NSEAD’s manifesto 2024
How all can achieve in art, craft and design education
Our trade union priorities
Editorial

Since the last general election and the publication of NSEAD’s manifesto for art education in 2019, significant challenges have faced our members. These include problems in recruiting art and design teachers, schools affected by RAAC, and concerning trends in mental health referrals for children and young people, to name but a few.

With four prime ministers and six Secretaries of State for Education since 2019, there has been considerable instability and uncertainty in the political landscape, affecting policymaking and the funding allocation for art education.

Recruitment of art and design teachers has been an issue, with only a 44 per cent recruitment rate last year according to the Department for Education. This shortage of qualified teachers has placed additional strain on schools and has impacted the quality of art education as a whole. Furthermore, the, ‘Art Now Inquiry’ (2023) revealed that 81 per cent of teacher respondents had concerns about their wellbeing, indicating they suffered from high levels of stress and burn-out.

In response to these challenges, we have published our 2023 manifesto, outlining three key hopes for the future of art education—and symbolised in our poster by a triangle representing hope, strength and harmony. Designed by artist, designer and educator Libby Scarlett, we hope it will remain on your wall way beyond the next election. Additionally, our pull-out (p.16) details 12 manifesto actions which we hope can bring about the necessary changes in art education that we all need.

Despite the political and systemic challenges in our sector, this issue of AD magazine focuses on the transformative power of art, craft, and design education. Our authors highlight how art education changes lives, offers inspiration and possibilities for change in the future.

Whatever happens politically this year and into the future, let us remember that we have a unique and special subject in common—art, craft and design and will always make the world a better place.

Sophie Leach, Editor, AD
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Our art educator manifesto

Being an art educator in the UK today means you are teaching a marginalised subject. Art in schools is under-valued and has been subject to year-on-year underfunding, while performance and assessment measures leave little space for our subject in a crowded curriculum. For many schools, this has led to a reductive curriculum that shows little understanding of the potential and importance of our subject. Contrast this with NSEAD’s passionate and expert community, united as we are in a shared belief that we can make the world better. NSEAD patron Bob and Roberta Smith OBE sums it up brilliantly: ‘Art makes children powerful’. Along with you, our members, our patrons and partners, we work to support the conditions and systems to make this happen for all children. We have been working in this way for a long time; since 1888, in fact, when a group of art school principals gathered outside the Royal College of Art. They were the founding members of NSEAD, united by a shared purpose to promote and raise the value of our subject. They wanted to ensure all learners have access to high-quality art education and to protect the interests of all those who engage in it. And we still have the same essential founding principles and mission today.

As a trade union standing up for art educators in the workplace, as a learned society, and as a subject association leading research and better practice, NSEAD members work tirelessly to deliver that mission. We draw enormous strength from this tripartite identity, each part of which feeds the whole. It’s therefore appropriate that our manifesto poster in this issue features a triangle, a shape that not only represents our organisation, but also the notions of strength, unity and change.

It is also important to remember that NSEAD is a democratic organisation. We have an elected council, a president and a leadership who steer every aspect of our work. So, every NSEAD manifesto is written by the membership for the membership – a powerful collaboration of educators from across the UK, all sectors and phases.

To build our 2024 manifesto, we first evidenced the impact of policies on art, craft and design education. Last year, creative arts entries dropped drastically with A level performing arts down by 19 per cent over 13 years. Our subject has fared better, but we have still seen a decline. In 2023, in England, Northern Ireland and Wales combined, there was a four per cent decline in GCSE and an eight per cent decline in A level art and design candidates.

‘There is no shortage of statements, arguments or creative campaigns that argue for change but, even so, in the face of arts-hostile policies, we must hold the line and call for change and action’

Michele Gregson, general secretary of NSEAD, explains the power of the manifesto for art education and the importance of our collective hopes, aims and actions
We also know that our subject is facing a teacher recruitment and retention crisis. Again, in the Art and Design Survey Report 2016, 67 per cent said they had considered leaving the profession. In 2016, according to NSEAD’s survey report, fewer art and design teachers (51 per cent) had considered leaving the profession.

These concerning trends evidence the impact of policies. There is no shortage of statements, arguments or creative campaigns that argue for change but, even so, in the face of arts-hostile policies, we must hold the line and call for change and action. Our manifesto addresses the needs, the vision and the actions required.

At its most simple, a manifesto is a written statement outlining what a person or group stands for, their core beliefs and how they plan to affect change. All our NSEAD manifestos are grounded in social justice values. They set out the work that we can all undertake and the work that is needed by policy makers and governments. We don’t affect change just by declaring it necessary; we must make it happen through action.

So let’s go back to the etymology of the word ‘manifesto’, which derives from the Latin terms ‘manifestus’ and ‘manifestum’, both of which mean ‘obvious’. To NSEAD members, it is blindingly obvious that art education is essential. But here is the truth: The value of our subject is not obvious to this government. They do not get it, and, for 14 years, they have chosen not to. Our manifesto sets out clearly and directly what change is needed, and why and how we are going to make it happen.

Our manifesto upholds the entitlement for every learner to access arts, design, creativity and cultural education. We set out a clear statement of what our art educator community needs to secure that entitlement for every learner, and how we can work together to achieve that shared vision. And so, for the entitlement of all learners to an excellent art, craft and design education, our manifesto has three key overarching asks or hopes.

