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Creativity and Art Education: gaps between theories and practices

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Abstract: Theories of creativity from different disciplines map onto teaching strategies within the fine art field developed since the Renaissance and up to late Modernism. In particular, the outcomes of historical studies by psychologists and experimental studies within cognitive science have significant resonance with some long-standing methods of training artists, which have recently become less common within the art schools. Through a series of interviews with experienced teachers of studio art in the UK university context, and analysis of written material to support teaching, this paper explores where theory and practice overlap. We report on the role of practical strategies, field knowledge, artistic identity, and the importance of ‘space’. We note that the latter two factors do not appear to be clearly present within existing models of creativity, but aspects of them reflect tolerance for ambiguity. We conclude by reflecting that this space within conceptions of art education is now being considered as a gap that needs attention.

1 Creativity and the education of artists

This chapter reports on a study within the visual arts field on whether models of creativity as described in other fields are reflected within art education teaching. As this discussion is located within a multi-disciplinary collection of essays on creativity we must initially highlight two points reflecting assumptions about artistic creativity held beyond the field, based on historically located perspectives no longer operational within the field. The first is the idea that current art might have a concern with beauty, and the second that creative capabilities are a special gift. Both would be contested to varying degrees within the world of art in the university or contemporary gallery. We also note a range of different perspectives on creativity within the field of the visual arts, which are based on assumptions not necessarily framed by an understanding of contemporary thinking about creativity.

In the 1990s, coming into art education with some familiarity with current thinking on organizational behavior, Mottram was surprised that theories of creativity were unfamiliar to colleagues. In addition, as artists were seen as key players in the ‘creative industries’ so vital to city regeneration (Landry 1995), it was anticipated their education might be informed by contemporary thinking on creativity.

There has, however, been a pronounced hermetic tendency in art education in the UK. Perhaps because of the unwritten valourisation of the role of the artist within society, with the right to pass comment on and to eschew convention, how we teach has been left to us with no sense of any obligation to look at other theory. The result is that scrutiny of creativity is little known to the field which generates the creative practitioners of the future. We thus have a circumstance in which clarification might be of use to all parties interested in the field of creative practice in the visual arts and the understanding of creativity from a multidisciplinary perspective.

Interrogation of this topic could provide a platform for review of the investment in creative education, given claims made for the centrality of creativity to innovation, prosperity and well-being. Towards this end, we first give an account of how art education reached the current position and the extent to which this relates to models of creativity. We then describe how we have explored practices, perceptions, values and beliefs in the visual arts field and report on recurring themes. Our conclusions note the specific aspects of practice and values that accord or otherwise with models of creativity from psychology.

2 The historical context of art education

The training of artists has been based on a model of learning through doing for centuries. While the focus on the depiction of the human form has changed over time, the supremacy of experiential over theoretical learning has remained central. The Carracci, who opened their Accademia degli Incamminati in Bologna in 1582, established life drawing as the key discipline for all aspiring artists. By the late 18th century, Robertson (2008) notes that students in David's atelier drew from the model for at least six hours a day with each pose being retained for a week. In the same period, the first President of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, Joshua Reynolds, stressed the importance of copying from the old masters, plaster casts and the life model. Teaching in the Academy Schools comprised lectures by professors of chemistry, anatomy, ancient history and ancient literature, alongside studio teaching by Royal Academicians. This combination of learning by doing with delivery of topics can be seen as constituting a curriculum covering what artists needed to know.

The life room remained central to the training of artists in the UK until the introduction of the Diploma in Art and Design in the 1960s, but by the end of the century life drawing was increasingly contested both in terms of the needs of artists and also by artists and theoreticians concerned with issues of gender. The other core component of learning through doing was the practical project, working to a 'brief' or specification set by staff, mirroring the tasks of the professional marketplace like commissions or orders. In the UK, as in other European countries, the industrial revolution saw the establishment of national design schools to ensure that industry had a supply of skilled workers to generate designs for manufactured goods. The place of projects as a primary teaching method was re-enforced in the 20th century by the centrally examined national curriculum of the National Diploma in Design (NDD, 1946–1961) and then the Diploma in Art & Design (1961–1970). Roy Ascott (1964) recounted of a set of projects from a Dip AD course, that 'in the first-year course, the student is bombarded at every point with problems demanding total involvement for their solution. Ideas are developed within material limitations and then in the abstract. For teachers, the formulation of problems is in itself a creative activity.'

