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FUTURE ART SCHOOL TRENDS UK (FAST UK).

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ABSTRACT | Scenarios for envisioning future thinking in arts education are typically constrained by perceptions of contemporary circumstances as immutable, despite political fluctuations across the Global North: determined by culture ‘wars,’ socio-economic, and ecological crises. While the future of art and design education cannot be predicted, we can help shape it by joining forces across/beyond borders (disciplinary, institutional, geopolitical) to create more horizontal hierarchies of knowledge tested through participatory discovery and discursive research methods. Drawing on the Learning Platform of ELIA: FAST45 (Futures Art School Trends 2045), FAST UK is introduced as an emergent nexus of British educators, student collectives, and third-sector partners. We actively embrace diverse stakeholders in the public domain as a socio-conceptual space for formulating an equivalent Pedagogic Futures Research Lab in the UK. This experiment in future thinking is devised as a catalyst for more robust multimodal bodies of knowledge employing discursive and empathic approaches to co-construct pragmatic and theoretical new methodologies, more porous academic boundaries, and future visions for the (British) art schools of tomorrow. Art school traditions, models, and methods are unpicked as a part of this process to sift best practices from habits/norms and familiar formulae through the lens of the possible, probable, potential, plausible, preferable, or even utopian futures for the sector. New forms of art practice, generative AI, radical pedagogies, performative practices, and hybrid technologies are synthesised in a convergence of knowledge. FAST UK is conceived of as a means of anticipating and shaping our collective futures by utilising the inherently imaginative, intellectual, and creative resources (human, strategic, methodological) nurtured and developed in our art schools at a local, regional, inter/national, and global scale.

1. Introduction

Shaped by the cultural and socio-economic climate of our time, the art school is situated in an uncertain position as a state-funded institution producing creative innovations and new knowledge, contributing significantly to economic growth in the UK. Its popular (historical) status as an emancipatory site for creative and intellectual freedom, innovation and imagination, radical thought and action, integrated with a pragmatic preparation for professional practice in the service of industry, has led to fluctuating socio-cultural values and industrial allegiances. Over a century since the official opening of the Bauhaus in Germany (1919 – 1933), UK-based foundation arts education programmes remain significantly influenced by historical modernist principles of progress and production, achieved through a synthesis of form and function in the pursuit of a better tomorrow. In addition to the modernist pursuit of a new lived environment through art, architecture, and design, future-thinking has developed as a core characteristic of HE arts institutes that challenge students to shape their future through new cultural resources, anticipating future techno-social worlds. Academic course and module descriptors frame the future of creative work as full of possibilities but also uncertainty, as evidenced by the common refrain that many jobs in the future do not yet exist (it is students that will create them). Yet, what was imagined as an invocation to revolutionise the future of design work and fine art practices has become constrained by the immediacy of urgent climate and energy crises, socio-economic inequalities, funding cuts to the arts, cultural sector, and education in the context of political short-term thinking and turbulence. At a time when local councils in the UK have made 100% cuts to support for the arts and creative subjects have been systematically underfunded and diminished in their academic, social-cultural, and economic value from school to Higher Education levels, radical collaborative proposals are needed to reposition art and design pedagogy, research and practice at the forefront of socio-political action.

Arts education is framed in this paper not as a ‘reflex’ of the labour market or the knowledge economy but as an act of critical agency and transformation through the collective actions (Giroux, 1985: xi) of a transdisciplinary group of British arts educators, students, and local community groups. Following in the footsteps of the cultural legacy and educational significance strategically built by Bauhaus tutors and students in a collective act of self-actualisation through published manifestoes, pamphlets, exhibitions and catalogues, lectures, and media campaigns, FAST 45 calls on arts and design academics to be at the forefront of envisioning future scenarios for the art school. Walter Gropius’ radical pedagogic vision for the Bauhaus converged theory and practice and unified the applied and fine arts within an interdisciplinary programme facilitated by the architectural site of the art school as a ‘home’ for future thinking and making. The *gesamtkunstwerk* (synthesis of diverse art forms) was characterised by an absence of ornamentation in an embrace of objectivity and rational design on the one hand and post-war optimism and radical experimentation on the other.