These are:

- Equity of opportunity for all
- A learner-centred, future-facing contemporary curriculum
- A valued, nurtured and diverse subject-specialist workforce

Each hope is followed by four actions – 12 in total (see our manifesto poster, pages 16-17). These actions will help manifest our hopes.

As a multidisciplinary artist, designer and educator, I’ve never felt very comfortable with the label of just ‘artist’, ‘designer’ or ‘educator’. I’m quite happy to be all things, sitting somewhere in between or on the edge, and I like to move around depending on the project or my current evolving interests. Though this doesn’t make for a very easy explanation – I definitely don’t have a succinct elevator pitch – a wordier version can maybe paint a better picture.

I like the unknown of a project. Be they commissioned or self-initiated, I see projects as problems to be solved or things to be explored. Having an open beginning – and clients or collaborators who trust you and the creative process helps a lot – gives time to learn, listen and set the foundations for collaboration.

Questions I like to ask are: What is everyone hoping for, and what are the essential elements and actions for ways to create community and displace my view leading the creative process.

Libby Scarlett, artist and designer educator, shares how she created NSEAD’s manifesto poster and offers an insight into her artistic process.

I then like some time alone to let the concepts evolve. Often, I record the words I’ve been saying and set the foundations for collaboration.

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<th>Libby Scarlett, artist and designer educator, shares how she created NSEAD’s manifesto poster and offers an insight into her artistic process.</th>
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<td>Above (left to right) Initial ideas for the manifesto poster.</td>
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In that time, I hoped I’d be able to see if both the skills and experiences that are woven into the arts curriculum had made an impact. Those children are now in their final year and our school couldn’t be prouder. It’s not just about what they can do, but it’s about their passion, enthusiasm and how they articulate their ideas and express their individuality. And it’s a far cry from my own beginnings as an artist or, indeed, as a pupil.

My greatest passion as a child was drawing. If I reflect on my own education, what I learned about art is what I learned at home. Art in school was non-existent and there was little to inspire my creative mind. And being ‘different’ as a child in a rural, pre-millennial town temporarily stunted the artist in me.

My teaching journey has been far from linear. I got my degree at The Central School of Speech and Drama in acting, so creativity was never far away, but after treading a few boards I decided I wanted to teach. In 2005 I became an art subject leader and, in 2018, began teaching art to mature adults. It was here that my ideas for a new art curriculum started to take shape.

What followed was an amalgamation of all those experiences. At Dalmain we have stripped away any of the ‘it can’t be done’ barriers and replaced them with ‘how do we facilitate this’ questions. We have created an environment of awe and wonder, using materials that excite our children and give them the tools to understand and articulate their ideas. To become young artists also means becoming solutionists, scientists, historians, investigators and explorers (we use these labels frequently in the art room).

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The structure means children of all abilities and ages are given access to all resources and techniques, including techniques that are shown in steps via photographs and video recordings. This provides the children with the confidence to express their ideas, to explore and choose their own media and materials.

Art empowers those children whose voice is not always the loudest. Within our new curriculum, children with special educational needs have consistently produced boldly original work of immense depth. They confidently articulate their ideas and artistic inferences because art is a safe place where all opinions are valid.

As an inner London school, our curriculum reflects not only the local cultural landscape but also global issues concerning climate and environment. Art themes are cross-curricular. They connect with our long-term plan, allowing children to enrich and deepen their knowledge across a broad range of subjects. Our Year 3’s (age 8–9) will be making sculptures inspired by the children’s science topic and literacy texts. In the future, Year 4’s (age 8–9) students will be making sculptures inspired by their science topic ‘States of Matter’. They will look at the abstract sculptures of Pablo Picasso and the work of contemporary artist Livia Marin, exploring themes of material culture and consumerism.

Inspiring our children means introducing them to artworks and artists from all walks of life, celebrating ethnicity, diversity and inclusion. We learn about a range of artists, not just those who are established or historically significant, but also those less visible in dominant cultural representations. Children have collaborated with both local and global street-art muralists and, last spring, we began working with Open City to create a 3D future city. Our children were also lucky enough to visit Antony Gormley’s studio to learn about his sculpture techniques – the first school ever to do so. The impact that this experience had on their final designs and sculptures was extraordinary.

These experiences of cultural enrichment make the difference, enveloping the children into the world of those who do ‘art for a living’.

The art room, halls, corridors and staircases in our school have become a celebration of every child’s work, creating an environment that immerses them in the subject. Children see that their work is valued and celebrated. I have concluded that my six-year plan does not end after six years at all. As a practitioner, I’m learning with every new cohort. Picasso was right – every child is an artist – but then I don’t need to tell you that. If you look at the abstract sculptures of Pablo Picasso and the work of contemporary artist Livia Marin, exploring themes of material culture and consumerism.
Olivia Burton, visual arts faculty leader and senior lecturer at The Northern School of Art, shares how her education doctorate led to a new body of research into what an authentic arts education requires, and holistic approaches fuelled by collaboration and experimentation.

For as long as I can remember I have expressed myself through art and design. In fact, my earliest memories were those when I was engaged with ‘making’. The allure of creativity has led me to many unexpected opportunities and roles throughout my 15-year career in the creative industries and I, like many, stumbled into higher education mid-journey, with the hope of developing and inspiring the next generation of creative makers and communicators. I feel genuinely privileged to introduce my art school crush, the 1930s Black Mountain College in 1933, he was already a distinguished art teacher from the Bauhaus in Germany. He believed that academic study under measurements and scrutiny would do little more than produce ‘school stars’ and said ‘Any work done for the sake of the teacher or the sake of the school is not enduring, because life is everything but academic.’