The understanding of the project was influenced by the carefully constructed and challenging curriculum of the Bauhaus (Itten 1975), which focused on the future rather than the study of past art and design. In 1947, William Johnstone introduced a Basic Design curriculum to the Central School of Art & Design, London, drawing from the Bauhaus model. In the 1950s, Victor Pasmore and Richard Hamilton introduced a new curriculum at Kings College, University of Durham (Yeomans 2005) and Tom Hudson and Harry and Thelma Thubron established a radical and pioneering approach to teaching at Leeds College of Art, stressing the combination of expression with intellectual framing. This work was recognized in the 1970 Coldstream report: 'Through the establishment of courses leading to the Dip AD a number of colleges have had an important opportunity to develop courses of a new kind and a remarkable broadening of art education has resulted' (HMSO 1970 p5). These initiatives were partly a response to the influence of Marion Richardson's emphasis on the individual creative child rather than upon the work they made (Richardson 1948). Beth Williamson's review of recent developments in British art education (Williamson 2013) quotes Maurice de Saumarez's observation that:

there is in art theory today a thinly disguised conspiracy against the intelligence, resulting from an arbitrary splitting of consciousness into intuition and intellect... no one can estimate how intuition and intellect are disposed in creating a work of art

During this post-war period, debates about the purpose of art and design in society and the way to best construct an educational experience were directed at the objective of producing the types of practitioners that the modern industrial economy needed, much as they had been in the previous century. The influential art critic Sir Herbert Read and the painter Sir William Coldstream lobbied for changes to the art school curriculum and to the National Diploma in Design. In 1958 Coldstream was appointed Chair of the National Advisory Council on Art Education. The Coldstream Report was published in 1960 and later implemented by Sir John Summerson. Twenty-nine art schools were awarded the right to offer the Diploma in Art and Design (Dip AD) as an equivalent to a degree. The schools were able to design their own curriculum and anecdote indicates that staff took the initiative to devise their own projects. Their use has continued as a core component of year one teaching in undergraduate fine art education until the present.

Projects have been described as 'an established and universal vehicle used by tutors to teach and for students to explore studio curriculum agendas in art, design, media and communication' (Blair 2008). In the period in which our interview respondents practiced as teachers in UK art schools, 1970-1995, projects were structured and developed by staff in order to present a range of challenges to students.

The subjects of projects included working from observation, generative strategies, or practical skills, like colour mixing. Our understanding was that one of the main purposes of project-led curricula was to introduce students to the field, establish that the discipline was more important than the individual studying it, and to clarify the need for the student to understand a discipline before being able to make any contribution to it.

Since 1970 the centrality of the core elements of drawing from life and the project has been eroded. Various factors impacted upon art practice and education: the emergence of conceptual art; the development of digital technologies; the internationalization of the art market; and the introduction of 'institutional' theories of art to encompass anything that was labeled art as art (Dickie 1971). Together they appear to be producing shifts in art practice and education, effectively dislocating 400 years of traditional practices. The Second Coldstream report of 1970 set up one of the key conditions for this change by stating that it did not believe fine art study should be defined in terms of media, but that 'studies in fine art derive from an attitude which may be expressed in many ways' (HMSO 1970). This led to the gradual decline in courses that focused on a particular media, like painting, in favour of more all-encompassing courses covering all fine art media. The core change here perhaps pre-figures what seems to have taken place: the move from creative engagement with a discipline, to being a 'creative'.

3 Identifying common ground for art education and creativity theory

Over the past 50 years creativity has become a topic of interest to disciplines from psychology to artificial intelligence. Amabile (1996) gave a succinct summary of studies within psychology as having been focused on the characteristics of people known to be creative and the variables of personality and intelligence. She noted the absence of scrutiny of 'creative situations', drawing a distinction between a notion of 'circumstances conducive to creativity' and Simonton's work on the environments that foster or inhibit creativity. Work on the conditions, or resources for creativity, such as covered by Lubart & Sternberg's 'investment theory' (1995), does touch on this notion of circumstances. From artificial intelligence, the distinction between normal or 'personal' creativity and that which leads to paradigmatic shift, or 'historic' creativity, is made by Boden (1992). She also distinguishes between innovation as requiring critical evaluation and novelty which is 'merely intriguingly crazy' (1992 p8). What is emerging is a picture of creativity as drawing from normal human psychological resources as opposed to from 'talent' or special 'giftedness'.

