



MOKITA: A DISCUSSION

**ICON10 THE ILLUSTRATION CONFERENCE DETROIT USA
EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM JULY 11-12 2018**

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Abstract

>doomjolt-ante

Illustration as a mode of cultural production is an exponentially expanding phenomenon. Illustration students form a significant and substantial constituency within the Art and Design education sector. The future of Illustration disciplinarians is assured, or so it may seem. It is conceivable that the volume of Illustration graduates entering the 'job (less) market' exceeds real demand for conventional, transactional, freelance, *commercial* Illustration work. This constitutes an existential threat for the discipline and increased precarity for Illustration graduates. Add to this the imminence of wide scale Automation (Chui et al), the deployment of Artificial Intelligence in to the creative sector and the normalization of Self-Entrepreneurship (<https://vimeo.com/46254409>) and we have a (potentially) destabilizing 'mix' that poses serious ethical and operational questions to educators, institutions and the industry at large.

MOKITA proposes to run a panel and/or short series of discussions during the ICON10 Educators Symposium composed of invited US delegates to discuss the theme of...future shock. The aim of the panel discussions will be twofold; to create a space for open, energetic, informed and speculative discussion around the causal factors impacting Illustration practice/education/lifestyle over the next (x amount) of years. To invite a mixed economy of practitioners, academics and students to use this space for the cooperative construction of an open and flexible framework enabling immediate and potentially sustained knowledge fabrication through critical dialogue.

MOKITA

MOKITA* is a UK based illustration forum that aims to discuss the discipline in a critical framework, bridging the gap between practitioners and academics; to examine specifically the contested issues around Illustration that we encounter but seldom discuss.

Co-founded by Darryl Clifton *Camberwell College of Art UAL*, Geoff Grandfield *Kingston University London*, and Roderick Mills *University of Brighton* in 2010 they have staged several successful events at Somerset House in London UK, discussing topics such as 'Sentimentality' and 'Style'.

Events have featured speakers such as; George Hardie, Rob Ryan, Laura Carlin, Jonny Hannah, James Jarvis, Sanna Annukka, Lawrence Zeegen, Luke Best, Michael Salu, Sam Arthur, Luise Vormittag, and Crowd Talks.

<http://mokita1.blogspot.co.uk>

**MOKITA is from the Kilivila language spoken on Kiriwina, Trobriand Islands near Papua New Guinea and translates as 'The truth we know but agree not to talk about' or the 'elephant in the room.'*

The following are three provocations to act as catalysts to the panel event staged at The Education Symposium ICON10 The Illustration Conference Detroit USA July 11th – 12th 2018.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? GEOFF GRANDFIELD

Profile and Value

How to understand the value of Illustration as a retooled subject for **21st** century applications and formalising its true **scope** for cultural production, as understood globally by academia / the educational provider / industry / culture.

Associative Links

Historical **associations** have limited and subdivided the subject to specific image contexts, with the illustrator not acknowledged as author but the **crafter** of merely a contributory component. An inheritance from the demands of mechanical media.

By only looking at the output product, the intention is coded by its application, the authorship often only emerging over a series of works and therefore only appreciated/understood by specialists (art directors/commissioners/collectors).

Historical association also placed the word illustration into specific cultural economic modes, such as for children, advertising, instruction.

Whilst these applications are still in use and are descriptive, the **developing** use of the discipline to engage in other content has expanded to acknowledge the **processes** of illustration. Researching, interpretation, translation and participation have become active elements of the discipline beyond drawing that do not necessarily result in a mediated commodity. The perception of illustrator as facilitator is emerging, but still has some way to go to being the **director** and key figure in cultural production.

Education and Identity

This expanded definition has been driven by successive cohorts of creative **ambitious students** who seek a practice that is sometimes accommodated in illustration courses but may also be found in graphic design, animation, fine art, printmaking, fashion, textiles, creative writing, the humanities and so on. The potential breadth of associated disciplines that characterises the core application of illustration is informative. Just as the communicative process of the subject acts as a bridge from one point to another, the discipline can readily annex others. This is a strength that could be incorporated in a structured way educationally, by prefacing **process** and **content** over materials and production. Where the technique of production is prioritised over content, the student is often lost in a labyrinth of **'style'** without direction.