Future Art School Trends (UK) or FAST UK is introduced as a nascent collaborative arts education futures project instigated and co-constructed by a collaborative team of interdisciplinary educators from Kingston School of Art (London) and Nottingham Trent University in the UK. The critical context of UK-based arts and design Higher Education provides the focus and context for FAST UK, but this is not intended to delimit its research findings on a more global scale, nor is it framed as an exclusive internally facing project. On the contrary, its generative nature, collaborative structure, and porous edges are symbolically and practically designed to form discursive intersections with diverse partners and contributors. As such, this paper is presented as an open invitation for creative input and exchange, adaptability, and mutability, framed by the conference theme of converging pedagogic knowledge. The initial inspiration and catalyst for creating FAST UK was the FAST 45: Futures (Un)Known conference in Brussels (6 – 7 December 2023), at which participants (predominantly arts and design educators from Europe and the USA) were invited to join forces to “imagine and promote a future in which the arts and arts education plays an integral role in a world radically reshaped by the 4th industrial revolution, globalisation, and climate change” (FAST45, 2023, *np.*). We met at the conference as strangers, discovering a common passion for collaborative discourse around arts and design education. The conference call to collaboratively reflect on and reimagine art’s role in envisioning and shaping our collective academic and professional futures represented a productive

provocation for a more expansive and generative thought experiment in future thinking. As the website states, Future Art School Trends 45 (FAST 45) aims “to imagine, map, and shape a higher arts education landscape where participation, research, and education in the arts play a crucial and integrated role within the sector and society as a whole” (ELIA: FAST 45, 2024, *np*). The convenors of the FAST 45: Futures (Un)Known conference made it clear to attendees that the learning tools (Learning Platform) co-created by the research participants could be used and adapted by all arts/educational institutions who are seeking to anticipate unknown futures and actively shape them. With this collegiate spirit in mind, we left the conference having agreed to form a distinct but aligned future art school research group.

FAST UK is presented to the Cumulus community as a statement of intent and an invitation for collaborations across borders and disciplinary boundaries to join and enrich this discursive convergence of knowledge through tangential insights, oppositions, and synergies. The FAST UK pedagogic research group aims to empower arts educators through a spirit of convivial exchange rather than competition to not only anticipate possible futures for the arts but also to be co-leaders of future thinking.

2.A Reflective Overview of FAST 45

Launched in 2022, Future Art School Trends (FAST 45) takes a futures-thinking approach to imagine the educational landscape of 2045 as the year when those born in 2022 might apply to study a degree-level arts discipline. What socio-cultural, strategic, pragmatic, or symbolic role might the art school institution of the future offer prospective students? The Futures (Un)Known conference formed part of a programme launched in 2022 across several European arts institutions from Belgium, Estonia, Switzerland, the Republic of Ireland, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands, as well as non-academic partners such as the School of Commons. FAST UK was conceived as a direct consequence of in-person attendance at the Futures (Un)Known conference: its aims are closely aligned but distinct due to the socio-economic and political circumstances of contemporary Higher Education in the arts in the UK. We have identified a need to place UK educators at the heart of discourse to actively shape the future of our institutions in a pedagogic exchange. The FAST 45: Futures (Un)Known (ELIA, 2023, *np.*) home page presents participants and audiences with a challenge:

“Close your eyes. Picture the arts in higher education in 2045. Imagine multiple futures and how working practices will change while dealing with global uncertainty. Is it possible to map unknown futures today? What structures do we need to create the sustainable and desirable futures our art students deserve?” (FAST 45, 2023, *np.*)

A research-in-action and knowing-in-action approach that draws on Donald Schön’s (1987) conscious engagement with mutual dialogue as a method of developing new forms of understanding and action lends a more reflective evaluation of the research process in future thinking. For Schön, the alert participant in dialogic future research consolidates the methods of discovery and knowing as a part of the active process of thinking about the research while actively engaged in it. The FAST 45 workshop techniques and methods employed during the conference to explore certain aspects of future arts education are thus incorporated and adapted into FAST UK as core methods of exploring future pedagogies and practice research. For example, four scenarios have been developed by FAST 45 to act as adaptable “tools that will empower arts institutions to not only anticipate an unknown future but to actively shape it” (FAST 45, 2022, *np.*). They include:

- Scenario 1: Open Spaces: hubs of artistic ingenuity, encouraging creativity and collaboration, addressing the complex problems of society and the planet.
- Scenario 2: Slow Eco-life: Slowness and degrowth are seen as catalysts for creativity, while resource scarcity is integral to artistic growth.
- Scenario 3: Phygital Frontiers: fresh perspectives and legislation are needed to navigate the ethical challenges of technology-driven art.