When reflecting on the values implicit in the teaching approaches common in European art education over the past 400 years, several models from the study of psychology have particular resonance. Many authors have made the case for subject knowledge as a vital component for creativity: Lubart and Sternberg; Smith, Ward & Finke; Weisberg, and Csikszentmihalyi. For example, Csikszentmihalyi identifies the requirement for 'immersion' (1996), and Weisberg (1999) describes this as 'internalising what has already been done'. This is reflected in generic expectations of degree-level study and in the values the authors experienced themselves as students and have enshrined in their teaching. The 2000 and 2008 UK Quality Assurance Agency 'Benchmarking' exercises note the importance for art students to 'study the works of other practitioners past and present to locate their practice in an evolving historical context'.

The emphasis on drawing from life accords closely with the idea of 'deliberate practice' set out by Weisberg (1999). This is distinct from the idea of play, which also emerged in the mid-20th century theorisation of creative expression (Richardson 1948; Milner 1950). In part, the emergence of a more intellectual approach to art education through the use of Bauhaus models was in opposition to the emphasis on playful expression coming from such developmental studies, but as we shall see, playful engagement has become a key strategy for stimulating innovation and progression in art practice.

The recognition of the parallels between the values and practices of art education and several of the theoretical models proposed from studies of creativity stimulated this paper. Our hypothesis was that some key approaches to art education that were strongly reflected in the literature of creativity were now less prevalent within art education practice. We also anticipated there might be aspects of practice not accounted for in the literatures of creativity that might warrant further scrutiny.

4 Exploring the common ground

Our study is based upon two main strands of data collection. We identified the ‘project brief’, as potentially a key source of information about the actual activities and the values embedded in the briefing documents and undertook interviews with experienced teachers within art education in UK universities.

Through purposive and snowball sampling we gathered project briefs used on three UK Fine Art degree courses. Each contributor gave us two or three undated documents in use between 1980-2010. A senior colleague noted that it was rare for anything to be written down for project briefs until well into the 1990s, when higher education became more accountable to external agencies. The material collected ranged from a one-page project brief to a ‘handbook’ for the contextual studies component of a course.

We independently marked up the content of the project briefs and handbook, identifying words and phrases that pointed to specific over-arching ideas. We then agreed an exhaustive set of thematic strands that covered all material. The key findings were that the project briefs embodied the following themes: field knowledge, models of how to operate like an artist, practical strategies (including suggestions of how to use stimuli), models of how to think like an artist, and stipulation of what art does. Examples of the sorts of comments covered by the categories are given in table 1.

Table 1 Categories and examples of clauses from project briefs

Field knowledge	Staff have chosen these images in order to enable you to contextualise the practice and also gain inspiration from the work of practitioners
How to operate	What areas of specific interest are emerging from your experience – are they formal/material? Are they conceptual? Are they based on context?
Practical strategy	...will be introduced to a number of different approaches to drawing and visual research in order that they can reflect upon the relevance and function of drawing in contemporary art practice
How to think like an artist	The suggestion here is that our experience of an art work - ... - is based around a process of reflection or a series of reflective moments
What art does	What references beyond the immediate experience are encouraged? And how is your subjectivity affected?

A large part of the content of the project briefs focused on practical strategies (<45%), with 20% of the active clauses focused on field knowledge, less agreement on the specification of clauses relation to operating like an artist, and ‘thinking like an artist’ showing at <5% of the identified clauses.