Black Mountain College was clearly influenced by the utopian ideals of the progressive education movement. It was conceived as a pro-community and anti-hierarchy movement, so although the faculty was technically in charge, students were involved in institutional decision-making. There were no course requirements, departmental restrictions, grades or degrees. A broad-based liberal arts programme was offered as part of an ‘open curriculum’, with art itself at the centre, available to all. It was not necessarily considered as a professional pursuit but as a means of unlocking creative thinking in students in every field. This encouraged individuals to think beyond the purely visual and focus on the process of making.

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To articulate my thoughts, I would like to introduce my art school crush, the 1930s Black Mountain College, an art school that broke the mould and evoked a different spirit of learning. Black Mountain College, for me, is the manifestos for all art education, by virtue of its community, values and educators.

In the years leading up to World War II, America’s great socialist moment was underway, which initiated radical new approaches to teaching, learning and applications of the creative process in the real world. It was during this time that philosopher John Dewey proposed new ideas for education whereby students would shape their own curriculum.

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Black Mountain College was a place where education thrived. It modelled an innovative style of education that would form a paradigm and ‘manifesto’ for liberal arts schools worldwide and educated a generation of prominent artists and original thinkers. In my lifetime, I endeavour to give rise to a network of creatives who could embody a similar spirit to Black Mountain College and thrive in an adaptive, authentic arts education.

Creativity is valuable to our communities, our economy and our place in the world and, as educators, we hold the door open to future generations. We owe it to our learners to create history-worthy education and to elevate high-quality creative learning experiences.

References
Art history is central to art education

I want to claim that art history should be central to how we teach art, craft and design.

Of course, art history is already an important discipline in its own right. It’s valued for the mind-broadening and empathy-building virtues of studying a range of periods and places, and for developing skills of close observation, interpretation and judgement. But mainly my suggestion is that art history should be key to our teaching as students can get an adequate sense of the complexity and plurality of what ‘art’, ‘craft’ and ‘design’ have become. It is understandable that many art, craft and design teachers see the subject as essentially practical and worry that students encounter diverse exemplars and work out their own preferences and commitments. Art history as a discipline has long since moved beyond a linear parade of great artists or as a written add-on to practice. Both art history and studio practice are better thought of as introducing learners to the diversity and plurality of what ‘art’, ‘craft’ and ‘design’ are taught. Here, he explains why this should be an invitation to rethink the shape of our subject, and look at how art historical and theoretical concepts might be fully integrated into the classroom.

To convey the notion of art history at work requires questioning some common ideas of it; for example, as a narrative of mainly European great artists and their lives. Ernst Gombrich’s *The Story of Art* has sold millions of copies, but this is no longer representative; art history has comprehensively addressed the charges of narrowness and elitism that used to be levelled at it.

Art history has also changed from the mid-twentieth century image of the influential art critic, concerned only with making definitive judgements of taste, into a more varied field of art writing by curators, advisors, bloggers and researchers. "Art criticism has also changed from the mid-twentieth century image of the influential art critic, concerned only with making definitive judgements of taste, into a more varied field of art writing by curators, advisors, bloggers and researchers."
NSED’s trade union priorities

As the only art, craft and design educator trade union, NSEAD is uniquely positioned to campaign, lobby and call for subject-specific workplace changes. Here, Seán Taylor, principal trade union case worker, for NSEAD, shares our trade union workplace priorities

1. Campaigning for the restoration of the value of teachers’ pay

- The School Teachers’ Review Body (STRB) 33rd Report, GOVUK states: ‘The competitiveness of teachers’ earnings compared to the whole economy, wider public sector and to professional occupations was lower in 2012/13 compared to 2010/11.’
- In July 2023, according to the DfE’s own data, the number of teacher vacancies for art and design reached the highest level recorded since 2011. In 2012, The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in Education’s Art Now Inquiry report showed that in all nations, art and design teachers are considering leaving the profession. Fewer teachers in Scotland (6% per cent) have considered leaving, compared to 79 per cent of respondents in England. Teachers’ pay has not kept up with inflation and has fallen markedly over a number of years. This is devaluing the profession, which in turn leads to difficulties in the retention and recruitment of staff.

We are calling for:

- Teachers’ rights to a work-life balance that is essential for the wellbeing of teachers and, in turn, the quality of education that pupils receive.
- A recognised maximum class size for art and design in all key stages to improve the learning environment for pupils.
- Action to tackle excessive workloads and address the inadequacy of current teachers’ conditions of service frameworks.

2. Improving conditions that impact on teacher mental health, wellbeing and workload

- The 2023 Art Now Inquiry report indicated that 82 per cent of respondents had concerns about wellbeing.
- The majority of art and design teachers (86 per cent) who responded in the report said their workload had increased in the last five years, and that they are working long hours and facing mounting workloads. This is inevitably taking its toll on educator wellbeing.

We are calling for:

- Teachers’ right to work-life balance issues that are vital for the wellbeing of teachers and, in turn, the quality of education that pupils receive.
- A recognised maximum class size for art and design in all key stages to improve the learning environment for pupils.
- Action to tackle excessive workloads and address the inadequacy of current teachers’ conditions of service frameworks.