The subject is proven to enable the authorship of the self in an age where personal identity is commodified more than ever before. The appeal for young creative minds is to find an open space that is accessible and tangible and not culturally dominated by existing theoretical structures.

It seems highly significant that the larger population of illustration students in UK are female; a critically marginalised practice occupied by an economically marginalised constituency.

Industry and Academia

For many practitioners who have entered pedagogy and sought to develop the possibilities of the subject through the enquiry and instincts of the student, a conflict becomes apparent. The understanding and use of the word is critically relegated to a purely representational form whose significance is only conferred by others, not the illustrator.

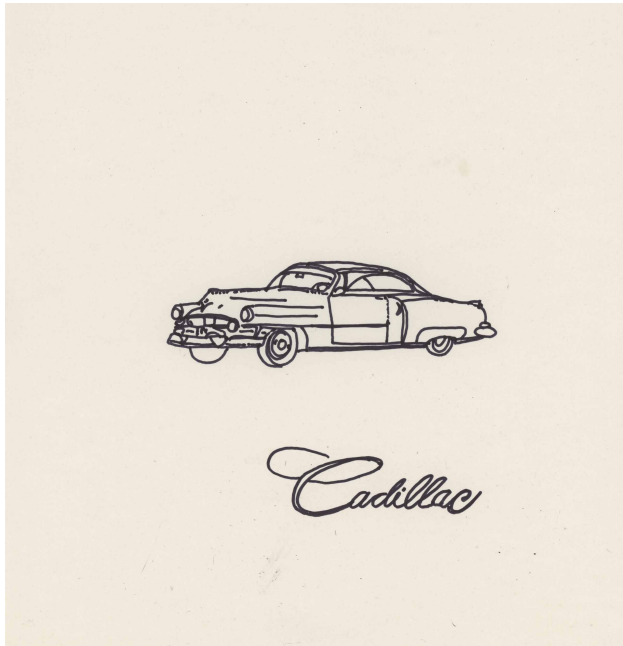
The understanding of a discreet discipline and creative space informed but not restricted to its real-world applications is rarely found beyond the 'converted'; the lecturers and students of illustration.

What is needed is a fresh socio-cultural-economic understanding of the discipline and its core **process** enabling visual thinking in current and prescient technologies. Many design students will take their core visual training and proceed to work in disciplines other than design. This is a positive example of how visual literacy is critical to success in many sectors and should not be relegated to a specialist service silo, in education or industry. Visual education that understands process and origination, not mere collating and reviewing, needs to be in all curricula. Creative endeavour is not a luxury but a persistent life experience.

Illustration offers perhaps one of the most direct routes to explore and realise this.

Surely the demand and popularity of the subject reflects its currency, it is time that institutions, educational and critical and political need to follow suit with a new awareness.

A revised understanding of illustration as visual literacy grounded in observation and drawing is important for contextualizing the expansion in numbers. The teaching of the subject to growing cohorts does not aim to destroy a livelihood for practitioners, but it could be argued, to expand the appetite for visual understanding and original content beyond internet search engines. In the UK the taught subject has seen a popularity and proportional growth in educational numbers for the last 15 years without a clear rethink of illustration in context to other subjects or industry. This appears to have confused many institutions who welcome the increase in fee revenue but fail to recalibrate cultural hierarchies. This in turn has led to many illustration courses being under represented in resources and research agendas. The balancing of resources with demand in education is essential as is the support of a relevant research culture in order to acknowledge the central role the discipline has to play in creating visual meaning in the contemporary world, for the self and for everyone else.