- Scenario 4: Profitable Endeavours: To thrive, artists and institutions must adapt, forge alliances, and embrace alternative networks that foster inclusivity, artistic freedom, and diverse perspectives.

FAST UK seeks to triangulate future thinking, the Learning Platform tools of FAST45, and a diverse coalition of art and design school stakeholders in a new synthesis of theory and practice, media and methods, community and academia, co-created by those currently studying and teaching in the UK. FAST UK will also embrace and develop the spirit of convivial participation designed for participants of the Futures (Un)Known conference as a human-centred method of collaboration, incorporating interactive media, prompt cards, speed dating, Q&A sessions, data gathering, analysis, mapping, and knowledge creation in multimodal discourse. Experimental modes of research and engagement, including performance poetry and sound works, will also be adapted from FAST 45 as alternative future-thinking approaches to workshop construction and deployment. FAST UK is, thus, framed in this paper as an emergent nexus of educators, students, and third-sector partners co-constructing strategies for a radical reappraisal of arts education and new configurations of the art school itself within urban, suburban, and rural locations. This experiment in future thinking is devised as a collective rather than competitive approach to innovation – joining forces across disciplines and institutions to make new networks of shared knowledge for, with, about, and through art and design education. The FAST UK collective is conceived of as a means of anticipating and shaping our collective futures by utilising the inherently imaginative, intellectual, and creative resources nurtured and developed in our art schools at local, regional, national, and European levels.

3. UK Art school visions of the future past

Art school myths persist as institutional prospectuses and promotional platforms attest by claiming that art school teaches you to rethink and reshape the world in a crucible for original thinking, risk-taking, and critical thinking (Tickle, 2013). Within the duration of three-year (BA) or one-year (MA) programmes, art students are tasked with addressing urgent (vast and complex) global challenges, from climate and energy crises to health and well-being, to ethnic and gender equality, in the form of cutting-edge designs and inspirational art forms that will simultaneously contribute to economic growth. These achievements are sought while simultaneously succeeding at the highest level (there is no alternative level) of attainment (assessment grades), leading to a lucrative position in one of the ‘creative industries’ (to pay off student loans and concurrent debts), winning design awards, being selected for exclusive exhibitions and building a significant following on social media.

Corporate branding and design agencies promote visions of art education as a force for social good but also individual self-actualisation in a competitive global market. That art schools have the strategic and structural capacity to fulfil these obligations is not in question, but in current and future visions of academia, what needs to be addressed is the role of the art school itself as an idea, place, and community of practice which is instrumental in the conception and construction of future visions. This paper seeks to go beyond the current UK Education policies, which, even in 2013 (when fees were increased to £9000 per year), were “driven by an overarching political view of how the world should work. A sense that [the] government sees every aspect of cultural life purely in terms of its economic utility” (Guardian, 2013, *np.*). While the images and nomenclature employed by art schools in their designed visions and mission statements have adapted to new challenges (e.g., decolonising the curriculum, increased equality, diversity, and inclusivity in curricula) and labour markets, this paper argues that a new collective convergence of knowledge is urgently required from students and tutors, technicians, librarians, and researchers within Higher Education (HE) to reimagine art school futures. In the age of AI and machine-led knowledge production, social and ecological crises, and global conflict, there is more urgency than ever to rethink our models of education, drawing on diverse voices.

Beyond the neoliberal affordances of the UK's vibrant arts education sector, future thinking is inherent to art and design practices, giving form and credibility to new ways of living, working, and being in the world. As Ramia Mazé (2019) argues, in the process of conceiving and producing visions of the future, artists, educators, students, and designers give form to possible, plausible, or preferable scenarios, visualised by Voros (2015) in Figure 01 below. Futurists use the plural of 'futures' because the master concept of the futures field is that of the existence of many potential alternative futures rather than simply a single future (Voros, 2022). Futures studies are the systematic study of possible, probable, and preferable futures, including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future vision – alert to the methodologies or mechanisms that don't change as well as those elements that do differ. What is considered an advancement, a progressive vision? And who for? Who benefits from the future vision for the arts and arts education? Dominated by technological determinism, such visions often fail to make explicit the shifts in the social imaginary, labour, and policy required to instigate critical shifts to “gender norms, socio-ecological practices, and power structures” (Mazé, 2019, p.23).