3. Securing an art, craft and design advocate in every workplace

- Half of all art and design teacher respondents (50 per cent) in the Art Now Inquiry report said the reduced profile and devaluing of the subject are a disincentive to stay in the profession.
- The report also revealed that, since the pandemic, teachers had serious concerns about resourcing for our subject. Ninety-three per cent of respondents said that there had been a decrease in resources.
- Art, craft and design education is under threat from 14 years of governmental policy changes. There has been a focus on what are often referred to as ‘academic’ subjects (humanities, sciences and maths, and languages), as well as a school accountability and measuring system that has negligible respect for the arts subjects. We believe that art and design educators deserve a strong voice in the workplace. That’s why we are committed to supporting our members to be NSEAD advocates.

We are calling for:

- An NSEAD advocate in every school or studio workplace to be the voice of art, craft and design teachers and learners. They should represent the interests of educators, whilst protecting the rights of all learners. We know that being a subject advocate can be challenging. That’s why NSEAD will provide support training, resources and advice for this key role.

4. Ending financial hardship and inequality for trainee art and design teachers

- In December 2023, data published by the DfE revealed that art and design has seen the largest decreases in reported performance against FGTT targets between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 training years; 44 per cent of target recruited in 2023/24 compared to 88 per cent in 2022/23. 
- According to the DfE in 2017, 31 per cent of children in schools were ‘minority ethnic’. In the same year, the percentage of art teachers working in the visual arts was 94 per cent white.

We believe that all art, craft and design educators deserve to be treated fairly and with respect. We will continue to fight for your rights until you have the support you need to do your jobs effectively and to enjoy a healthy work-life balance. NSEAD is here for you.

We have a generation of teachers, many of whom graduated during the pandemic, who are also saddled with substantial student debt.
Actions

• Collect robust evidence to identify the state of art, craft and design education across all regions, sectors and phases
• Invest in resources and improvement to our learning spaces
• Protect our art, craft and design curriculum time across all phases
• Remove subject hierarchies and dismantle harmful accountability measures that limit learner choice

Actions

• Research into the impact of best curriculum practice, drawing on The Big Landscape research
• Consult with the NSEAD’s Big Landscape expert community to co-create and shape curricula that is:
  – Relevant and engaging
  – Twenty-first century and future focussed
  – Equitable and accessible
• Protect the integrity of our subject, to realise that a distinct curriculum for art, for craft and for design is vital to strengthen progression pathways and careers in the creative industries
• Empower learners so they can harness the unique potential of our subject to address the vital and pressing issues of our time

Actions

• Invest in data collection that will inform a national strategy to recruit and retain a diverse art educator workforce
• Improve teachers’ terms and conditions to address wellbeing and workload:
  – Restore pay
  – Reduce excessive class sizes for art, craft and design
  – Build opportunities for teachers to achieve flexible working
• Invest in art, craft and design teacher recruitment:
  – Fair bursaries for every subject and every trainee teacher
  – Increase the time given to the study of art, craft and design in primary initial teacher education
  – Address the consequences of the Initial Teacher Training Market Review
  – Recognise and remedy the impact of austerity, the cost-of-living crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic on a generation of trainee teachers
• Create opportunities for all art, craft and design teachers to continue to train, research and practice

Find out more
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Our manifesto for art, craft and design education

For the entitlement of all learners to an excellent arts education, we need:

1. Equity of opportunity for all
2. A learner-centred, future-facing contemporary curriculum
3. A valued, nurtured and diverse subject-specialist workforce

Image credit Libby Scarlett
Design by Libby Scarlett
A workshop series engaging students (age 14-18) with photography, archives and collective histories allowed students to explore the creative and critical power of visual representation in shaping our understanding of ourselves and others. Jolie Hockings, engagement curator at the visual arts charity Autograph, London, explains what really struck me through these workshops was observing the students having fun. I often think about what bell hooks wrote in ‘Teaching to Transgress’ back in 1994: ‘The first paradigm that shaped my pedagogy was the idea that the classroom should be an exciting place, never boring.’ There were moments along the way where Cassia and I would feel frustrated that a student might not have responded exactly how we had expected to the session. It brought up a reflective conversation between us around what we wanted the students to take away from the experience and why. It sounds so simple, but when an encounter with an artist and institution is so light touch, the best we can do for students is for them to go away feeling like they did something memorable outside the walls of the classroom. It was a freer space, a more playful space, where they had agency over the outcome they created. Autograph’s learning programme aims to encourage curiosity and empathy while fostering visual literacy. We invite students to explore the creative and critical power of visual representation in shaping our understanding of ourselves and others. The workshops with Cassia provided an opportunity to delve deeper into the importance of archives, reinforcing that everyone has a story that is worth preserving. jolie@autograph-abp.co.uk autograph.org.uk

Not long after joining Autograph last year, I met Cassia Clarke. She had just finished her final project on the Photographic and Documentary Photography BA at UAL. Deciding that taking photographs no longer interested her, Cassia based the project around rescuing her family photographs and began to investigate why the archives of African-Caribbean-British families, in particular, are neglected.

We spent the months that followed expanding on the project ‘Take My Word For It’. Cassia ran a series of school workshops at Autograph’s gallery, asking students to consider how personal photographic collections can play a significant role in documenting and narrating British history. The workshops became an important space to discuss why some histories get preserved more than others. Students learnt about Cassia’s artistic and archiving practice and recreated photographs they felt would be important to share in the future.

