Making Public: The Fine Art Degree Show

12.04.19

Keynote Speakers:
Director of New Contemporaries, Kirsty Ogg
Artist Paul Winstanley

Leeds Beckett University
School of Art, Architecture and Design
Broadcasting Place, BPAG02
Leeds LS1 3HE

Leeds Art Gallery
The Headrow
Leeds LS1 3AA

nafae.org.uk
leedsbeckett.ac.uk

The National Association for Fine Art Education
Annual Conference and AGM 2019
Morning Location:

Broadcasting Place, BPAG02, Leeds Beckett University, LS1 3HE
As a network we are primarily interested in what and how people are producing and how educators and art practitioners are responding to contemporary challenges and contexts across the sector.
The keynote/guest speakers are Kirsty Ogg (Director of New Contemporaries) talking about the link between degree shows and the New Contemporaries/graduate exhibitions and Paul Winstanley whose book ‘Art School’ documents studio and exhibition spaces in British Art Schools.

Most institutions across the UK that offer Fine Art and Art related degree courses have a “degree show” in the form of a final year exhibition; it is frequently perceived as a standard expectation but is it a platform that meets the diverse needs and ambitions of the whole student cohort?
> Are there practices that have successfully incorporated the range of experience that is being pursued across the student body?

> What are the pre-requisites for success or the fulfilment of expectations and how are those metrics impacting on the student condition or their approach to independent learning?

> Are art schools and courses managing the degree show differently at graduate and postgraduate levels?

> Are we preserving a form of exposition that is constraining learning outcomes?

> Are there alternatives that are being trialled and are they affecting reforms or shifts in the delivery and design of teaching and learning?

> Is there a fear of teaching and learning resources being eroded as a consequence of changes in our behaviour as educators?

> Do we sufficiently trust our managers and decision makers in the context of change and shifting requirements or reference points?

> How does the art school or art course represent its regional geography and how is the exposition of final year work influenced by the local socio-economic landscape?

The 'Degree Show' is often used as a tool of assessment and sometimes heralded as the event that students spend three years working towards. It is a historical expectation of a Fine Art education and also one that tends to receive endorsement by the institution. It can be a celebration of work. It might be framed by competition or specific expectations of being ‘noticed’ or achieving sales but can it match those expectations?

A degree show framing of art work may still seek to replicate the white cube though it is more likely to be constrained by the limitations of space and facilities. The very concept of a show or exhibition may not suit all contemporary expanded art practices, where a proportion of students operate in a post-studio context in which interdisciplinary working and collaborative practice are strongly encouraged. Is it appropriate to question the relevance of a degree show in an age where more and more students are moving into post-graduation worlds of working; with context and site, alongside social communities, in response to public realms, through media and on-line environments, or in assistive roles or as facilitators in applied fields.

Do we need Degree Shows? How representative are they of our context for teaching and developing arts practices for contemporary society? Have they become institutionalised or instrumentalised for what they might offer our institutions in terms of public engagement? Are there alternatives? Has the degree show become outdated/outmoded? Is the ownership still really with the student body and to what degree are exhibitions curated, censored and utilised as marketing material for an increasingly commodified higher education system?
Contributors were invited to respond to themes including but not limited to:

01. Alternative models of exposition and public engagement
02. Student choice, voice and perspective
03. Sustainability and Resourcing
04. Space makers: The impact of an era of new buildings in UK higher education
05. Relationship of the Degree Show to Teaching, Learning and Assessment
06. Varying notions of display and dissemination
07. Curating and interpretation
08. The role of the University/Art School Gallery
09. Beyond the institution
10. The role of the degree show in supporting graduate outcomes.
Often, students tell me how much they dread their degree shows; it’s not a celebration, but a competition. They’ve been equipped with a complex set of anxieties but no basic coping strategies, like inviting other people to come or contribute. The function of the degree show is not questioned, they just accept the stupid formats, like VIP breakfasts – why don’t you just make tea and toast for everybody?