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A NEW PEDAGOGY FOR ILLUSTRATION? RODERICK MILLS

'The future of an art education will be based on the notion of universal immediate access.'
Ernesto Pujol - On the Ground: Practical Observations for Regenerating Art Education

It is apt in many ways that ICON10 The Illustration Conference is being held in the city of Detroit Michigan USA in July 2018, commonly known as Motor City, the center of the U.S. automobile industry, home to car manufacturers General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. Arguably a signifier to the rise of the consumer society, perhaps even to Madison Avenue the fabled location of the burgeoning advertising industry, that spawned much graphic arts and illustration itself?

It was in Detroit that Henry Ford developed the assembly line for the Ford Motor Company in 1913, and today illustration sits at a unique crossroads as we reposition the discipline and as Geoff Grandfield has said during MOKITA discussions that illustration doesn't simply rest at the end of the creative production line these days, at the end of a telephone line when a visual interpretation is necessary. The authorial instinct is commonplace today, as Marshall Arisman, the renown illustrator and Chair MFA Illustration as Visual Essay Department, School of Visual Arts New York, has referred to previously, is now an essential part of being an illustrator, and for many studying the subject is perhaps of more primacy than the commercial experience?

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1958 created a 41,000 mile network of interstate highways connecting the U.S. Fitting therefore to be in Detroit to discuss how arguably illustration inherently intersects much of the visual world that we inhabit today, and the growing understanding of its cultural agency. It is through illustration that we navigate the modern world, and understand the flow of information that we are daily inundated by. It is through images that the world becomes clearer, that in the process of communication we get to question the world itself.

At a fast changing time for illustration as a discipline, the recognition of change and the need to anticipate further developments has become paramount for educators. As illustration has moved beyond traditional notions of the singular use of print, to encompass moving image, interactivity and situated forms, it has drawn in those who want to study it from a broad base, identifying illustration as something to study, beyond perhaps to become a traditional practitioner itself. This is obviously benefitting illustration as a subject, encouraging the study of illustration and raising the criticality of those within the discipline. These institutions have capitalized on, according to UNISTATS, the official website for comparing higher education in the United Kingdom, in 2017 there are over 124 undergraduate courses in the United Kingdom with *Illustration* in their title. As the notion of what can be illustration has expanded, its form in one sense dematerialized, with its widespread dissemination across the web has attracted many to pursue.

Illustration is popular, there is a vibrant entrepreneurial scene evolving with zine fairs and festivals supportive of those artists wanting to sell product and edition work. Perhaps a signifier of illustration's inherent accessibility or its draw as an activity in its own right? The internet has enabled much divergence of the discipline, from a general awareness of what illustration is, to self-publishing online, to developing followers or an audience for an illustrators work without ever having to negotiate a commercial client, possibly illustration as a lifestyle, or as a noun? This popularity of the discipline, or the diverse range of practitioners coming to illustration through study is naturally changing what illustration is, and its position within visual culture. This I would argue is more than a change in the balance of self-authored work and that of commissioned works. This change is important for those within education to understand the shift in what an illustration practice can be today and not to be shackled by one's own experience of the profession or how it was taught twenty years ago.

With this growth and expansion of what it means to be an illustrator, it proposes that within education there is an acceptance of the multi-disciplinary nature of illustration, and what skills both in terms of art production, context, and critical thinking are necessary for the future practitioner. This necessitates ongoing development as a lecturer, both in terms of teaching and research to retain relevance, and an emphasis on empowering the student to become agile designers, visual communicators, fostering life long learning.

In his chapter *On the Ground: Practical Observations for Regenerating Art Education* in the book *Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)* Ernesto Pujol has commented:

'Therefore, we must not be lazy or afraid of triggering change, no matter how painful, and ultimately we must rely on the growing numbers of our art students who connect the dots on their own and end up with multidisciplinary education in spite of the institution, not because of it.' (Maduff, 2009)

There can be a safety in teaching a practical skill for a career model of the past, rather than looking ahead at the needs of the future, a comfort in the craft alone, the refinement of a technique, or what illustration used to be? The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices published by the United Kingdom Government in 2017 explored the realities of modern work, including the 'gig' economy, online communities and platforms, and mobility within work and careers. For the illustrator not only are they self-publishing but they need to have critical distance to situate their practice within the wider field of the creative industry. Illustrators would seem ideally placed at the intersection of technology and communication - in a world where the image is all-important in how we navigate the modern world.

