

about art and at the same time support ways in which they can effectively acquire content-specific pedagogical knowledge for understanding art. The presentation embraces an explicit constructivist view of teaching and learning processes and proposes the simultaneous development of all aspects of knowing how to teach art with artworks, based on Cochran et al's (1993) concept of pedagogical content knowing (PCKg), which is largely based on the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK, Shulman, 1986). To this end the adoption of an aesthetic mode of inquiry is proposed for engaging preservice teachers in observational, reflective and reasoning practices. Educating teachers to build their expertise of teaching (PCKg) by being taught with the same principles (PCKg) can be a successful way to help them transfer the knowledge gained from a university context to the school context.

Nicholas Houghton

University for the Creative Arts, UK

Dr Nicholas Houghton is an Academic Developer (Learning & Teaching) at the University for the Creative Arts. He has worked in education for 40 years, as a lecturer and tutor, teacher educator, researcher, manager and external examiner. At the same time he has developed his own arts practice. Nicholas studied at Wimbledon College of Art; Slade School of Fine Art, University College London; Nova Scotia College of Art (NSCAD University) and Roehampton University. His PhD was in craft education and his research interests are in craft; the post-secondary art and design curriculum; assessment in art and design and social science research methods. A good proportion of his experience has been gained outside the UK and he has lived and worked in Canada, Portugal and Belgium. His teaching experience includes working at Université du Québec; University of Leeds; Ravesbourne College of Design and Communication; Cleveland College of Art and Design and Escola Superior de Educação de Viana do Castelo. As well as teaching a range of art and design subjects, he has worked as an educational researcher. At London University's Institute of Education he helped to develop methods for undertaking syntheses of educational research findings. In addition, he has undertaken research for a number of government departments, agencies and councils, such as the Crafts Council, engage (the National Association for Gallery Education) and the Learning and Skills Development Agency, for which he undertook various research projects into widening participation. Nicholas is Associate Editor of the International Journal of Education through Art.

His publications include:

Houghton, N (2009) 'The Art Curriculum: What is it? Where does it come from? Where is it going?' In: *Enhancing Curricula: using research and enquiry to inform student learning in the disciplines*. London: Centre for Learning and Teaching in Art and

Design.

Houghton, N (2008) *Learning in Galleries: Evaluation of enquire Programme*. London: engage.

Keynote

Tales about art and art education

Houghton, Nicholas

University for the Creative Arts

nhoughton@ucreative.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper recounts seven tales about ways in which conceptions of art in the professional art world have influenced what is taught in post-secondary art education. It begins with a tale about some pertinent aspects of art history, which provides reference points for the six other tales.

The paper proceeds with two tales about traditional skills learning, copying and the importance placed on drawing, which dominated art education in the west until the twentieth century. The next two tales tell how this kind of art education was disrupted by the influence of modernism in two manifestations: self-expression and formalism.

The rest of the paper tells two tales about the influence of contemporary art and, in particular, a conception of art from the mid 1960s, going under terms such as 'post-Duchampian', or conceptual. Amongst the changes in art education this has ushered in are an emphasis on process rather than the final product and a requirement that the learner can explain and justify every stage of the production. This is connected to the need to have a theme which informs the art. Discourse about this kind of art has seen the displacement of connoisseurship by critical theory (with implications for assessment). At the same time there has been an extension of art practice into a range of non-traditional media (lens based and digital in particular) and often with skills taught on demand. Art making has been reconceptualised as a strategy (rather than an inner need) and art practice professionalised.

Key words

Conceptualisations of art education, Conceptualisations of art, History of art education, Post-secondary education, Art curriculum

Introduction

This paper reveals seven tales hidden within with the fine art curriculum. The research which informs it was into the curriculum in the post-secondary sectors, which is where I work, however many of the same tales can be told about what is learned in art in schools. In the

space available, there are tales I won't be telling such as those about the allied disciplines of craft and design. Hence this is only about fine art, or plastic art, or beaux arts in post-secondary education and concentrates on what has happened in the west.