We had expected to be able to locate more project brief material, but as our search commenced it became apparent that academics had either internalized the activities and never written down briefs, or had jettisoned the material as they moved into managerial roles. The archive records of courses had not included documentation of such specific teaching events. One of the five respondents for this current study commented on this point that:

When you compare notes with other people teaching in the same period we were all doing the same thing really. We used to all talk to each other on the train. You knew there was a whole canon of teaching projects that you knew about yourself, you had been taught yourself or you saw other visiting lecturers teach. (Respondent 5)

The second strand of data collection was a series of interviews with senior colleagues who had been teaching in UK art schools between the 1970s and 2010. Our five respondents had between them a wide experience of teaching in different schools, each having between 30-40 years teaching in the field, with some shared experience, covering in total about twenty UK art education providers. All but one was happy for the interview to be audio recorded. The interview schedule drew upon the initial analysis of the project briefs, literature reviews and our own experience of the field. The following topics were covered: how they became involved in teaching; approach or models used; views on important values or skills; whether they delivered projects, the nature of tutorials; changes as their career progressed; and whether they documented their teaching. We intentionally were not asking directly about the topic of ‘creativity’ as we wanted to see if the respondents used the term. Each interview lasted about one hour.

The literature in art education gives little evidence of reflection upon creativity. James Elkins' book 'Why Art Cannot Be Taught' (2001) argues that despite the Greek identification of art as a teachable *techne*, what exists in contemporary art education is more like an *emperia*, or a subject that cannot be taught, but has to 'be absorbed, or learned by example'. He acknowledges that: 'Art teachers and students are in a bind. They do not teach or learn art, but they also cannot talk too much about the fact that they do not teach or learn art' (p104). This is reflected in volumes such as *Artists in the 1990s, their education and values* (Hetherington 1994), which focuses on the importance of artists delivering teaching not on what they were teaching. In *Issues in Art and Education* (Hetherington 1996) the focus was ostensibly on what might be taught, but focused more on the capabilities to be developed through study. Griselda Pollock's paper was an exception, in her call to expose the 'sedimented' ideologies of fine art education and to ensure that 'real knowledge of the art made by women and men, lesbians and gays, blacks and whites, Africa and Europe, China and America, Asia and Australia' was used to foster creativity. Otherwise, the curriculum would kill creativity 'by complacent indifference, ignorance and an utterly non-benign neglect' (Pollock 1996 p 29). Pollock's comments reflect appreciation that knowing about other art is vital for creativity. Susan Hiller touched upon another aspect of thinking about creativity shared beyond the field in her discussion about the art school as 'the only site where right-brain functions are consistently trained and utilised' (Hiller 1996 p47). While she saw scope for art schools to be expanded and transformed into 'a highly developed means of education in the conscious use of the visual, perceptual and intuitive modes of the right brain', this perspective has not had widespread traction.

The following sections explore this context in light of the data from the interviews. We focus on two themes clearly identified from the analysis of the project briefs: practical strategies and field knowledge, reflecting these ideas from Hiller and Pollock. We also discuss a theme that became crystallized as 'being an artist' from both sets of data; and a new dimension that arose in the interviews: space.

4.1 Practical strategies

Our analysis of the project briefs revealed that practical strategies were the focus of <45% of the content of the projects. The intention appears to be to present approaches to stimulating 'powers of invention' and breaking stylistic predilections formed through previous study. A selection of phrases indicative of this theme is shown as table 2.

Table 2 Phrases indicative of address to 'practical strategies' for studio activity

PS1	The student will be expected to be imaginative in the use of materials
PS2	Using your sketchbook, attempt to find as many potentially interesting things to draw
PS3	You should consider viewpoints of both architectural structures and closely observed details of objects sculptures within each place...consider scale and respond to the physicality of the space. Look at one space in relation to another and consider different surface qualities and textures
PS4	The purpose of this piece of research is to enable you to further develop an analytical approach to the visual interrogation of a two-dimensional image, in this case a figurative painting, which can then be applied to other images which are similarly organised
PS5	You will be expected to actively pursue a programme of drawing activities and generate additional visual reference material that might be of relevance to your ideas and interests

The assignment to the theme was arrived at through a process of increasing abstraction. For example, for PS5, the initial statement was interpreted as indicating 'The need for discipline and input from a range of sources in feeding and sustaining a personal practice', then generalised as being about 'how to build a personal practice'. This then was grouped with other generalisations such as 'how to learn from

other art and artists', 'how to make an interesting drawing', or 'practical technique', as all indicative of 'practical strategies'.