Tom Lubbock, the former chief art critic of the Independent newspaper when presenting the Critic's Award for Association of Illustrators Images 29 competition in 2005, contentiously referred to Illustrations' avoidance of influence from contemporary art:

"I half suspect that illustration has become a haven for visual artists who want to escape from what fine art has become. But whatever its limitations as art, this work is a source of strength that illustration should not neglect." (Images 29, 2005)

Illustration needs the confidence to look at itself with an external perspective, from the outside, whilst at the same time understanding its historical and cultural significance from within to ground itself. As Visual Communication courses have emerged this cross over with other disciplines has become more commonplace, diversifying where illustrators have emerged from, but illustration needs confidence from within? In the educational institution there is a rising professionalizing of teaching staff, especially in the United Kingdom, alongside the emergence of an illustration research culture unshackling the discipline from merely being a professional trade.

Not only are tutors preparing their students to enter an industry, that in itself is uncertain and precarious, but also there is the need to look ahead at the future role and opportunities for the discipline, in an age when the agile illustration graduate needs to negotiate an ever shifting field, combining both transitional illustration and the authorial, entrepreneurial publishing area. Amongst these new illustration models include those based around ethnographic approaches within illustration or visual anthropology, of illustrators seeking funding opportunities to situate their work, to be site specific, responding to a collection, to engage with technology in the generation of immersive and interactive spaces, performative aspects of generating illustration, augmented and virtual reality, public engagement activities, or to be issue based with political or ecological contexts, outside of the commercial mainstream, or simply being an illustrator for hire.

The importance of studying within a community of fellow practitioners cannot be overstated here, allowing collaborative practices to become commonplace and providing a safe environment for the testing of ideas and mediums. Increasingly it is the role of education to challenge the established notion of illustration, to provoke the new spaces or practices. The model of sole practitioner is no longer the only template for an illustrator, both on terms of design or economic necessity. Therefore having a support network and a safe environment to 'visually play' is of vital importance allowing for personal growth within a community and academic framework.

Alongside this is also the need to learn the critical skills of image consumption, how to read the world that we inhabit. In terms of understanding the post internet world, there can be a tendency for vocational illustration courses to simply see social media as a marketing tool for illustrators, which is valid, but perhaps misses the far-reaching affect of such media, and how the discipline sits within visual culture beyond simply adding to it. Illustrators shape the visual culture that surrounds us; the very diversity of those wanting to study the discipline is changing what it means to be an illustrator, as it will change what it means to teach it? Education would seem to be the common link – with a growing responsibility for those wanting to sustain and extend their practice, but also to be responsive to those coming into education now and into the future.

References

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/good-work-the-taylor-review-of-modern-working-practices> (accessed July 11, 2017)

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Images 29. (2005) London: Association of Illustrators.

DOOMJOLT ANTE. DARRYL CLIFTON

Some AI mumbo jumbo.

“How do they do it!? I don't care that much. Some a.i. mumbo jumbo. Point is let's make some crazy art!”¹

“A few weeks ago we launched the Lara photo generator with help from our visitors and listeners #fotogenerator. By entering lots of photos and drawings of radio host Lara Rense into a system of artificial intelligence we taught the system what a photo of Lara should look like. The generator turned out to be hugely successful. Over 19,000 websites from all over the world linked to it. The vlogger community has also picked up on it. Unfortunately, we had to take the website down as the server costs had become too high for us to carry”²