Amongst the things which become apparent when scrutinising the art curriculum is that what is learned has always been bound up with developments in the professional art world, while developments in the art world are bound up with and propagated by art education (Osborne, 2002). You can't recount the history of art education without taking into account the history of art and no history of art is complete if it ignores art education.

Unlike science, art doesn't progress (even if the narrative of the avant-garde suggested it can). Hence for science education it would be ludicrous to teach about the world being flat and also being round: the latter negates the former. In art, however, new developments tend to exist alongside what happened before and this is true of the curriculum. Hence all the knowledge around a new paradigm of art will tend to be crammed in beside knowledge about previous paradigms, making for a curriculum which is over brimming and incoherent (Elkins, 2001, Farthing, 2002, Singerman, 2007). These tales linking art education and professional art attempt to make it clearer.

There have been two ruptures in the history of western art, one in the 1860s, with the advent of modern art and the second a hundred years later, which brought about contemporary art. The latter was the more radical and far reaching and yet the least documented within art education literature. It is also noteworthy that most people who have ever studied post-compulsory art education will have studied it since contemporary art came into being.

An art historian's tale

The first tale concerns some aspects of western art history which have had a profound influence on the art curriculum. If history is written by the victors, then so is art history. According to this narrative, art is not about mere craft skills, but loftier concerns such as use of imagination and aesthetics. Its history is one of shedding the former in order to better practice the latter. Art is about invention and craft is about technical skill (Adamson, 2013). In fact, far from being in opposition, during the European Middle Ages technical skills were needed as a prerequisite for being inventive. The status of crafts-based artists at this time was low, however their work could reach great heights (Shiner, 2001). They were usually regulated by guilds, which monitored standards and determined who was allowed to practice.

During the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was a gradual change in the status of artists. In some cases art incorporated philosophical ideas such as neo-Platonism and attempts were made through treatises to codify what an artwork required. The importance of craft skill in the production of artefacts was downplayed and the idea of some artists possessing almost miraculous gifts put in its place (Shiner, 2001).

The next developments to have a significant effect on art education came about at the end of the eighteenth century and the advent of Romanticism. Craft skills were no longer downplayed but denied, in favour of the (male) concept of genius and inspiration. Artists and crafts practitioners were now poles apart (Adamson, 2013). With this new emphasis on the individuality of artists, their work came to be seen as an extension of their sensibilities and inner beliefs (Shiner, 2001). Creativity, up until then the unique prerogative of God, was claimed by artists and poets.

The rupture in the 1860s that gave birth to modern art came to be understood in terms of an avant-garde, whereby each generation of artists stood on the shoulders of the previous one and stabbed them in the back. This implied there was an evolution, if not progress per se and an artwork was less significant in and of itself and more because of the timing of the intervention. For this conception of art, craft skills were not only not required, they could be considered a positive hindrance to an artist (Elkins, 2005).

Modernism was driven by two main concerns: formalism and self-expression. These were closely linked and the work of many modern artists contains both. Within the linear narrative of modern art, formalism led inevitably to an all white or all black painting (or cube sculpture) and came to a full stop. Heroic self-expression was running out of steam before critical theory finished it off. Out of this impasse came the second rupture and in the 1960s contemporary art came into being (Roberts, 2007).

If the first rupture is akin to people in a horse drawn coach being told their journey will continue on a high speed train, the second was like people being told that the train has reached its destination, you are free to stay on the train for as long as you like, but you are also free to get off and explore what lies within and beyond the station. If Modernism was a temporal, linear narrative, contemporary art instead expands horizontally.