Future visions of art school education are thus approached as a fundamentally social discourse embracing diverse positions to strategically and productively coalesce new models and methods drawn from a wide range of re/sources and stakeholders. As discussed with attendees at the conference, future curriculum planning needs to consider the urban and suburban creative practices of local communities as a divergent embrace of DIY coding, graffiti, and music production, the theatre of the street, and performative communication.

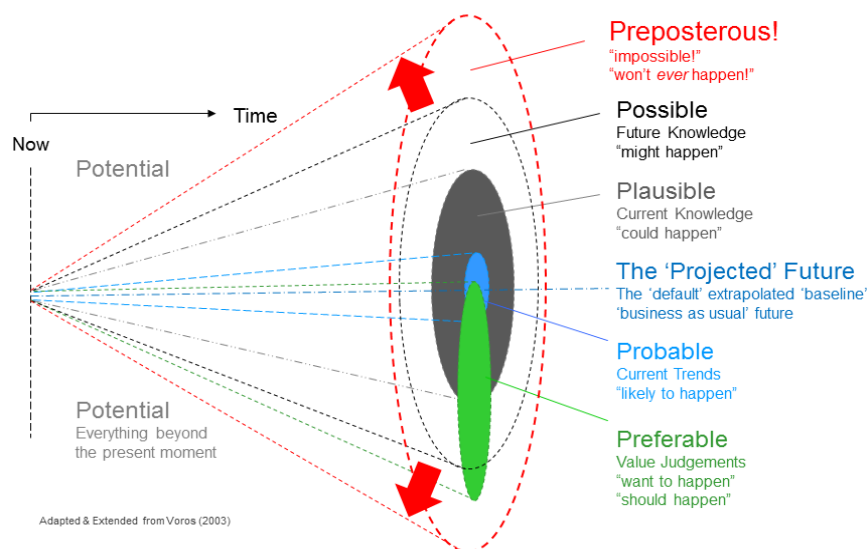


Figure 1: The Futures Cone, adapted and extended from Voros (2015).

'Art school' is employed as an overarching umbrella term coalescing broad concepts of art and design education to purposefully invoke examples of symbolic art institutions of the past (Bauhaus, Ulm, Black Mountain College). Art school is often framed as a crucible for such future thinking in action, although as the queer, intersectional, feminist platform Futuress (2024, *np.*) argues, “common design practice, its history, pedagogy, and institutions remain predominantly Western, white, privileged, cisgender, and able-bodied.” The mythical concept of art school may have survived as a backdrop to contemporary arts education in the UK, but the internal power structures and neoliberal ideologies of competitive individualism are at odds with the traditional values of collaboration, transformation, creative discovery, and freedom. Decades of underfunding in the UK threaten to undermine the learning experience offered to students as the often reductive nature of how art and design education is described by government ministers and media alike is determined by market forces and a recent rise in media references to ‘culture wars.’ Arts educators are thus consistently asked to do more with less or to paraphrase the British BBC TV comedy series WC1A (BBC, 2014 – 2017) ‘More of Less Initiative’ described by one character in this way: “The fact is, this is about identifying what we do best and finding more ways of doing less of it better”

(Wollaston, 2017, *np.*).

Historically, British art schools, such as St. Martin's School of Art (UAL) or Hornsey College of Art (founded in 1880), have accumulated an image of counter-cultural rebellion (Tickle, 2013), a transformative discovery of the self and the world. However, the plethora of free schools, alternative universities, self-organised collectives, and courses that have expanded in recent years in the UK as well as in Europe suggests that the current state-sanctioned provision is not meeting the needs and ambitions of young people (Kosmaoglou, 2017). What the expansion of newly formed alternative art schools reveals is the need for ownership and engagement in the form of arts education, which eschews the hierarchical structures of modules, fixed curriculum, assessment, standardisation, and constant measurement. The conventional teacher-student power relationship (derived from the historical master-apprentice model) of the classroom/studio is disrupted in a more collective embrace of learning and experiencing arts education for all. These alternative art schools feature collective strategies for engaging students in the possibilities of their own learning experiences beyond the neoliberal framework of more established validated institutional systems. Indeed, as more collective arts, architecture, and design collectives emerge from the transdisciplinary social opportunities of studio-based art school study, perhaps the first change in the future art school model must be in a collective alternative to the predominantly individualistic assessment criteria. The impulse to collaborate rather than compete in contemporary arts education programs and practices suggests a transitional moment is at hand for course leaders, teachers, students, and external partners.