On the 3rd of July 2017 the website, fotogenerator.nl, was obliged to close. With over “2 million unique visitors”³ it had proved *too popular* for its own good and exceeded the available server capacity of its ‘creators’ De Kennis Van Nu. They simply could not afford to run it anymore. Fotogenerator allowed users to make simple line drawings that were then ‘processed’. The results of these digital transmogrifications ranged from fleshy Pikachu lumps and mangled ersatz Homer Simpsons to button eyed quasi cabbage patch monstrosities and everything in-between. Despite the uncanny and often unpleasant results that the algorithm threw-up, users flocked⁴, and when they were eventually denied their fun due to the website’s closure, went on to produce some further monstrosities, this time in written form⁵. De Kennis Van Nu had taken the open source pix2pix software developed by computer scientists at Berkeley AI Research Laboratory (BAIR), UC Berkeley⁶, and adapted it to produce another online distraction. The website’s popularity was testament to the freakish and exotic possibilities afforded by the pix2pix algorithm, it illustrated all too well the appetites of online communities. The desire to produce original, albeit ‘use-less’, visual material was evident in the sheer volume of traffic. Kennis and Van Nu were one of a number of creative practices⁷ that had adapted the pix2pix code. The scientists at BLAIR readily acknowledged that the community of creatives had extended the software’s capabilities beyond *their* original intention. They described the implied promise in the adaptations to the code in the following

¹ <https://steemit.com/photogeneration/@havok777/photo-generative-crazy-face-maker-and-others-pix2pix-fotogenerator> (accessed 4.3.18 / 07:51)

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=112&v=pWNqg4f4jDg (accessed 4.3.18 / 08:22)

³ <https://dekennisvannu.nl/site/artikel/Fotogenerator-The-End/9232> (accessed 4.3.18 / 08:27)

⁴ “We can quietly drop the word ‘viral’: the Lara photo generator was smoking hot for weeks. Every day, hundreds of thousands of people worldwide used it to create zombie-like images.
<https://dekennisvannu.nl/site/artikel/Fotogenerator-The-End/9232> (accessed 4.3.18 / 07:17)

⁵ The responses to fotogenerators closure were mixed – a good number of responders were confused and/or dumbstruck by De Kennis Van Nu’s lack of entrepreneurial spirit, challenging them to monetize, activate the engines of commerce through advertising, Google analytics etc. There were the inevitable death threats, the desire to see De Kennis Van Nu and their families consumed by fire being one of the most odious and bizarre. [\(ref to this?\)](#)

⁶ The full (and largely incomprehensible to non-computer scientists) paper authored by Eros, A. Isola, P. Zhou, T. Zhu J-Y. *Image-to-image translation with Conditional Adversarial networks* can be found here: <https://arxiv.org/abs/1611.07004> (accessed 4.3.18 / 13:16)

⁷ “Since the initial release of the paper and our pix2pix codebase, the Twitter community, including computer vision and graphics practitioners as well as visual artists, have successfully applied our framework to a variety of novel image-to-image translation tasks, far beyond the scope of the original paper. Figure 11 shows just a few examples from the #pix2pix hashtag, including Background removal, Palette generation, Sketch → Portrait, Sketch→Pokemon, “Do as I Do” pose transfer, as well as the bizarrely popular #edges2cats and #fotogenerator. Note that these applications are creative projects, were not obtained in controlled, scientific conditions, and may rely on some modifications to the pix2pix code we released. Nonetheless, they demonstrate the promise of our approach as a generic commodity tool for image-to-image translation problems.” Eros, A. Isola, P. Zhou, T. Zhu J-Y. *Image-to-image translation with Conditional Adversarial* <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1611.07004.pdf> (accessed 4.3.18 / 14:51)

way; that pix2pix has the potential to become “a generic commodity tool for image-image translation problems”⁸. But this bland analysis of the algorithm’s potential belies a number of cultural, scientific and educational effectors that are worthy of scrutiny. This short text does not afford the time or space to explore all aspects in detail, indeed the abstract makes specific reference to the potential impact on the Institutional discipline of Illustration. Therefore, the aim is to focus on this matter in the hope of achieving some clarity of purpose. It is the relationship between the broad discipline of Illustration, how it is taught and learned⁹, how it is considered in the context of professionalization in formal education and how it’s pedagogic evolution may start to be considered, in order to effectively apprehend multiple, simultaneous and shifting practice landscapes, that is central.