It is difficult to overstate the immensity of this second rupture. It used to sometimes be called postmodern, but it is now clear that this term and its attendant theories failed to capture the extent of what happened and the preferred term is contemporary art (Smith, 2009). Most modern artists had continued to use traditional media (e.g. oil painting, drawing, printmaking and bronze or stone sculptures). However, contemporary art expanded into photography, video, film, installation, performance, text, books, sound and online media, which sit alongside traditional media (Smith, 2009). Contemporary art can be presented in a traditional gallery space or anywhere else. The artist might not play any part in the making of the artwork. Anything an artist declares to be art is art. Art should encompass theory and theory largely replaces aesthetics. In the same vein, critical theory displaces connoisseurship. It is pluralistic and post avant-garde: there is no sense of each generation simultaneously superseding and yet being validated by the previous one. Its roots lie within a strand of anti-art within Modernism and the influence of Marcel Duchamp in particular (hence the term post-Duchampian) (Roberts, 2007). Despite this, it is largely ahistorical. Because it is ahistorical and not tied to the western canon out of which it sprung, it can easily spread round the world and be reinterpreted in countless local contexts. It is also claimed that contemporary art is ideally suited to an age in which people have limited time spans and has replaced a leisurely scrutiny of the finer points of an artwork with easily absorbed spectacle (Millard, 2001).

Contemporary art has been able to spread outwards because artists have taken possession of a kind of diplomatic passport which enabled them to work in disciplines such as performance and film while giving them immunity from the rules and critical discourse attached to that discipline. Moreover, that passport exempts them from having to learn the skills and techniques which practitioners in that discipline still have to acquire (Van Winkel, 2012). This is more than a postmodern diminution of borders between disciplines because it doesn't work in the opposite direction, for example actors can't present a painting and claim it is theatre. It is a privilege that art and art alone has claimed.

In this brief account it is clear that art has changed from being grounded in making skills to being about critical skills, from object to idea. For many it is a history of deskilling (Roberts,

2007). It is probably preferable to state that in the plurality that is contemporary art that making skills are optional and that is very difficult to pinpoint any particular knowledge which all artists need to possess (Smith, 2009).

The apprentice's tale

During the European Middle Ages art was learned like any craft: through observation, demonstration and lots of practice. This education was formalised through an apprentice system, regulated by guilds. A typical apprenticeship would last seven years and attainment could be demonstrated by a masterpiece. The particular set of skills in manipulating a certain medium which are being learned and the specialisation of a particular master will have a profound influence on the kind of art the apprentice produces (of course there would be other influences, such as patronage) (Cole, 1983).

This tale has two major influences on the present day curriculum. The disciplinary specialism of a teacher can still exert a powerful influence (Storr, 2009). This is even more pronounced in those countries (mostly in continental Europe) where there is still an atelier system, whereby students elect to sign up with a particular art teacher.

The other influence comes from the tradition of the masterpiece. This has evolved into a final major project or degree exhibition, in which students demonstrate what they have learned on a course or programme.

The academician's tale

Apprenticeships were one form of formal education for artists and academies another. These came into being at the end of the Italian Renaissance in the sixteenth century, not as a replacement for apprenticeships, but to supplement them (Pevsner, 1973). Through learning at academies, prospective artists could raise their status, while through apprenticeships continue to learn essential skills. The academies downplayed the skills component of what they taught, whereas in fact it was in large part a skills-based curriculum, with drawing at its core (Goldstein, 1996). Painstaking copying was supplemented by lectures in topics such as perspective, composition and anatomy and Renaissance ideas of ideal beauty. Prospective artists learned about the importance of tackling 'lofty' subjects such as events from classical history or mythology or from the Christian Bible (Efland, 1990). However, the subject they tackled most was the human figure, which was considered to be analogous with ideal beauty (Elkins, 2001). Academies spread throughout Europe and to the Americas and beyond but this part of the art curriculum stayed largely unchanged, in most cases until the twentieth century (Pevsner, 1973).

So much of this tale can seem very old-fashioned and alien now. All the same, having been around for so long, it is not surprising that it continues to exert an influence. One legacy is how drawing is (still) so often considered to be of central importance for the education of an artist. Another is the tradition of life drawing (and painting and modelling) which survives in the curriculum of many institutions.