The intended aim of the briefs appeared clear, but there was normally a lack of specific directions, e.g. as in PS1, which expects students 'to be imaginative in the use of materials'. There is no indication in this brief of how this might be realised, apart from the intention of this being 'in order to broaden a mark-making vocabulary'. PS3 is an example of where more specific instruction is embedded in the brief: 'consider scale... respond to physicality...look at one space in relation to another'. In essence, the destination may be stipulated but the map was rarely given. The objectives appear to be to support the development of strategies to generate visual vocabulary, and range of style and visual language, to enable new approaches to realising ideas.

All of the interview respondents talked at length about projects they had delivered and noted the importance of generative strategies, which could deliver a volume of material and develop the appropriate discipline for self-directed working. Volume and hard work were prioritised to support reflective processes of learning through making. Momentum of making and volume were seen as central to establish a sustainable art practice. Respondent 4 recalled a one-week project: each student was given a single matchstick and asked to generate 50 drawings from that match by the end of the first day. After the tenth drawing, the question became 'where do I go now?', introducing 'the idea of reflective, reflexive practices'. In another project, two marks were made in the drawing room and the participating students were asked to draw what was between those two marks. The Respondent commented that both projects put the onus onto the student to generate thinking through practice as opposed to thinking prior to and separate from practice.

This focus on working through problems and emphasis on volume of production was also noted by Respondent 1, who said 'the volume of work was probably considerably more than today, people did spend hours in the studio,... and I think that thing of moving a practice through momentum and setting in because you're doing a lot, that's a difficult thing to get over with people who haven't got grants, who've got part time jobs and all the rest of it,' and that 'students need to be making and doing for their ideas to come through'.

Our respondents recalled projects aimed at developing articulation of abstract properties of media, rather than on external stimuli. Some projects were intended to equip students with a practical understanding of how colour operates in art. Respondent 2 recounted setting a project involving each student painting an 8' x 4' piece of hardboard with household paint, using just a single colour and 'mindfully painting the whole surface taking it from hardboard coloured to colour'. She recalled discussing this with a former student some years after who commented that it had taken years to understand what he had learnt from this 'experience of colour as stuff'. Another project involved asking each student in the group to bring in 20 highly coloured objects. A still life was then built with the objects, giving an arrangement of c.400 coloured objects to work from. Her reflection during the interview was that with hindsight, she was giving the students some parameters to work within but with freedom to improvise. She would now use these terms to talk about her own process. She had not consciously linked her practices as an artist to her teaching delivery, but looking back, she reflected that requests for her to deliver these projects may have recognised that what she did as an artist was felt to be a good model for students. When asked if anyone had told him what he should be doing when he was teaching, respondent 5 recalled: 'nobody said anything at all so I had to invent things'.

4.2 Field knowledge

The knowledge of what specific artists did and the use of that as a building block for creative practice was reflected in the project briefs reviewed. We classified 20% of the material in the briefs as about field knowledge. Phrases drew attention to the external stimuli that other artists used, indicated the role of representational drawing or drawing from figure, and raised questions about who had made what, when, and why it might have been made that way. The clear sense here is about looking at other art, stressing there is more to creative expression than only drawing on individual experience. A selection of the phrases indicative of this theme is given in table 3.

Table 3 Phrases indicative of address to 'field knowledge' for studio activity

FK1	Staff have chosen these images in order to enable you to contextualise the practice and also gain inspiration from the work of practitioners
FK2	...on completion of this module the student should be able to show through the evidence of the work produced that they have increased their understanding of some of the key issues of observational life drawing
FK3	...the aims are to help to place the work that you do in the studio into a relevant context and to open doors about ideas, critical thinking and artists work. Artists and designers have never worked in a vacuum. The best are aware of contemporary as well as historic practice.

The process of arriving at the categorisation of Field Knowledge was again carried out through a process of re-phrasing. In FK3, we identified the stress on knowing what others are doing and their reasons, and of the importance of a shared understanding of innovation in the field as a point of comparison for one's own work. As with the practical strategies, there is much unsaid in the project briefs. We presume that there may have been a discussion at some point about why the staff chose the reproductions referred to in FK1, but this was never made explicit nor was there a statement in the project brief that carried FK2 of what constitutes the key issues in observational life drawing.