So how does the story of fotogenerator and the pix2pix codebase meaningfully connect to a discussion about Illustration education? Perhaps, with the exception of the occasional dalliances of curious, tech savvy students exploring the ironic potential in unsophisticated imagery, it doesn’t at the moment. It is true that the digitally corrupted images produced by fotogenerator owe something to the more expressive or cathartic forms of figurative Illustration, but they are essentially random at the point of processing and wholly dependent on the preloaded inputs; in fotogenerator’s case the line art and corresponding photographs of Lara Rense. However, fotogenerator is probably the thin end of an AI wedge that is likely to have an impact on Illustration practice. Whilst fotogenerator and pix2pix had very obvious limitations in terms of their combined capacity to intelligently interpret the rudimentary drawn instruction of the user, it does not require a huge leap of the imagination to consider a more sophisticated future application with an increasingly substantive database of source imagery and *beefed up* interpolative ‘intelligence’ giving more enhanced results and greater *creative* scope. It may also be worth considering how, in the future, that intelligence might collate and classify the various visual inputs and preferences of users, developing an augmented understanding of aesthetic biases, reading the choices made in response to variable contexts and stimuli and starting to compile, adapt and *create* imagery based on parameter inputs¹⁰. In other words, the intelligence that is described in novelty applications like fotogenerator and (by comparison) trendlist.org could start to reproduce an understanding of the experiences, decisions, judgement, cognitive latitudes, wild thoughts, random moments of inspiration, tastes and styles etc. of organic Illustrators. Reproduce may be the wrong word, originate might be better. And if or when that happens then we have a low to negative cost alternative to messy meat units. But this is science fiction isn’t it? Our organic creativity is unassailable.

V-OW! Cation.

“(The)Vocational level of job was calculated using OSCR. The results were calculated by giving each subject an occupation-subject concentration ratio (OSCR) – a percentage indicating how “vocational” the subject is, so how likely the students are to go into a career related to their degree.

This was calculated by looking at how many graduates go on to be employed in one of the three most common highly skilled occupations associated with the subject they took at university. Data was only used based on students’ first degrees, so not postgraduate degrees and not second undergraduate degrees...Design studies had an OSCR rating of 26%, meaning just over a quarter of students are likely to go into a

⁸ Efros, A. Isola, P. Zhou, T. Zhu J-Y. *Image-to-image translation with Conditional Adversarial networks*: Berkeley AI Research (BAIR) Laboratory, UC Berkeley
accessed via: <https://arxiv.org/abs/1611.07004> (accessed 4.3.18 / 13:16)

⁹ It would be more accurate to say ‘how knowledge might be built in this context’.

¹⁰ I was recently out walking in the woods with a friend and we were discussing the merits of my *Sperry* duck boots. When we returned home he showed me the Facebook interface on his smart phone. In the advertising column a range of duck boots and related waterproof products had appeared, as if by magic. For me this was a new and marvelous phenomenon. He went on to tell me how this had happened to him on a number of occasions and it was clearly no coincidence. In the context of this discussion, and considering the proliferation of IOT augmented devices, including the ability that smartphones appear to have to listen to and interpret your verbalized whims and desires – it seems plausible to anticipate that this capacity to harvest and interpret data derived from everything that we do and think, could be used to develop a virtual, creative persona. If an algorithm can learn to become a dynamic and evolving ‘creative’, and the IOT hardware is integrated in to almost everything that we hold/wear/use/do, we, the user, may only need to express a vague notion of what we want *or feel*, leaving the code take the strain.