The formalist's tale

For the first half of the twentieth century, Modernism only made small inroads into most art curricula (Elkins, 2001). There were exceptions, most notably the Bauhaus in Germany (1919-1933). When, in the 1950s, modern art entered the art curriculum, the Bauhaus proved to be a decisive influence (Macdonald, 2004).

To write about a Bauhaus curriculum is over simplistic, however it is possible to summarise those aspects which went on to influence so many art curricula. This was a concern with the formal aspects of art, such as colour, form, shape (basic geometric shapes were favoured), line, proportion, texture, rhythm etc. (Wood, 2008). Named basic design, it was felt this would provide all art (and design) students with a necessary grounding in art's basic vocabulary and grammar (Yeomans, 1988). This was complemented by a discourse around the formal qualities of artworks

Basic design was incorporated into many foundation courses or introductory programmes. This was usually in the form of exercises, such as building out of identical geometric shapes, or producing a colour wheel (de Saumarez, 2001).

With the benefit of hindsight it can be seen that not only was this a radical alternative to the academician's tale, but also shared many characteristics. They both believed that there was a basic knowledge all artists needed to learn, they both favoured geometry, they both propagated the idea of universals underpinned by theory; for the formalist this was gestalt psychology.

The one size fits all and Modernist ideas which underpin the formalist's tale might have gone out of fashion but this hasn't prevented much of this part of the art curriculum from still being taught, especially in those foundation or introductory years which survive. Meanwhile, a formalist discourse spills over into much art teaching, existing side by side with its opposite: post-medium discourse (Storr, 2009).

The self-expressionist's tale

As in modern art, self-expression in art education is very different from formalism yet is also dependant on it as a means and as a discourse. One of the main reasons this tale is so different from the formalist is that, on the face of it, there is so little in it: students just have to be given the time and space to express themselves (Elkins, 2001). However, the more it is unpacked, the more it is shown to contain, albeit in a hidden form.

For this part of the art curriculum students were encouraged to express themselves through improvisation and spontaneous gestures. It borrowed from the child art movement, which in turn had embraced ideas from Romanticism (Efland, 1990). Hence this tale incorporates the belief in individuality and the link between the inner self and the art this self produces. If the child art movement had promoted the idea that every child had something unique to express, at post-secondary level this became translated into the talented learning to make the self-expression meaningful (de Duve, 1994). This was accomplished through the way that teachers conveyed their connoisseurship, so that students could recognise, for example, why one brushstroke was superior to another (De Ville & Foster, 1994).

Also hiding beneath the surface in this part of the art curriculum was the imparting of how to acquire the persona of an artist (Daichendt, 2010). Following the Romantic model and the merging of art and life within Modernism, being an artist wasn't a job or profession but a

calling and a role which had to be lived every waking hour. An important part of studying to be an artist was to go through this rite of passage into adopting the norms of an artist's lifestyle (Groys, 2009). It is noteworthy that whereas all art education up to this point was male dominated, there were aspects of this Bohemian lifestyle which went beyond the patriarchal and into the macho (Pollock, 2011, Wood, 2008).

This part of the art curriculum, together with the formalist part, became ubiquitous by the 1960s. However, already in the professional art world a new vista was coming into view beyond the Brillo box: contemporary art.

The conceptualist's tale

A new tale, based on conceptual art was added to the art curriculum in isolated cases (e.g. Nova Scotia College of Art and Design) from the last 1960s, but only became common some thirty years later (Storr, 2009). Contemporary art extends beyond the confines and doctrines of conceptual art (Osborne, 2013), all the same it was the post-Duchampian way of making art which has exerted a massive influence on the art curriculum. In particular, the priority placed on planning an artwork and the ideas behind it became crucial; in fact the ideas could become more important than the actual artefact, or even supplement the need for one (Grayson, 2004, Wood, 2008). Those studying art were taught to incorporate the critical discourse about art into the work itself (Van Winkel, 2012). They had to justify where and how the work was to be interpreted and explain its historical and theoretical context (Corner, 2005). In this curriculum therefore, the emphasis changed from talking about the artefact to a discourse around pre-production and the process of realising a concept (de Duve, 1994), while connoisseurship was replaced by critical theory.