2008-2009, BA Fine Art/Contextual Studies, Dartington College of Arts, Devon; 2009-2010, MA Fine Art, Camberwell College of Arts (UAL). rosalieschweiker.info

I remember my undergrad degree show feeling like it should stand for everything that I wanted to be as an artist, and for all of the years I had been studying. But in hindsight, it was the very beginning, a sort of testing ground.

Holly Hendry 2013 graduate

Your degree show – whether at BA (degree) or MA (postgraduate) level – is a valuable opportunity to showcase your work to a wide range of people working in the art world. Curators, writers, other artists, gallery directors and many others visit degree shows as part of their research into artists they might want to work with in the future. It’s important that your show looks its best at all times, and that you are available and contactable in the months following your show.

Artquest Website 2018

A crucial early showcase is the art school degree show, which, following the influential example set by Goldsmiths’ Visual Arts Department in the late 1980s, has now become increasingly professional in presentation. The degree show also provides a valuable opportunity for a wider public to have access to challenging contemporary art in its earliest incarnation.

9.00am
Conference starts. Coffee and registration

9.30am
AGM

10.00—10.10am
Introduction Dr Lisa Stansbie,
Dean of the School of Art, Architecture
& Design and co-chair of NAFAE.

10.10—11.00am
Keynote Paul Winstanley will be talking
about his Riding House publication
Art School.

Filled with photographs of unpopulated
studios, Paul Winstanley's exploration of
British art schools highlights their importance
at a time when the art school system’s
existence is more fraught than ever. In his
latest series, Paul Winstanley documents
undergraduate studio spaces from over 50 art
colleges across the United Kingdom. These
rough and ready, nearly neutral spaces are
photographed as found: empty between
school years. Collectively, the works highlight
the abstraction of the interior with their
temporary white walls, paint stains, neutral
floors and open spaces. Photographed in this
manner, their sterile nature is juxtaposed by
their intended purpose of fostering intense
creativity for a future generation of artists.
11.00—12.00pm
Three speakers
15 min each presentation +5 min Q&A each,
Chaired by Justin Burns, Head of Art

11.00—11.20am
Gina Wall, Deputy Head,
School of Fine Art, Glasgow School of Art
Showing Off

This paper will present three short case studies of divergent practice across the School of Fine Art which will demonstrate the distinct ways in which our nuanced approach to degree show aligns with the core aims of our respective programmes and the ethos of the School of Fine Art. The paper will also reflect upon the relationship between the degree show and learning, teaching and assessment to explore the different ways in which programmes remain consistent with their diverse aims, while ensuring that the degree show format retains its currency.

11.20—11.40am
Martin Newth, Programme Director,
Fine Art, Chelsea School of Art
Event-based Curriculum.

The term event-based curriculum is coined to describe a learning experience which, rather than following an individual, assessment-driven approach, emphasizes external-facing, collaborative events in which students participate. The new BA curriculum at Chelsea, which instead of focusing on the narrative of assessment, seeks to place the emphasis of a series of events in which the students engage, each of which has a currency within (professional) art practice.

11.40—12.00pm
Thomas Rodgers
The History of Leeds School of Art

Rodgers will present an overview of the exhibition that accompanies the Making Public conference. The exhibition explores the history of The Leeds School of Art, Architecture and Design. It will concentrate largely on its status in the 60s and 70s as one of the world’s foremost avant-garde art schools through to the current period of research-centred activity at Leeds Beckett University. Making use of the university archives, saved and gathered materials from departments and contemporary resources, Rodgers will show where, as an institution, we have been and where we are heading in the future.

12.00—1.30pm
Lunch Reception Area and exhibition on
The History of Leeds Art School by Thomas Rodgers (and time to walk to Leeds City Art Gallery for the afternoon papers in the Henry Moore lecture theatre at Leeds Art Gallery)
Afternoon Location:

The Henry Moore Lecture Theatre, Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, LS1 3AA
1.30—2.30pm
Three speakers
15 min each presentation +5 min Q&A each,
Chaired by Dr Kiff Bamford

1.30—1.50pm
Andy Broadey,
University of Central Lancashire
Democratising the University Gallery Space.