*highly-skilled, related career, while medicine and dentistry had a rating of 99%, meaning nearly all graduates are likely to go into a related career.*¹¹

Ow indeed! This damning statistic ought to strike fear in the hearts of creative Institutions. If word gets out that a degree in Illustration only gives you a one in four chance of getting a job *in Illustration* then we are all doomed! Of course the OSCR is a blunt tool and preferences education to employment routes such as medicine and dentistry precisely because they are vocational, there is a predictable (and presumably almost guaranteed?) terminal employment point. The idea that a job¹², in the conventional sense, is waiting for an Illustration graduate is flawed. This, I would claim, is well known and accepted by Institutions and students alike. Given the level of applications in the UK for Design related courses it does not seem to be a significant barrier to prospective students who want to study through this discipline¹³. However, the employment landscape for Illustrators has evolved radically over the last fifteen years. This is in part due to the ubiquity of the internet as a self-promotional space and the possibilities afforded by (largely visual) social network platforms such as Instagram. Opportunities to develop niche markets have also increased exponentially and Illustrators generally have embraced the prospects afforded by PayPal, Etsy and the like. These, though, are difficult and unpredictable waters to navigate – beyond the conventional, transactional existence of freelance Illustration work, the wild west of platform¹⁴ based entrepreneurialism offers promise and disappointment in equal measure and cannot, I would argue, be relied upon to either provide financially or capitalize on the core competencies and skills developed through disciplinary education. Indeed, the normalization¹⁵ of entrepreneurialism raises some interesting questions about the role of online platforms in reifying the ideologies of neoliberalism, situating those concepts inside narratives of self-actualization that are beginning to dominate Illustration communities, probably out of dire necessity. It is possible to witness this phenomenon in the proliferation of ‘process’ videos and autobiographical creative exposés available online. In a recent conversation with final year undergraduate students that revolved around the relationship between processes and products and the inherent values of both, the consensus in the group was that their (the students) process was as viable a commodity as the produced artefact. This was presented by the students as a normal/natural aspect of their ‘offer’ as commercial creative practitioners. Most striking was the acceptance of the neoliberal paradigm as immutable¹⁶, with no distinction between the public and private in their practice - perhaps the inevitable consequence of an entire lifetime experienced simultaneously off and online.

In this context we see an emerging paradox - if the conventional options for employment, in the case of Illustration mainly freelance and commission based, are gradually beginning to

¹¹ Sarah Dawood. February 6th, 2017, 5:52pm <https://www.designweek.co.uk/issues/12-18-february-2018/design-popular-university-choice-graduates-arent-ending-designers/> (accessed 3.3.18 / 07:57)

¹² job¹ |dʒɒb| noun. 1 a paid position of regular employment:

¹³ 18, 815 acceptances on to UK Design Studies courses in 2017. End of Cycle 2017 Data Resources: DR3_015_01. UCAS Analysis and Research, published on Thursday 14 December 2017 at www.ucas.com.

¹⁴ For more on the realities of Platform Capitalism read Nick Srnicek’s extensive and brilliant analysis in the book of the same name. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/80352/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-Book%20Review%20Platform%20Capitalism%20by%20Nick%20Srnicek.pdf>

¹⁵ Normalization here referring to the bringing of ‘workers’ to a state of *normality* as determined by an organization and/or dominant paradigm or culture – this may be understood in terms of the workers’ journey towards self-actualization (Maslow. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs) and manipulated subjectivity. In other words, that the mechanisms of reflexive modernity, the narratives of flexibility, occupational socialization, self-organization, excellence – described as ‘discourses of the work place’ (Zemblyas) – are contributing towards the control of the subjectivity of the worker. That these forces enacted on the worker and therefore the student ‘worker’ or she/he who engages in work based learning contribute towards a revised subjectivity, a way of thinking and behaving that synthesizes the organisational aims, where the subject implicitly understands them in terms of their own explicit desire for self fulfilment.

¹⁶ William Deresiewicz talks extensively (and critically) about the rapid rise of an entrepreneurial ‘spirit’ in creative practitioners in his article for the New York Times Sunday Review entitled Generation Sell. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/opinion/sunday/the-entrepreneurial-generation.html>.

contract whilst the number of graduates educated through the discipline increases year on year then where to go and what to do? How can we start to re-consider applications for the inherent 'values' in the processes of education associated with the discipline? As previously stated, one option might be to view all aspects of the creative process as commodity. This is a potentially reductive approach, because of the tendency in commercial practice to replicate successful formulae. There is no reason to suspect that in the realms of the commodified self this would be any different. Pursuing that logic, it is possible to imagine an (online) atmospheric pressure to behave and/or perform as a practitioner in a manner that is 'sellable'. In educational spaces these tautological behaviours and acts of mimesis could become confused with the legitimate and necessary acquisition of professional skills and attempts to enable students to transcend these limitations through pedagogic innovations might result in mistrust and anxiety that the worth of the experience has been compromised by Institutional and/or intellectual ideological drivers.¹⁷

What did you say?