One reason this kind of art has become so common in the professional art world is because it is what artists were taught (Osborne, 2002). Meanwhile, one reason for the popularity of this part of the art curriculum could be what was taking place in post-secondary education. Like it or not, sites of art learning found themselves having to follow the norms of other subjects (Buckley & Conomos, 2009). More stringent assessment requirements led to the necessity to be able to explain a work and the ideas behind it - and write essays and a dissertation. Art also had to fit into established frameworks for research. One consequence was that art became a sort of problem solving, even if the problem to be solved was arbitrary and came from the artists themselves. This had led to the awarding of doctorates in art, usually with a body of work and a thesis linked by a common theme and focus of investigation (Buckley, 2009).

This part of the art curriculum is not so much interdisciplinary as post-medium. In any case, there is no need for students to specialise in any particular medium or kind of art making, albeit there is an expectation they will find their own preoccupation or theme for their practice (Storr, 2009). It is claimed that because art can be anything an artist says it is and made in any medium or none, this part of the art curriculum can also include almost anything, or nothing (Groys, 2009). There is hence any number of things which the students might learn, but nothing they have to (Elkins, 2001).

The professional's tale

The conceptual artists who rose to prominence in the 1960s adopted a very different approach to being an artist to the previous generations. Instead of a Bohemian lifestyle, they adopted the persona of the manager or cadre (Van Winkel, 2012). Instead of a calling or inner need, making art became calculating and strategic (Josipovici, 2010). Artists treated their practice as a kind of business and became adept at marketing and entrepreneurship (Graw, 2009).

As noted above, the art curriculum keeps being added to and each addition will usually sit alongside what is extant. Therefore students would have received mixed messages since the Bohemian lifestyle described above in the self-expressionist's tale was mixed with the managerial promoted by the conceptualists. This has been further complicated by the rise of artist as celebrity (Graw, 2009). However, the art world itself transmuted from being rather gentlemanly (the use of the gendered adverb is deliberate) to being much more hard-nosed and business like (Graw, 2009). To make one's way in this world, artists have had to adopt a similar approach.

At the same time changes in post-secondary education ensured that teaching would be focused on career development (in the UK the jargon word is 'employability'). Art is one of those disciplines (like medicine), where there has always been a presumption that the education was vocational. However, as neo-liberal ideas have become dominant in the last twenty years, so educational policy has narrowed the purpose of education to only having a utilitarian focus on economic efficiency (Graw, 2009). For this reason, from being hidden, professionalism has become a formal, essential part of the art curriculum.

In this newest component of the art curriculum, students learn about marketing, how to enter competitions, the workings of the art world, renting a studio, contracts and keeping accounts. Although it might teach about various art worlds such as community and artist-led, it is the commercial which is always the most alluring for students enamoured of the fame of the celebrity artist (Horowitz, 2011).

The new professional focus led to the reintroduction of programmes, courses or pathways in specific media such as painting, drawing or sculpture. All the same, in my experience of visiting many degree exhibitions, students on any of these can finish up working in any two- or three-dimensional medium, or none.

Conclusion

As this paper has shown, the art curriculum can be influenced by policy. However, it is hoped that it has been demonstrated that it has most of all come about in response to what has happened in the professional art world. This was often with a considerable time lag. Indeed, one of the important functions of the unchanging academician's tale was to provide a fixed point for artists to react against. The history of modern art can only make full sense if understood in terms of what it was rejecting.

As the movement of contemporary art has become horizontal, the curriculum which reflects this has – by necessity - become ever more shallow. Without proposing a solution, it is worth pointing out that the existential problem of contemporary art is not shared by design, nor by other arts such as theatre, film, creative writing etc. Perhaps they have yet to follow art into

its post-everything state. Or perhaps art education needs to reverse out of its ontological cul-de-sac.