From the interviews, the role of projects as promoting an informed, analytic and objective attitude to qualitative judgements of other work was clear. Respondent 3 recounted how one project was devised to require students to transcribe key 19th century paintings into drawings. The project, devised by Respondent 3 (and experienced by Journeaux as an undergraduate) arose because the staff team concluded that students had insufficient knowledge of art history. They built a large still life in the studio and then briefed students to make a drawing from the still life set-up in the style of futurism, cubism, or impressionism. The students had to spend time in the library researching these art historical movements and to then use this knowledge in their drawings to explore how those works had been made. Respondent 3 likened the rationale for this as establishing the capacity to look at other art 'the way the mechanic looks at an engine'.

The interviews indicated that the interests and knowledge of the teaching staff informed the construction of the projects and reflected what the 'artist educators' perceived as being key questions for those wishing to become artists. The values underpinning projects were rarely explicit but seen as secondary to the collective acknowledgement of 'what students needed to know'. Many staff used the project-led approach to address their perceptions of what had been missing in their own education. Respondent 3 described this as 'checking out what you were thinking in your own practice with a bunch of students'. Respondent 1 recalled presenting twenty images to the students first thing every morning for a week, and of doing two lectures every week, covering every single 'ism' going. She commented that 'actually students needed hooks to find ideas'.

4.3 *Being an artist*

Knowledge of the field was presented as something that it was normal to be curious about, to be used in an everyday way to stimulate practical work in the studio. We agreed that the theme covered matters that related to the values accorded to practical strategies. There were embedded values of the demanding nature of studio practice needing discipline and self-determination and time spent in the studio, and guidance on how to operate as an artist. A selection of the phrases relating to this theme is given in table 4.

Table 4 Phrases indicative of address to 'being an artist' through studio activity

BA1	Tutoring people making art is tutoring people in ways of thinking about art
BA2	The thematic content of the work will be entirely determined by the student
BA3	Processes of informed critical reflection; How are your responses informed by your intentions and ambitions

BA4	To develop an informed, analytic and objective attitude
BA5	Artistic ambitions/intentions > <i>declaring future ambitions</i>

The process of coding saw BA5, for example, as indicating the imperative for the student to articulate their artistic objectives. Developing clarity about ones creative intention was again seen as embedded in BA3. The briefs do seem to provide a template for the ‘rules’ of entering into the community of contemporary art practice. The briefs indicate the spiral of preparation, incubation, insight, evaluation, reflection and re-iteration, towards an understanding informed judgment based on experience and knowledge, rather than personal or emotive responses. The material reflects the processes of reflection in action identified by Schon in his 1983 book *The Reflective Practitioner*, which did become familiar with some teachers on fine art courses during the 1990s.

The interviews reflected this. Respondent 2 recounts not having had the sense herself as a student of having been taught, but of coming to ‘recognise the importance of parameters that nevertheless allowed for real improvisation’. She noted that ‘you look at the really good stuff in the past... you read the big books’.

The core values of being an artist that we identified do have a degree of cross over with the sorts of activities identified as practical strategies. The most important of these was the notion of artists as having discipline, stamina and persistence, and the expectation that students would learn a working habit which involved them putting in long hours in the studio, to underpin a working pattern for after graduation. Respondent 1 recalled a senior tutor commenting: ‘you know if you’re not painting full steam in your thirties or twenties, imagine what you’re gonna be doing in your forties’. Respondent 3 noted there were colleges where one might get students saying ‘you wouldn’t be allowed to do that here’, indicating quite a bounded sense of what was permissible. Respondent 5 noted that the absence of agreed principles in fine art ‘leaves them floundering. The paradox is that the less guidance and direction you give student the more support they need.’

4.4 Space

Although there were indications of some constraints within the permissible, the fourth theme of note within the data we looked at we have labelled ‘space’. This is space in two key dimensions: firstly, what is unsaid, the absence of explanatory detail or specification, and secondly, the freedom given for different perspectives to be held, or for self-determination of focus, direction or activity.

We saw in table 2 that project briefs lacked exact specification. This poses the question of where and how learning happened. In our experience as students and teachers we recall that the specifics were divulged in response to the particularities of the encounter with practical work. In individual tutorial or end of project critique there would be identification of what seemed to have ‘worked’ effectively or not, and that through collective experience and peer group recognition, particular procedures rose to the status of strategy.