Understanding value and worth in learning experiences then is problematic at best. Attempting to frame these qualities in ways that are comprehensible and achieve sufficient universality often results in nebulosity or inadvertent vernacularization. Well intentioned attempts to develop languages that aim to adequately capture some of the underlying cognitive and metacognitive methods which underpin creative practice are manifold. Universities, think tanks and trade organizations regularly attempt this task with varying degrees of success¹⁸. Of the versions that I have seen there is a substantial degree of overlap and it is apparent that, despite the differences in nomenclature, similar kinds of things are being said. But it is important to remember that what is being developed is a variant of Institutional language. For instance, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF)¹⁹ of the 'Top 10 Skills required in 2020' the first three are: *Complex Problem Solving*, *Critical Thinking* and *Creativity*²⁰. Accepting for the moment the voracity of the WEF's practice descriptors I think that it would be fair to say that most Design education would lay claim to these attributes as fundamental to the successful enactment of their disciplines. Illustration is no exception. However, I would suggest that there is a communication gap emerging as Illustrators attempt to articulate their particular creative qualities beyond a professional or Institutional bubble. There is some further suggestion that communities of shared interest, which have grown in number with the expansion of the internet, are exacerbating this linguistic shortfall. Put simply, and in my experience, graduating Illustrators struggle to find ways of effectively communicating the tacit but vital intellectual and practical processes they deploy when developing and executing a project. Viewed in the context of the rapidly changing professional terrain this is a challenge that needs to be met urgently.

As educators our ability to bring the discussion to the studios, lecture theatres, seminar rooms and cafeterias; in short to foreground the matters that will affect the work lives of our graduating students, will be increasingly important. Specifically, the 'known unknowns' of wide scale Automation, Artificial Intelligence, the normalization of self- entrepreneurship and the stagnation/contraction of conventional Illustration 'employment'. Identifying and articulating the high value capabilities of creative practitioners, as well as meaningfully excavating the true potential of Illustration practice will need to become the *sine qua non* of contemporary Illustration education. This short paper has not attempted to define what form that process could or should take, more rallying call than manifesto it is aimed at the fractures in the present that suggest potential futures. The hope is that by suggesting we open up a space to

¹⁷ This anonymous, extended piece by a recent graduate from Norwich University of the Arts makes clear some of the difficulties encountered by students and attempts to confront perceived inequities and flaws in the Institutional approaches and systems. <https://medium.com/@anonartboy/nua-a-graduates-account-249cb5be6819> (accessed 8.3.18 / 17:54)

¹⁸ University of the Arts London (UAL) has its own set of descriptors called the Creative Attributes Framework (CAF). CAF comprises of three categories each containing three descriptors: 1. Making Things Happen: Proactivity, Enterprise and Agility. 2. Showcasing abilities and accomplishments with others: communication, connectivity and Storytelling. 3. Life-wide Learning: Curiosity, Self-Efficacy, Resilience.

¹⁹ Data and descriptors are derived from a number of significant reports including WEF's *New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning Through Technology* and *The Future of Jobs*. Both reports can be accessed here: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/03/21st-century-skills-future-jobs-students/>

²⁰ For the complete list see: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/03/21st-century-skills-future-jobs-students/>

bear witness to some of the potential future possibilities of Illustration educational practice now, we might lay the foundation for a more expanded, reflexive and sustainable discipline in the future. It's a stab at viral intervention, what Srnicek and Williams might call a Hyperstition – an antidote to the latent, enviro-techno-socio traumas, a doomjolt-ante.

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