With the rapid and increasing emergence and availability of AI software as an embedded tool for the creation of artworks and artefacts, the traditional certainties of knowledge transference between experienced teacher and pupil are called further into question. When a student, born in 2022, can produce, direct, change, merge, and edit their creation alone in their bedroom through machine intelligence, what role does the art institution play in teaching those nuanced skills? The creation of an artwork (in collaboration with AI) necessitates the questioning of values - what is the value of this work beyond Walter Benjamin's notion of aura (Benjamin, 1936)? What is the intent of the student? What do they understand about the context of the composite ideas and images and the nature of the collaboration? What does this say about being human?

4. Future Studies Futures Thinking

In his essay, 'A primer on Futures Studies, foresight and the use of scenarios' Joseph Voros (2022) highlights the broad field of future thinking which goes by a variety of names, including: "‘futures research,’ ‘futures studies,’ sometimes ‘futures analysis,’ ‘futurism,’ ‘futuristics,’ or even ‘futurology’" (Voros, 2022). Many have negative connotations. As such, a research framework for future thinking within academic contexts may suffer from the ambiguity or topicality of its nomenclature. Voros adapts three 'laws' of futures from Roy Amara (1981) to establish a conceptual foundation for the futures field:

- the future is not predetermined
- the future is not predictable
- future outcomes can be influenced by our choices in the present

Higher Education might be framed as a programme of preparation for future practices in which curricula are designed to meet the challenges of today and anticipate the needs of tomorrow, responding to real-world problems in a hopeful projection of art and design's power to have an impact on the world. As educators, we help students give tangible form to speculative future scenarios as a means of better understanding the link between action and impact – social, ecological, economic, political, and cultural – on a local and global scale. Future skills (Kingston University, 2022) such as adaptability, collaboration, collective resilience, relationship building, and critical thinking are identified by businesses as necessary thinking tools to meet the challenges of tomorrow in civic and corporate contexts. To this list, we might add future thinking as a means of reconfiguring the reactive approach to contemporary local and global crises and adopting a more proactive position for the arts, culture, and education in future thinking. Art

school is (or has represented) an ideal environment for such skills to be developed and in a process of transformation through learning, for innovative modes of creative thinking and problem-solving to be applied and integrated into everyday experiences. As Ramia Mazé argues, “designed visions of the future, along with their preferences, norms, and ideals, shape policy planning, market economies and cultural imaginaries” (Mazé, 2019, p.24). But how can we approach a future unknown with heuristics to create change when the parameters for creative practice are so ill-defined?

On MA Graphic Design (Kingston School of Art), responsible approaches to visualising future scenarios are applied to future thinking in a reflective process of analysing historical images of our future lives. In these scenarios or tableaux, the (male) workers may be observed flying on jet packs to the sleek shiny office, while the domestic sphere remains depressingly familiar in its division of labour and gender bias. The shapers of our cultural horizons must be fully conscious of what we allow to change (travel, climate, work) and what remains the same (social, ethnic, and economic inequality) in our future imaginings. Critical reflection is therefore essential to underpin the principles and methodologies of imaging our future world through ‘Futures thinking,’ ‘speculative’ and ‘critical design,’ and ‘design fiction’ if we are to avoid reinforcing the stereotypes and inequalities of contemporary life and work.

“Speculative design asks questions about the future and offers some alternatives that are essential for the world of today, but more importantly, the world of tomorrow... the speculative design approach expands the critical practice towards imagination and diverse visions of possible future scenarios.” (Mitrović, 2016, p.69).

