their valuable and continued support.

NSEAD

It's been a busy and challenging year for NSEAD. There is a new board structure, we have moved premises to Mason's Wharf, developed our Facebook and network presence, introduced a stunning new publication, continued to expand our CPD provision and welcomed the significant support of new patrons of our Society. NSEAD's new Council, the PD, the Publications and Curriculum Boards, have worked together for over a year now. Each sector of education is represented by volunteers who work hard to help shape the views of the Society and to support you and all our members. They have achieved much this year, indeed we must thank the PD Board for shaping our theme this year for this weekend's conference; Inclusion, Diversity and Globalisation.

John, Lesley, Sophie have also worked tirelessly to maintain a high profile for the Society, ensuring our voice is heard in the right places, so that we can influence and develop the art and design education agenda at a time of massive political change.

President's aims

As President, I want to capitalise on the convergence of A4 (the Art Advisers Association) and NSEAD, to ensure a powerful, single voice for art and design education. I want our Society to move forward, driven by the enthusiasm and commitment of all of us, its members. I want to build on the strengths of both organisations and to preside over our growing membership.

Before we can do this I need to talk about the problems that we face.

Problems

Over the last 10 months the political context has changed radically. Art and design education is under threat and much of our good work is at risk because of current political thinking. We have all felt the impact of changes in government policy, haven't we! Many arts and creativity initiatives have evaporated: Creative Partnerships are disappearing; the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) have been scrapped; Arts Council funding has been cut; and the Design Council and CAFE have merged: local authority support for schools has been decimated; and Drumcroon, that hallowed sanctuary of exceptional practice, is under threat. My own Arts Team in Newham is no longer in existence, and I, possibly have the dubious honour of being the last Arts Adviser in the country. As I visit schools I have witnessed numerous attacks on art and design education first hand: many of you will also you recognise that:

- Art and design CPD has been scaled back – I can't remember the last time I delivered a primary INSET day.
- External providers of art and design-related CPD have found it increasingly impossible to secure work.
- Art and design teaching in many primary schools has evaporated into the ether, particularly in year 6.
- GCSE option choices are skewed because of the introduction of the English Baccalaureate, where art and design is excluded from a broad and balanced education. This is in stark contrast to the International Baccalaureate, where there are six rather than five areas of study with the arts being compulsory.
- Universities that predominantly teach the arts are to lose their government funding, while others will have funding greatly reduced, and student fees are to rise. All of this will affect recruitment to the arts, the quality of provision and the outcomes.
- Time for training in the arts has been cut in PGCE courses and the training of teachers within University Post Graduate Certificate in Education courses is also under threat. Gove's letter to the Teacher Development Agency concerning the allocation of teacher training places for 2011 provides for only 320 art trainee teachers, as opposed to 2,635 in maths, and 840 in design and technology. Art and design has been cut by half, and is now second to bottom in terms of numbers: social sciences are the only specified subject area with a smaller number of students. This is in contrast to the popularity of art and design at KS4 and 5.

These changes are undoing our successes and hard work raising the status and value of art and design education.

While the official line may be that the Government wants a balanced curriculum, all the indications are that our political masters do not see art and design contributing to their vision. A vision where there will be fewer art and design teachers, no local authority support or CPD, and a vision where the subject is disappearing from the school curriculum anyway!

I therefore not only fear for the space we occupy in the curriculum, but also how our subject is popularly perceived.

- Look at Mumsnet, they hold the worrying opinion that subjects such as art and music can be moved outside school, and the curriculum reserved for so called 'academic' subjects.
- Look at The Russell Group's labelling of 'hard' and 'soft' subjects for entry into university, where art and design is classified as 'soft' and perceived as a more vocational subject, all adding to the perception of our subject as less rigorous and less important.

These are dangerous times: Mumsnet doesn't understand us; Gove thinks we are patronizing; and universities think we are soft. I think I would be justified in saying that Art and design education is at a point of crisis!

