Abstract

A work of art is as useless as a tool is useful.

The term interdisciplinary and how institutions establish this as a core function of undergraduate education is a conundrum. It could be argued that art is an expanded field that does not need to recognize interdisciplinarity - we acknowledge that art practice is post media and antithetical to categorization. Yet the pedagogy in UK art schools predicated a get-on-with-it studio culture with making as the, often unquestioned, cynosure of activity foregrounding the conventions of material and technical methods and processes. A mono-technical approach to learning that relies on doing, often separating theory from practice, advocating studio time over learning through the study of other subjects.

In this paper I will question how can we potentially enable a true analysis of a practice that relies on a broader context not just in its inception and development but also in its reception and reflection. Developing ideas discussed in the paper I delivered at the PARADOX conference I will interrogate what is instrumental in our teaching and how we engage our students to grasp that art is as useless as a tool is useful. How do we maximise the future potential for art education in the broad context of universities and what form and function should our trivium and quadrivium take?

Art is as unique and irreplaceable as tools are common and expendable – but what aspects of our teaching and, by extension, students’ learning is unique and irreplaceable and what is common and expendable?

References