Arts and cultural organisations running workshops for schools is nothing new. However, in recent years I have begun to question how useful such a short interaction with a space, materials and ideas really is to young people’s long-term creativity. Perhaps it’s just a reflection of frustration stemming from 13 years of successive government policy marginalising art in our schools, leaving institutions to try and fill the gap.

Working with Cassia – and experiencing the workshops she created – has shifted my perspective of what a school’s encounter with a cultural organisation could really mean today.

Below Students looking at Cassia’s family archive at Autograph, 2023 © Nadine Scarlett

‘Working with Cassia – and experiencing the workshops she created – has shifted my perspective of what a school’s encounter with a cultural organisation could really mean today’
In conversations with primary PGCE trainee teachers who have taken part in a week-long arts elective during their training year, outcomes such as improved knowledge of teaching strategies and increased personal wellbeing stand out. One artist teacher trainee found that their artist identity worked with and not against their primary teacher identity. But increased confidence can also be found in non-art specialists, with one Early Career Teacher (ECT) trainee taking their class to The National Gallery as a direct result of the elective. Hope is written into most trainee stories and subsequently into the stories of the children of their future classes.

The arts elective referenced here is an annual collaboration between the University of East Anglia’s primary PGCE, The National Gallery in London and Norfolk Museums Service. It begins with an introductory workshop for all trainees to Take One Picture, The National Gallery’s learning programme for primary schools. From there, 12 trainees engage in a cultural placement week – observing, practising, embedding their learning, and making use of two days in a local museum and art gallery, and two days in The National Gallery, supported at all stages by gallery education experts. It is a transformative week.

As a teacher educator on this primary PGCE, I teach, observe and engage in this elective week alongside my trainees. The benefits of immersive cross-curricular art pedagogy on the learning of the child are always at the fore, but a newly found confidence in themselves as art teachers, with a renewed (or perhaps liberated) view of the teacher’s purpose, also develops. They begin to think of themselves in Pat Thompson and Christine Hall’s terms as ‘cultural brokers’, able to make creativity integral, explicit and inspirational to the children in their classes.

As a visual arts teacher educator, I also value this week as a breath of fresh air, a refuge, and a powerful liminal space to engage trainees with something other than the mechanistic view of teaching and learning that the government-mandated Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curriculum offers. It is a space in which trainees can be inspired and curious; a place of appreciation for and championing of high-quality arts learning that develops the whole child. Yet arts electives across the initial teacher education sector (especially within time-precious PGCE courses) are in jeopardy. Pat Thompson and Christine Hall, in the early results of their 2023 Researching the Arts in Primary Schools investigation, found arts provision ‘patchily-served’ in initial teacher education. Insufficient time allowed within the ITE framework and uneven arts-rich practice in school placements are cited as key barriers, something that is unlikely to improve with the remodelling pressures of the 2024 ITE curriculum.

We must believe, however, that hope remains. If we don’t want to perpetuate variable arts provision within our schools, we need a shared belief that general arts education and specific arts electives in primary ITE matter. They create opportunities for educational change at a variety of scales and levels. So let us find ways to protect them, speaking up for what they are – an enabling entitlement, and essential at ITE level if we are to empower arts teachers of the future and re-centre meaningful arts learning for children and young people in our schools.

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Sam Hobbs, associate assistant head of arts and creativity at The Angmering School in West Sussex, describes how, for her Fine Art MA, she drew comparisons between events in recent social history and the challenges facing working people in the present, thus creating manifesto messages for modern times.

In February 2022, my request for sabbatical leave was approved and my place secured on the full-time MA Fine Art programme at the University of Brighton. Sitting in my studio in September felt strange. It was the first time in 17 years that I hadn’t returned for the new school year – I hadn’t received a phone call to ask where I was. I made a start by pinning a screen-printed copy of Mineworkers (NUM) membership badge. The words Organise, Educate, Agitate were taken from an old NUM banner, but felt relevant to my work as an art teacher. I wanted a visual connection to Elvis Presley and his embellished jumpsuits, elevating the miner to rockstar status.

I first visited Woodhorn in 2015. I half expected a phone call to ask where I was. I hadn’t returned for the new school year – felt strange. It was the first time in 17 years that I hadn’t returned for the new school year – I hadn’t received a phone call to ask where I was. I made a start by pinning a screen-printed copy of Mineworkers (NUM) membership badge. The words Organise, Educate, Agitate were taken from an old NUM banner, but felt relevant to my work as an art teacher. I wanted a visual connection to Elvis Presley and his embellished jumpsuits, elevating the miner to rockstar status.

As the working class hero in their community.

Mark Fisher, author and music critic, wrote about hauntology and ‘lost futures’. Hauntology is a range of ideas first introduced by the philosopher Jacques Derrida in his 1993 book Spectres of Marx. Referring to the return or persistence of elements from the social or cultural past, hauntological ideas helped shape my understanding of societal and political changes that have happened during my lifetime and their impact – themes of loss, nostalgia and socialism emerged.

I began to make comparisons between events in recent social history and the difficulties facing working people in the present – the rising cost of living, low wages and lack of job security. Uplifting and hopeful messages found on traditional union banners reached out to me from the past, including Unity is strength. The past we select, the future we build. There is a world to win and Power to the People to name a few. When written together, these words felt both instructional and inspirational; a banner that reminded us that things have different and can be different again.