References

- Adamson, G. (2013). *The Invention of Craft*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Buckley, B. (2009). What is the ceiling! The artist, research degrees and research in the university art school. In B. Buckley & J. Conomos (Eds.), *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD and the Academy* (pp.76-86). Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.
- Buckley, B. & Conomos, J. (2009). Introduction. In B. Buckley & J. Conomos (Eds.), *Rethinking the Contemporary Art School: The Artist, the PhD and the Academy* (pp. 2-26). Halifax: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.
- Cole, B. (1983). *The Renaissance Artist at Work: from Pisano to Titian*. London: Harper & Row.
- Corner, F. (2005). Identifying the core in the subjects of fine art, *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 24, 3, 334-342.
- Daichendt, G. J. (2010). *Artist-Teacher: A Philosophy for Creating and Teaching*. Bristol: Intellect.
- de Duve, T. (1994). When form has become attitude – and beyond. In N. De Ville & S. Foster (Eds.), *The Artist and the Academy: Issues in Fine Art Education and the Wider Cultural Context* (pp. 23-40). Southampton: John Hansard Gallery.
- De Ville, N. & Foster, S. (1994). Introduction. In N. De Ville & S. Foster (Eds.), *The Artist and the Academy: Issues in Fine Art Education and the Wider Cultural Context* (pp. 9-22). Southampton: John Hansard Gallery.
- de Saumarez, M. (2001). *Basic Design: the Dynamics of Visual Form* (2nd ed). London: Herbert Press.
- Efland, A. (1990). *A History of Art Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Elkins, J. (2001). *Why Art Cannot Be Taught*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Elkins, J. (2005). *Master Narratives and their Discontents*. London: Routledge.
- Farthing, S. (2002). What an artist needs to know. In A. Davies (Ed.), *Enhancing Curriculum: Exploring Curricula: Exploring Effective Curriculum Practices in Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education* (pp. 11-25). London: Centre for Learning and Teaching in Art and Design.
- Goldstein, C. (1996). *Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Graw, I. (2009). *High Price: Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*. Berlin and New York: Sternberg Press.
- Grayson, R. (2004). Qualified survivors. In P. Bonaventura & S. Farthing (Eds.), *A Curriculum for Artists* (pp. 42-45). Oxford: Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, University of Oxford and New York: The New York Academy of Art.

- Groys, B. (2009). Education by infection. In S. H. Madoff (Ed.), *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)* (pp. 25-32). Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Horowitz, N. (2011). *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Josipovici, G. (2010). *Whatever Happened to Modernism?* London: Yale.
- Macdonald, S. (2004). *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press.
- Millard, R. (2001). *The Tastemakers: UK Art Now*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Osborne, P. (2002). *Conceptual Art (Themes and Movements)*. London: Phaidon.
- Osborne, P. (2013). *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books.
- Pevsner, N. (1973). *Academies of Art, Past and Present* (2nd Ed). New York: Da Capo Press.
- Pollock (2011). Art, art school, culture. In F. Allen (Ed.), *Education: Documents of Contemporary Art* (pp. 149-1520). London: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Roberts, J. (2007). *The Intangibilities of Form: Skills and Deskillling in Art After the Readymade*. London and New York: Verso.
- Shiner, L. (2001). *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Singerman, H. (2007). In R. Rubenstein, Art schools: a group crit. *Art in America*, May, 100-101.
- Smith, T. (2009). *What Is Contemporary Art?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Storr, R. (2009), Dear colleague. In S. H. Madoff (Ed.), *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)* (pp. 53-67). Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Van Winkel, C. (2012). *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will Be Closed: Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptualism*. Amsterdam: Valiz.
- Wood, P. (2008). Between God and the saucepan: some aspects of art education in England from the mid-nineteenth century until today. In C. Stephens (Ed.), *History of British Art: 1870 – Now* (pp. 162–187). London: Tate Publishing.
- Yeomans, R. (1988), Basic design and the pedagogy of Richard Hamilton, *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 7, 2,155-173.