In our interviews, there was reference to recollection of a strategy of leaving students to sink or swim, with it feeling ‘a bit random’. Respondent 3 recalled: ‘being cast adrift after some intro projects in the first year was really daunting. Some students never recovered’. Similarly, Respondent 1 had recounted ‘the projects were a coat hanger, by the second year students were making work under their own volition but within the framework’. This model of first year projects then space was also noted by Respondent 2. Students were offered ‘an intense learning experience in the first year then left to their own devices’. And Respondent 4 notes that ‘nowhere where I worked was there a sense of teaching painting’. It was just: ‘you got the first year project but after that it was very much well you can make a stretcher, you know, you can get on with it’.

Respondent 5 stated that ‘fine art, if you are going to do it well is a dangerous occupation because you must be able to make mistakes and go down blind alleys and so on’ and that ‘the teaching I experienced on pre-dip was based loosely on the Bauhaus and basic design principles, but by the time I

was teaching I wasn't thinking in those terms at all.' He describes the model he aspired to: 'basically allow the unexpected to happen and go with that.'

4.5 *The studio and the critique as additional conditions for creativity*

There are two topics, which hardly appeared within the project briefs and only in passing in the interviews, which have been the focus of some discussion in art education in relation to the conditions for creativity. These are the role of the studio space within the teaching environment and the in- or end-of-project critique.

While our interviewees spoke about the work ethic and the volume of work produced, they did not talk about the space in which it is produced. Discussion within the university sector has focused on this in recent years, as universities have explored space-charging models. The argument has been presented that: 'if students are to make open ended explorations and tolerate ambiguity they will need to spend time sitting with work in progress' (Rogers & Kilgallon 2009). While this does not necessarily mean that the space is a shared space, Woolley (2013) has explained this further:

Generations of students in the creative arts have been taught within a very particular learning environment, and largely according to the principles of the atelier system. It is perhaps inevitable therefore that at such a formative period in their development, undergraduates should absorb attitudes to the creative environment that they readily transfer into their professional lives.

What is at issue here is the importance of learning alongside colleagues, of testing and reflecting on values and judgments as they are formed. The working method that was expected within the shared studio environment was to leave aside distractions to reach a state of creative production in which the student learnt to forget themselves and the passage of time. Such a state might now be called 'flow', after Csikszentmihalyi

The studio critique is central to project led teaching and embodies key attitudes of the community of practice. Critiques usually involve at least two staff discussing completed work or work in progress with a group of students. Each student's work is considered by the whole group and the extent to which the work meets the terms of the brief is considered. Variations of the model abound, with students or tutors taking the lead. Elkins' chapter on critiques in *Why Art Cannot Be Taught* gives some examples from the USA, which communicate the nature of the transactions that occur within these encounters. There was a brief mention in one project brief we looked at: it noted that the volume of work produced by students would be considered in the final crit. This gives a clear sense of the critique as a way in which the community will measure progress. Respondent 1 notes the purpose of the critique was 'to have more than one voice. To get the students used to talking among themselves'. Many accounts (e.g. Blair 2008) suggest that while a daunting process, the critique develops verbal skills associated with the articulation of purpose and evaluation and more general advocacy skills. It requires students to defend their work publicly whilst acknowledging failures and shortcomings. It enables students to observe staff using, and their peers developing, ways of reading art objects and thinking in, through and about art. It also allowed students to experience expert practitioners displaying confidence and dexterity in recognizing defects or successes, and in explaining them. The critique taught students how to think on their feet in front of art objects, to interrogate and deconstruct the object, and to weigh its value. This skill-set has become a core part of the contemporary conception of the artist and contributed to the notion of artist as entrepreneur.

6 Mapping the common ground

The small sample size of respondents and project briefs generated enough data from which to appraise the extent to which art education in the period from the 1970s through to the early 2000s reflected the models of creativity generated through studies in other disciplinary fields. In relation to the conditions required for creativity associated with, for example, Lubart and Sternberg's 'investment model', we might map the relationship between the themes evident in the project briefs and interviews and their resources in figure 1, reflecting that our research methods did not look at ability, personality type or motivation:

Figure 1 Matching themes to investment model resources

<i>Investment model resources</i>	<i>project brief and interview themes</i>
Intellectual abilities	-
Knowledge	Field Knowledge
	Practical strategies
Styles of thinking	Being an artist
Personality	-
Motivation	-
Environment	Space (partially)

Knowledge of the field and understanding of the practical strategies for practicing in the field were clearly very important aspects of the project briefs and were intrinsic in many of the responses from the interview respondents. This reflects the notion of immersion central to systems models.