Challenge for NSEAD

Major challenges lie ahead in how we position NSEAD and how we fight for art and design in the 21st century in a murky education arena that reflects thinking from another era.

I've painted a gloomy, doom-laden picture, but rather like Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, there is a shaft of light shining through the night as we prepare to move forward to address the challenge and strengthen the place of our subject in young people's education and in society.

- We have a shaft of light in that the role of the teacher is changing, and with it, we gain more professional freedom.
- Another shaft of light could be in properly trained teaching assistants adding value, we need to be able influence this practice providing training and pedagogy.

- We need to enlighten the increasing number of artists/educators in schools as we are likely to have more artists and volunteers supporting aspects of art and design education.
- We also need to shine a light on new markets for art and design education as part of the creative industries.

Schools are forming allegiances and federations, there are academies and free schools, Primary schools are a key market. Art and design is happening outside the school timetable. However shocking - this is the situation in which we find ourselves, how do we go on to develop these markets?

What NSEAD needs to do

As a professional organisation, the Society needs not only to have a clear vision for art and design education, but also to make this known and not only to its members: it needs to make this accepted as a necessary and valued part of the future education landscape.

This might mean that we use high profile, commercially successful advocates to influence decision makers. Just as Simon Sharma is advising on the history curriculum, so - we might brief Stella McCartney or Anthony Gormley, to enlighten the government on the value of the art and design curriculum.

We need to persuade art and design educators to see themselves not only as part of the education establishment, but as part of the creative industries. Teachers often don't recognise their professional skills, however those skills are very marketable.

Officers will continue to support members and promote the subject in every way they can. Officers will represent the Society, lobby, generate publicity, make publications and develop CPD.

What individual members need to do

Of course, the Society is not the officers: it is the members. Our membership needs to grow and I'm asking you as members to play your part here in marketing our future. I trained in fine art, and unusually, I have a marketing qualification. I've learnt that one of the most effective ways of selling a product is by personal selling (peer to peer) and personal recommendation (word of mouth is a powerful tool). So let's make us viral in the real world.

I'm asking you to take responsibility to be an advocate for the society, encourage people to join, be knowledgeable about the benefits of joining, and look at the website so that you are informed about the different categories of membership and the cost of these – for instance did you know there is a Primary Sector Membership category that costs much less?

What groups need to do

To develop membership I also invite you to identify, join, start up and promote local subject networks. It is not enough to do a good job. Another thing I learned from marketing – if you've got it, flaunt it! You will notice that contemporary marketing practice relies a lot on story telling. We need to tell our stories of young people succeeding in learning, of the difference our subject makes to their capacity to learn and to their ability to find employment. The first speech David Cameron made as Prime Minister highlighted the creative industries as an important growth area in rebalancing the economy, and I quote:

Creative employment provides around two million jobs, in the creative sector itself and in creative roles in other sectors. Employment in the sector has grown at double the rate of the economy as a whole.¹

The key point here is that while the creative industries are growing at twice the rate of the economy, the Government is slashing the number of art and design teachers and destroying opportunities for students in schools.

¹ www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/creative_industries/default.aspx

So let us help the Government do some joined-up thinking!

We need to lobby decision makers, publicise our work, celebrate and inform through local networks, through national forums and of course, through the Internet which is a wonderful platform for our subject.

Size is important!

- **With more membership comes more activity**
- **With more membership comes more influence**
- **With more membership comes more advocacy**
- **With more membership NSEAD will become The One Stop Shop for all things Art and Design**

We have a strong association, with many talented members passionate about their subject, as well as committed and hardworking paid employees. We have the evidence and arguments to support our subject.

And now, we have an inspiring two days to engage with the current debate and to influence the new political agenda. We talk about creativity, dealing with uncertainty and risk-taking. Now is the time to show what that means in action. Action, not only in the studio or the classroom but, also through professional solidarity in the political arena.

Thank you again for being here today, I hope you enjoy your conference and later - Please follow me to the bar – or is it the barricades...!

Andrew Mutter

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