Under the curatorial direction of a group of democratically elected steering group of students, the gallery was transformed into a radical space of live art production and display, this occupation-as-exhibition functioned as a space of collective pedagogy, co-labour and ‘dissensus’ (Rancière 2009); a ‘war machine’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1980; Deleuze and Parnet 1977) which smoothes the ‘striated space’ of the neoliberal university and de-territorialises the current individualistic focus within arts education.

1.50—2.10pm
Richard Hudson-Miles,
Kingston University
Reading the Art School: Politics and Ideological Struggle in Degree Show Publicity

By revealing this ‘answer without a question’ which the neoliberal art school reproduces constantly but cannot admit this paper suggests that we can begin to ‘find the question itself elsewhere’. Therefore, it concludes by demonstrating how this question is explicitly posed in the publicity for the degree shows of the various autonomous art schools formed as free alternatives to the neoliberal UK art school following its ‘economisation’. Drawing upon the thought of Jacques Rancière these publicity images will be read as the dissensual counter-politics of ‘the part which has no part’ declarative images of ideological struggle subsequently personified in the act of artistic and pedagogical subjectification.

2.10—2.30pm
Dr Katrine Hjelde, Senior Lecturer,
Chelsea College of Arts
‘Make public?’

The student exhibition is a format and a genre which is under theorised and underhistoricised. It is not properly contextualized or explored within the field(s) of contemporary art or fine art pedagogy. Rike Frank and Tirdad Zolghadr have stated in relation to the Degree show that ‘the particularities of the format, its potentials, dialectics, and attendant Institutional power relations are not productively discussed’ (2016). This presentation maps and explores these ‘blanks’ where the student exhibition – in particular the Degree show, does not emerge critically, or indeed at all, in pedagogic literature, in Fine Art Course Documents, in curatorial theory, in art discourse or in terms of the position of the Art School in society.

2.30—2.45pm
Short 15 minute comfort break
2.45—3.45pm
Three speakers
15 min each presentation +5 min Q&A each,
Chaired by Dr Jill Gibbon

2.45—3.05pm
Wayne Lloyd, Programme Leader,
Fine Art UWE, Bristol
Comparing the Spike Open and the Fine
Arts UWE Degree Show.
My case study discussion will focus on two
ambitious, public facing exhibitions staged
by Fine Art students during their final month
of learning at UWE, Bristol: a student led
exhibition for Spike Island’s open studios, and
their degree show. By comparing these two
fundamentally different events I will examine
significant differences in relation to art,
professional practice and audience reception
that suggest that a conventional Degree Show
may hold less possibility than alternative,
student led events.

3.05—3.25pm
Steve Bulcock, Head of Undergraduate
Studies and Rebecca Court, Head of
Postgraduate Taught Programmes,
Birmingham School of Art
Perpendicular Pedagogy,
Parallel Presentation
The Birmingham School of Art is home to
two undergraduate programmes, BA Fine
Art and BA Art & Design, each with a distinct
history, ideology and pedagogic rationale.
It is perhaps surprising that, despite their
differences, they both still defer back to the
traditional model of a degree show; held
annually and predominantly sited within the
school itself. This proposition, in recognising
that these and many other courses perpetuate
this adopted practice, questions the role of
this annual event in meeting the needs of
current and future students. It will examine
potential relationships to learning, teaching
and assessment strategies, in particular
approaches for ensuring they are an
appropriate component of a programmes
pedagogy; framed in relation to their
significance as marketing showcase. If
we expect art schools to promote an
understanding of the contemporary and
historical contexts relevant to any developing
art practice, then surely we have to shift the
notion of degree show as default; adopting
instead an event of creative learning that
is owned, contextualised and perpetually
re-invented by this and future generations of
empowered students.
3.25—3.45pm
Daniel Goodman, Artistic Director at System Gallery, Newcastle
Artist-run Initiatives: The Fine Art Degree Show and Beyond