‘Uplifting and hopeful messages found on traditional union banners reached out to me from the past’ as the working class hero in their community.

Mark Fisher, author and music critic, wrote about hauntology and ‘lost futures’. Hauntology is a range of ideas first introduced by the philosopher Jacques Derrida in his 1993 book Spectres of Marx. Referring to the return or persistence of elements from the social or cultural past, hauntological ideas helped shape my understanding of societal and political changes that have happened during my lifetime and their impact – themes of loss, nostalgia and socialism emerged.

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The artist Jeremy Deller has also been influential in my thinking this year. I visited the Musée des Beaux-Arts Rennes for a retrospective of his work and immersed myself in The Battle of Orgreave, droite (2011). Several of Deller’s recent works feature banners made by the banner maker Ed Hall, and I have learned a lot from Ed since this exhibition. Finally, a collection of posters made by Deller over a 30-year period was an unexpected and brilliant discovery.

I first exhibited Power to the People at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Gallery in the Union Centre, London, in June 2013. Over the course of two weeks, feedback was overwhelmingly positive and I was given several union banners to add to the project. I took advantage of the space to begin work on a full-size banner.

By the time I had installed Power to the People for the end-of-year show, I had ten embellished or adapted garments which hung from a high rail on etched hangers, alongside a finished banner and a selection of prints. Using reflective fabric from a Deliveroo jacket, the word Power flashed under the spotlights as people viewed it. Again, people offered me garments, badges and ideas of how to develop the project further.

I returned to school, working part-time whilst continuing my own art practice. During the October half term I took part in an exhibition with fellow graduates at The Regency Town House in Hove. I’m enjoying seeing my work in different settings. The next step is to exhibit Power to the People in my school, with activities and talks for students, staff and the local community.

Following my sabbatical, I feel nourished and motivated. This project has empowered me and exists to empower others – to send positive messages that remind us that things have different and can be different again.

As the working class hero in their community.

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I’m rubbish at art

When trainee teachers can experience success within their own art, they are able to embrace themselves as artists and go on to help children do the same. Kaytie Holdstock, lecturer in Primary Art and Design Education at the University of Worcester, explains how to break the cycle of art anxiety.

Art teacher confidence in primary schools has long been cited as one of the many reasons why the quality of art education is said to be on the decline. This is made apparent in Ben Cooper’s 2019 report for the Fabian Society1 that paints a grim picture of the current state of art and design provision in primary schools. As a lecturer in primary art education, the phrase ‘I am rubbish at art’ is a familiar statement from our undergraduate, generalist trainees when they first enter the art room. This has always fascinated me. Why do so many trainees feel so determined in their perceived lack of ability in art? What experiences have contributed to shaping this negative artistic identity? And what impact does this lack of confidence ultimately have on the children they go on to teach?

Much of trainees’ ‘art anxiety’ appears to be born out of misconceptions around the nature of art and design. Students talk of artistic talent as a gift attributed to the few – a God-given talent that some of us are lucky to be born with, rather than something that can be nurtured and encouraged within everyone. Many trainees recall experiences from their own education which confirmed that they were ‘rubbish’ at art, and even less lucky few who maintained the love of art into their teenage years were often discouraged from continuing their artistic endeavours by well-meaning parents or teachers in the pursuit of subjects deemed more ‘academic’.

With some initial teacher education providers offering as little as two-hour focused instruction in art and design, alongside the lack of artistic professional development offered to practising teachers who serve as school-based mentors, little is being done to break the perpetual cycle where early career teachers enter the primary classroom fearful and ill-prepared to teach art. Our children deserve an education where art and design hold its rightful place as an essential and valued part of the curriculum. And for this, we need teachers who are comfortable and open-minded when exploring their own identity as artists. This is an unfamiliar territory for most primary trainees, many of whom dropped art like a hot potato at the first available opportunity in secondary school. Understanding the anxieties our primary trainee teachers bring to the art room must go hand in hand with a teacher education that develops trainees’ own artistic confidence. We need to challenge trainees’ perceptions of art as an exclusive and inaccessible subject by re-engaging them in dynamic artistic exploration, experimentation and play. ‘We need to challenge trainees’ perceptions of art as an exclusive and inaccessible subject by re-engaging them in dynamic artistic exploration, experimentation and play’

Artists who, by the very nature of overcoming anxieties and embrace themselves as artists. This is unfamiliar territory for most trainee teachers that art should be fun and accessible.

Below Experiencing success in their own art breaks the cycle of art anxiety in trainee teachers

We need to challenge trainees’ perceptions of art as an exclusive and inaccessible subject by re-engaging them in dynamic artistic exploration, experimentation and play. Through direct experience, we can guide trainees to see how easily art can be taught, so that all learners experience success and mistakes, and are then encouraged and valued as part of the learning process. Trainees learn best by undertaking a journey of discovery for themselves.

One of the key ideas which help students successfully navigate beyond their own perceived inadequacies in art is reframing the idea of observational drawing. A lack of drawing skill in its traditional form is all too often the reason why a student has discounted themselves artistically. By providing opportunities for mark-making, students are reconstructed with the dynamic, energetic and inclusive nature of drawing. Giving students opportunities to explore their own drawing by encouraging continuous lines, gestural marks and experimental drawings, whilst also exploring a wide range of tools, scales, orientations and timings, all help make drawing accessible again. It takes the fear out of observational drawing and returns the fun.

