

SESSION TWO

Arts and media: the anti-subject, new knowledge and reflexive practices.

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Abstract

This short presentation is developed from three sources; my recent experience of interdisciplinary research at Tate Britain; my longer experience of teaching in British Higher Education; and some of the thinking I did in co-authoring *The New Media Handbook* (Routledge 2006).

We are speaking today at a particularly uncertain moment for the cultures and economies of Western Europe and indeed for the wider world. The instinct of most of us working professionally in the public cultural and educational sectors is to brace ourselves to defend gains of the recent past in the face of cuts in provision and services. However, intellectually this is not a moment for retrenchment in which we attempt to shore up traditional disciplinary boundaries and insist on tried and tested practices. On the contrary this is a moment, however difficult it feels, to embrace change, or, more accurately, a moment to adjust our official thinking and practices to the changes that have been taking place on a world scale over a longer period of the recent past

The period we have been living through has been variously described as post-modern, late modern or in Giddens's (1994) terms post-traditional society. In all such complex accounts of social and cultural change, it is that nexus of economic and technical processes surrounding globalization, which are seen and understood as the driving force of change. In documenting the impact of such forces on art education we might point to; the changing cultural composition of students; the questioning of the Eurocentric canon of art; an embrace of multiculturalism; and the inclusion of computing within art and media design practices. But what I want to suggest is that these currencies, whilst a necessary accommodation to a changing world, are insufficient to meet the opportunities and threats of globalization. Instead I want to suggest that art education needs to build a transcultural curriculum based upon transdisciplinarity. What then in these terms is missing from the art curriculum is the space of the world.

My brief talk here proposes that this is a positive moment of transculturality and transdisciplinarity in which the key gain is to teach collaboratively from and as research. In a more polemical version I think of this as an anti-subject moment, in which it is our questions about and collaborations in the world, which should drive the creation of useful knowledge. I see this emergent pedagogy as an opportunity to explore the world across and outside of the boundaries of institutional space and in effect to redraw the architecture of our educational and cultural institutions. In part I think I am offering an overarching model for much that is already good collaborative and relational art practice and practice as research.

Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash. REFLEXIVE MODERNIZATION: *POLITICS, TRADITION AND AESTHETICS IN THE MODERN SOCIAL ORDER*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994.