The positive economic impact of creative industries is widely acknowledged but severely mismatched by the poor career prospects of creative graduates. For most UK graduates, artist-run initiatives are the first step into the wider art world, often through informal unpaid work which is seen as career enhancing. They are vital in the development of emerging art practices and countering the alienation felt at this vulnerable career stage through offering participation in collective action and networks. This provocation is an attempt to explore the possibilities of collaboration between universities and artist-run initiatives to combat alienation felt among recent graduates through using the Fine Art Degree Show as means to introduce them to these alternate support-structures.

3.45—4.00pm
Short 15 minute comfort break

4.00—4.50pm
Keynote Kirsty Ogg in conversation with Professor Simon Morris from Leeds Beckett University, talking about the history of the New Contemporaries.

New Contemporaries is the leading organisation supporting emergent art practice from UK art schools. Since 1949 New Contemporaries have consistently supported contemporary visual artists to successfully transition from education into professional practice, primarily by means of an annual, nationally touring exhibition. New Contemporaries remain responsive to change in the art world and the needs of emerging practitioners. Participants for the annual touring exhibition are selected by a panel comprising influential art world figures including curators, writers, and artists. Often, the selectors have been a part of previous New Contemporaries exhibitions giving them a unique insight on the experience.

4.50—5.00pm:
Closing remarks: Dr Lisa Stansbie

5.00pm
Conference closes & drinks in Foley’s public house, opposite Leeds Art Galley for those who wish.
Arrangement of images from the 1965 Diploma in Art & Design student intake From the Leeds Beckett School of Art, Architecture & Design archive
The INSIDE/OUT lecture series.

The mission of the prestigious INSIDE/OUT lecture series is to bring the best minds of our generation to inspire and support the work students and staff do across the School of Art, Architecture & Design at Leeds Beckett University.

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16/17 — 05
Search eventbrite.com

= An Fonteyne
to reserve your place

Thur, November 17, 2016
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Woodhouse Lecture Theatre 2,
Leeds Beckett University

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16/17 — 03
Search eventbrite.com

= Robert Fitterman
to reserve your place

Thursday, November 3, 2016
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Woodhouse Lecture Theatre 2,
Leeds Beckett University

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16/17 — 06
Search eventbrite.com

= Phoebe English

to reserve your place

Thur, December 1, 2016
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Woodhouse Lecture Theatre 2,
Leeds Beckett University

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16/17 — 06
Search eventbrite.com

= Martin Creed

to reserve your place

Thur, March 2nd, 2017
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM
Rose Bowl Lecture Theatre A
Leeds Beckett University

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16/17 — 07
Search eventbrite.com

= Erica Baum

to reserve your place

Thur, March 9th, 2017
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Rose Bowl Lecture Theatre A
Leeds Beckett University
Art  Science  Fiction

Henry Moore Lecture Theatre
Leeds City Art Gallery
9 January 2016
9:00 – 17:00

Brian Catling [ Keynote ]
Mark von Schlegell  [ Keynote ]
Milena Dragicevic
Maxine Gee
Nathaniel Mellors

Organised by Chris Bloor, Peter Lewis
Simon Morris and Robert Shail
A Leeds Beckett University event in association
with Leeds Art Gallery & British Art Show 8.

Email: S.DC.Morris@leedsbeckett.ac.uk for tickets
Previous conferences & poetry evenings organised by the School of Art, Architecture & Design at Leeds Beckett University include:


**Performance & Uncertainty at the Tetley**, Leeds, February 2017

**Performance & Uncertainty at the ICA, London**, March 2017

and **Ears Have No lids: Seven Poets at the Tetley**, October 2018