When trainees are encouraged to reflect upon their own experiences of primary art, an interesting picture emerges. Many students hold fond memories of making Christmas cards and, of course, using glitter, but few remember experiencing art in any meaningful way beyond a bit of drawing, occasionally ‘getting the paints out’ and, on rare occasions, making a clay animal (although never one that survived the drying process in one piece). Only once trainees’ eyes have been opened to the many other art disciplines – such as the fun of printing, the flexibility of collage and the skill of photography – can the limitless possibilities of a full and rich primary art education be explored. Additionally, this is often the moment a trainee will discover a previously unexplored area of art with which they resonate, leading to the realisation that ‘I’m actually pretty good at this!’

When trainees are given the time to experience success within their own art, we give them the tools to move past their own anxieties and embrace themselves as artists. Artists who, by the very nature of overcoming their own insecurities, are uniquely placed to help children do the same. It’s time we recognise the pivotal role of quality art provision in initial teacher education as the first step to breaking the cycle.

1. Primary Colours: The decline of arts education in primary schools and how it can be reversed fabians.org.uk/publication/primary-colours

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Reference
1. Primary Colours: The decline of arts education in primary schools and how it can be reversed fabians.org.uk/publication/primary-colours
Opening up access to the built environment

Open City is dedicated to making architecture and neighbourhoods more open, accessible and equitable. Here, Sarah Phillips, head of education and empowerment at the charity, explains how they are helping young people to have their say in the planning, development and architecture of the built environment around them.

Young people usually have little say in the planning, development or architecture of the built environment. Research by the property developers Grosvenor revealed that 89 per cent of young people – those between 16 and 18 – have never been asked about their neighbourhood, while only eight per cent had attended a public consultation. Meanwhile, an overwhelming 81 per cent said they would like the chance to be involved.

Opportunities for young people to pursue careers in planning and architecture, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, can be hard to come by. For example, while the LSE’s Millennium Cohort Study found that black teenagers are the most likely demographic group in society to aspire to be architects, 82 per cent said they would like the chance to have their say, while only eight per cent had attended a public consultation.

Returning to school, they share ideas and get out to explore a new part of the city. The Young City Makers programme involves working with young, diverse, built environment professionals in the classroom. As a participating architect said: ‘I think if you can get young minds asking questions and being conscious of the choices they potentially can make, and the consequences of the choices that they do make, then you have the beginnings of change.’

We must, therefore, unlock the city for young people by giving them the opportunity and the power to influence its future. We know about the long list of government directives that create a bleak diet for even the most determined art teachers. With this in mind, Open City offers a glimmer of collaborative hope in the areas of cultural capital, careers and Gatsby Benchmarks, and by ensuring that students don’t miss out on trips. The charity’s mission is to make the city more accessible, inclusive and equitable, as well as offering free educational programmes supporting young people in learning about and pursuing careers in city making.

Working with young, diverse, built environment professionals in the classroom can energise students, as can workshops that show there are multiple possibilities and no single right answer (or mark scheme). As well as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in art, we also offer CPD in JD design and architecture. A teacher who attended one of our courses said: ‘It’s been fantastic to meet other professionals who have very different skills from me and are equally passionate about passing those skills on to the children. As an arts lead, it was great to get ideas around the different types of architectural drawings and model making.’

For students with additional access needs, the It’s My City Too! programme looks to strengthen and secure students’ understanding of different places across the city and empowers them to explore these sites themselves. Longer programmes integrating both research trips and co-creating design have also been a huge success. From skate parks in Haringey and penguin cities in Westminster to bridges and bus shelters in Brent, this has been an inspiring story in which co-creation has brought about moments of astonishing neurodiverse talent.

As another teacher working for the Federation of Westminster Special Schools said: ‘The programme is inclusive, tailored to the school’s needs and enhances/supports a broad and balanced curriculum. It also equips students with meaningful and appropriate cultural capital.’

Open City’s Accelerate programme is designed for sixth formers to explore the built environment industry, learn new skills, create a portfolio and understand how they can become an engaged citizen in their local community. It’s a programme that empowers young people to seize opportunities and to be unafraid of new challenges.

We accept 100 young Londoners on to the course each year and in 2022 will open in Birmingham. Students explore the dilemmas of planning and development, as well as broader issues around construction, engineering and new materials. Alongside ten Saturday workshops, each student will receive work experience and mentoring, in addition to the opportunity to build at scale in the annual Accelerate Design and Construct Challenge.

In recognition of the difficulty of getting key stage 3-4 students (age 11-14) out of the classroom, we also offer in-school Accelerate Studios to explore problem-solving through model making, and Accelerate Insight Tours to achieve Gatsby & Benchmarks and give insight into the range of careers available under a broad design umbrella.

If you work in a school in London or Birmingham and would like to participate in any of these initiatives, please do get in touch: sarah@open-city.org.uk

cross-phase
I believe the acquisition of skills can develop learners’ sensibilities, allowing them to create a tangible expression of their feelings and emotions. Along with developing tacit knowledge from experiential learning, our department aimed to create a learner-centred curriculum. By making students active decision makers, we hope to develop their self-awareness, raising the prospect of them becoming more autonomous makers.

This approach also enables and develops the affective drive — whereby our feelings act as a motivating factor in our decision making. Giving students personal responsibility was paramount to activating the affective drive, because it relates to the neural stimulation brought upon by interest.

