

Creative Education/ Training and the 'Just-In-Time Self'

Pariece Nelligan and George Morgan
Institute for Culture and Society,
University of Western Sydney

Creativity: A Floating Signifier

- *The cultural policy represents a fresh expression of the values and priorities that will sustain Australia as a richly creative society in the 21st century. Julia Gillard*
- ‘Creativity’ has long provenance in official discourse on economic regeneration going back to Keating’s Clever Country, Blair’s Cool Britannia, but what is being signified by the word?
- *Capitalism is animated by the principle of unlimited accumulation at the expense of all other values. ‘Art’ or ‘culture’ has always been one of the limits on, or protests against, this principle. (O’Connor, 2007).*

Just-in-Time-Self Project

- Much of the (predominantly UK) literature on creative work (Baker & Hesmondhalgh, Banks, McRobbie, Gill etc) deals with the experiences of those with established work profiles.
- Our study deals with students and aspirants from minority/working class backgrounds: those who do not yet make a living in creative industries.
- Biographical narrative interviews with those who have a variety of creative skills – performing arts, music production, film/tv, design etc

School and Creative Ambition

- Increasing School Retention Rates – The challenge of occupying resistant students at school
- The Remedial Role of creative curriculum: progressivism and the ‘art-room as refuge’.
- Minority/ working class students then develop (improbable) vocational ambitions around cultural/subcultural enthusiasms
- Survey of >20,000 Australian students found 10.9% wanted to be ‘artist’ (artist, dancer, writer, filmmaker) and 8.1% ‘media’ workers (journalist, photographer, TV/radio production, graphic design) Polesel J.Helme S. (2003). *Young visions final report*. Sydney: Enterprise Career Education Foundation.

Creativity and Public Policy

Creative Australia policy aims to:

- *build, produce and nurture world-class artists and creators*
- *ensure the opportunities, training and skills development needed for careers in the arts and creative sectors are not limited by social circumstance*
- *drive a culture of professional development that strengthens the capacity of artists and creative practitioners to be artistic leaders within the arts and culture sectors in to the future*

<http://creativeaustralia.arts.gov.au/full-policy/#m-255>

The Educational Contract

- Creative aspirants generally not interested in generalist courses like Arts degrees but in those(whether university or college) that promise to develop their creative skills
- Most of those from minority/disadvantaged backgrounds are poorly informed about the nature of the 'career path' they are embarking upon. Lacking contacts and cultural capital they rely on their teachers, who often have industry experience, to illuminate that path.

Engineering the Soul

Creative training often encourages an abandonment of cultural ideals, habituating students to vocational realities and encouraging:

- i) Flexible and malleable work identities
- ii) Technical rather than artistic skills
- iii) Entrepreneurial individualism
- iv) 'Networking' habits rather than the quest for stable communities of practice
- v) Working for nothing – Normalizing Internships

Wine to Water

- The courses often fail to satisfy and can serve to deflect and disabuse students of the preconceived models of creativity: as craftspeople, bohemians, fine artists etc.
- Neo liberal universities are failing to resource creative training courses properly – cutting corners/ undermining the small group learning that is essential to fostering creative skills

Creative Frustrations

- *It's all about who you know and I don't know shit* (Brady – music production student on the networking imperative)
- *Cause I've learnt nothing creative. I've learnt how to work a camera, I've learnt how to frame different shots but that's sort of about it ...I kind of feel like I've already wasted those four years* (Melanie – after completing a communications degree)

The Just-In-Time Self

Just as Post Fordist capitalism requires productive flexibility to meet rapid shifts in tastes, fashions and consumption patterns, so young 'creatives' must be capable of renewing/reinventing themselves, viewing skills as transferable, capitalising on diverse opportunities even where they compromise artistic ambitions.

Young 'creatives' express bewilderment and despondency about the prospect of precarious work and the loss of agency over working life.

Biographical Imaginaries

- *The labours of the modern, flexible workplace pose quite a different challenge to the task of narrating one's work: how can one create a sense of personal continuity in a labour market in which work-histories are erratic and discontinuous rather than routine and determinate? (Sennett, 2001 p.183)*
- Contra Beck, Leadbeater etc our research indicates that those from disadvantaged backgrounds find it difficult to dissimulate, to hold together the sense of self in circumstances of creative precarity.