The cognitive styles identified by Amabile also have a good fit with the objectives of the practical strategies used within project briefs and recounted by our respondents. An indication of how the evidence from our study maps across to the Amabile cognitive style set is given in Table 5. Our only points of contention would be whether there is any evidence of understanding complexity in the education of artists, or only of getting used to tolerating it. The absence of specification, of only giving the starting point, suggests something not as resolved as understanding. On the suspension of judgment, we note the role of surprise which is associated with the recognition of new artistic achievement and the surprise which often accompanies assessment of success or failure to work produced by student artists. It may be interesting to explore the relationship of judgment and surprise further. While judgment calls on knowledge, recognition of innovation requires both recall of what has been before with recognition of the new and surprising. The role of memory that is embodied in knowing how something was made was evident in the emphasis of learning through doing in both briefs and the interviews but this distinct physiological experience may be somewhat different to the accurate memory of theory or fact.

Table 6 Mapping of cognitive style in creative individuals to the practices and values evident through the project briefs and interviews

<i>Amabile's cognitive styles:</i>	<i>Practices and values in briefs and interviews</i>
Breaking perceptual set	looking differently
Breaking cognitive set	making in other styles
Understanding complexities	absence of explanation
Keeping response options open as long as possible	working to 50 drawings brief
Suspending judgement	working to brief
Using wide categories	thinking in other styles
Remembering accurately	recalling methods of other artists
Breaking out of performance scripts	using practical strategies
Perceiving creatively	drawing what was between marks

We noted earlier how our interview schedules had purposefully avoiding using the term creativity or creative in any questions. One of the respondents did not use the terms creative or creativity at all in the session. Respondent 4 used it most frequently (seven times in the interview of just over one hour), with Respondent 2 and Respondent 3 using the term 5 and 3 times respectively.

7 Identifying the gaps for further investigation

Our study has explored the teaching of artists in UK universities in the past 40 years and has shown characteristics which map across to models of creativity from other subjects. We saw how space or

absence of specification was seen to give room for individual expression and that this worked in a context of a community of practice. Practical strategies, knowledge and values were all supported by working alongside each other, and those gaps were accommodated through this context.

This study has however, focused on a specific generation of respondents. There have been changes in the art education context since the periods referred to in the interviews. These have included the contraction of the space accorded to studio environments, less use of the project within curricula, and less time on critiques. The rise in digital tools has changed the skills required to generate effective representations and expanded arenas for creative practice. In place of a strong work ethic in the studio what has emerged is the theorization of the 'community of practice' by Wenger (1998). Although his work was originally focused on office workers, the notion of the community of practice has been seized upon by theorists of art and design education as an explanation of how ideas and practices are shared. It is not yet clear to what extent modeling of behaviours through the critique or the project brief can be accommodated by this framework.

There are indications that current thinking about art education at university level in the UK is changing. The 2014 National Association for Fine Art Education Annual Symposium (NAFAE 2014) included a series of presentations on 'current key issues in Fine Art education'. The concluding discussion identified that the curriculum was becoming empty at its core, with so much attention paid to peripheral generic skills like professional practice, or team-working, there is now little room for anything else. The Paradox Fine Arts European Forum also looked at the contested legacies of practice, research and education in its 2013 meeting, published in a special edition of the *Journal of Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education* (Fortnum & Pybus 2014).

We conclude by noting there has been a gap in the studies of creativity to date, both by our own field and by the omission of scrutiny of educators of creative professionals such as artists. Our intention is to expand our enquiry to address the current generation of academics teaching fine art on undergraduate courses, both in the UK and beyond. We also hope this foray beyond our own field can stimulate future collaborative work with other disciplines who are also interested in creativity, with their different structures and conventions for progressing knowledge, which might underpin this initial exploration.

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