In view of the students’ passion for food technology, we selected this as the initial theme so they had the opportunity to develop their interest in an unexpected way. The playful and cultural nature of food provided an organic synthesis between thinking and making. We began looking at the work of artist Claes Oldenburg and his seminal soft ‘food’ sculptures. Making slices of cake using slab building from paper maquettes enabled the learners to understand the benefits of using a template with slab build. What’s more, decorating the cakes using the mini extruder captured the students’ imagination.

Although we did not know how the students would respond to exploring clay, our decision was underpinned by the relationship and a selection of glazes and slips which allowed for the course to focus on ceramics without any significant output.

All learners were unfamiliar with clay. Because most of the students had not opted for an art or design-based subject, they lacked confidence with drawing. Instead, we began by using clay’s intuitive qualities. This encouraged and supported them becoming more autonomous makers.

Along with developing tacit knowledge from experiential learning, our department aim was to create a learner-centred curriculum which has organically evolved to focus on ceramics without any significant output. This has allowed learners to become more self-aware, adaptable and reflective of their work and the environment around them.

Although the happenstance that led to the study of three-dimensional design specialism in art and design GCSE was unexpected, supported by the then departmental support, the curriculum has been able to evolve for learning. But, with the cooperation of the school and with departmental support, the curriculum has been able to evolve organically. The school has a working kiln, an array of tools, plaster moulds, and a selection of glazes and slips which allowed for the course to focus on ceramics without any significant output.

One of the benefits of designing a responsive curriculum is that unplanned events can support the contextualisation of the subject. For instance, while some students were researching the artwork of Veronica Ryan, she won the Turner Prize. This allowed our young makers to deepen their cultural understanding of the role of art in society. We also visited the Kiln Rooms, an open access studio facility in Peckham and the ceramics BA department at UAL. These visits gave students a chance to make connections outside of the school and deepen their knowledge of art, craft and design as viable creative career paths.

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Responsive curriculums

‘By making students active decision makers, we hope to develop their self-awareness, raising the prospect of them becoming more autonomous makers’
Cross-phase awareness of the need

Teachers and creative – 400 pupils worked with

mission education

On an art to look after our oceans

The Odd Fish installation

Above

As founders and directors of creative education consultancy Shape North, Kathy Coates-Mohammed and Stephanie Bartholet are passionate about their goal to make changes with the art and creative

and consultants Shape North, are passionate about their

Bartholet are art advocates, working with children and young people, partners and communities to deliver high-quality arts

and designers who work on a national and international scale. Children and teachers say they enjoy learning from and about artists who ‘speak’ to them, who spark their interest, whom they can relate to and who raise their aspirations.

Shape North is currently working in Kirklees – a large, diverse borough. There, we are moving to instigate change on a whole variety of levels and areas. Raising access to high-quality arts can be crafted and created. Uniting the priorities of different local authority teams and putting children at the heart of delivery is resulting in an abundance of creative offers. With commitment, drive and strategic vision, change is happening. Shape North intends to stay a driving force, from changing the story in a northern town to spreading the vision nationally.

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Kathy Coates-Mohammed and Stephanie Bartholet are art advocates, working with children and young people, partners and communities to deliver high-quality arts opportunities, creative programmes, projects and training. They also partner with local authorities and cultural organisations to devise and influence powerful creative strategies.

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**Art education for the environment and climate emergency, and why it matters**

**Dr Emese Hall**, senior lecturer in Art Education at the University of Exeter, is the chair of the NSEAD Environment and Climate Emergency (E&CE) research group. A passionate de-growth advocate, her current research centres on ecological justice via art education. Here, she stresses the importance of addressing E&CE issues in our teaching.

*Below*

Smoke stacks at a steel plant in Benxi, China, with residential flats in the foreground © Andreas Habich/Climate Visuals

In the first major research into race in art education, the Runnymede Trust and Freelands Foundation have exposed significant under-representation of minority ethnic artists in school curricula. Just 2.3 per cent of artists referenced in GCSE Art papers from Black (1.54 per cent) or South Asian (0.74 per cent) backgrounds. The Visualise: race and inclusion in art education report confirms what art educators have been saying for years; that art education in the UK is at crisis point. Despite their best efforts, teachers and students are rooted in an education system that is failing to nurture diverse art practices.

This new research has revealed a strong desire amongst teachers and students to diversify teaching content and improve experiences of art education for all. But teachers are under pressure, overworked and under-resourced, and art education in schools remains overwhelmingly narrow in terms of curriculum content and exam assessment. The Runnymede Trust and Freeland’s Foundation have proposed a series of recommendations aimed at boards, policymakers and the wider visual arts sector to improve experiences of art education for all. But teachers are under pressure, overworked and under-resourced, and art education in schools remains overwhelmingly narrow in terms of curriculum content and exam assessment. The Runnymede Trust and Freeland’s Foundation have proposed a series of recommendations aimed at boards, policymakers and the wider visual arts sector to address these issues, which can be accessed along with the full report at runnymedetrust.org/Visualise.

For more information, contact Rachel Cass, head of communications, rachel@freelandsfoundation.co.uk

**Reference**


**News**

**Visualise: race and inclusion in art education**

Join NSEAD on a journey of inclusion, equity and diversity as we strive for every art educator to critically review, revise and decolonise their curriculum. Our mission is to advance art education, for everyone, so every child can achieve their potential.

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