Who gets to decide what the future looks like? Or how connected we are through social and or technological networks? How much of our cultural heritage do we bring to our future selves? Art and design’s (modernist) claims for a universal language, the globalisation of the arts, cultural capital, and the enfolding of commerce and common culture arguably frame ‘the future’ itself as a design problem (Mazé, 2019; Reeves, Goulden, & Dingwall, 2016). And it is often a singular future that is sought, following time’s chronological arrow in a logical progression from *the* past through the murky waters of the present to *a* future. Designing for a future art school education is a political act. Indeed, despite the initial intellectual and critical opportunities for design practice enabled by speculative research, its ‘flaws’ were soon exposed, as Francisco Laranjo argues, as ‘critical design’ became interchangeable with speculative as an ambiguous and unaccountable doctrine “synonymous with a vague ‘what if’ mode of design predominantly practised by white, middle-class Europeans” (Laranjo, 2024). The aphorism-cum-heuristic of “the purpose of a system is what it does” from the cybernetician Stafford Beer (2002) still provides a useful beginning frame from which to proceed. What does the art school *do* currently, and what do ‘we,’ as participants, labourers, co-constructors, and stakeholders, want it to do? How can Futures Thinking be used as a method for opening-up visions around this while taking on board such criticisms as those posed by Laranjo and Futuress?

As a crucible for the possible, art schools are ideal environments in which to problematise future thinking and to instigate alternative mindsets and methodologies through scenario-building. Scenarios can provide focused frameworks for research and thought experiments as an exercise in critically identifying an ideal socio-political location for an art school demonstrated at the design educators’ conference in the UK (GDEN, Ideas of Revolt, 2017). In this context, alternative socio-political scenarios (utopia, dictatorship, monarchy, communism) were examined in an action-based workshop on the speculative possibilities of art school – as a concept and place of revolt. Scenarios were devised, deconstructed, and critically interrogated on a sliding scale from the speculative to the pragmatic (Ellis, 2017) as a means of thinking beyond the parameters of the now. Voros’ (2022) Futures Cone enhances scenario building through the lens of future thinking in an embrace of the possible and impossible in a more pluralistic mode of critical thinking. Through four scenarios, described next, FAST UK’s critical and speculative approach to envisioning future art schools thus seeks to harness inspirational thinking and radical pedagogies. Underpinned by criticality and convivial collaboration, the scenarios seek to decolonise academic conventions and expand the boundaries of the academy to embrace local communities in a more proactive and collective exchange of ideas and interests to provoke socially engaged art practices and action.

5. FAST UK – a new convergence of knowledge

Some of these questions have been tackled by organisations such as AdvanceHE, a member-led charity which aims to ‘shape the future of HE’ by addressing “systemic inequalities and advance education to meet the evolving needs of students and society” (AdvanceHE, 2024). Other national networks for arts education in the UK, such as the Group for Learning in Art and Design in Higher Education (GLAD) established in 1988, work towards pragmatic discussion about ‘best practice in developing the student experience’ with a focus on teaching, learning, and assessment “in the context of increasing student numbers and reductions in staffing” (GLAD, 2024, *np.*). More discipline-focused groups such as the Graphic Design Educators’ Network (GDEN),

Illustration Educators, National Association for Fine Art Education (NAFAE), or EDI (equality, diversity, and inclusion) networks such as Fashion Academics Creating Equality (FACE) seek to re-establish the purpose and value of a given subject of study or field of the arts and to challenge the lack of Black, Brown, and POC academics in the HE system, for instance. No equivalent future-focused multi-disciplinary arts pedagogy research group such as FAST 45 currently exists in the UK.

In response, as coordinators of FAST UK, we propose a parallel set of scenarios to those established by FAST 45, which seek to identify and celebrate best practices drawn from British HE arts institutions while creating intellectual and discursive spaces for new knowledge methods and configurations of arts education to be interrogated. FAST UK has strategically expanded in its scope, incorporating third-sector groups such as The Community Brain (Community Brain, 2024a), student-led autonomous art schools such as the Offshore Art School, and self-organised alternative art schools such as Open School East. By integrating a broader spectrum of stakeholders in the arts and art and design education, FAST UK seeks to cement the core qualities and values of the arts into everyday discourse beyond the academy and within the social imaginary (Castoriadis, 1975). The social imaginary is framed as a social network negotiated between members of an (academic) arts community which anticipates a synthesis of the real (today) and the future-possible (tomorrow).

FAST UK is presented as an expansive forum for debate, an open invitation for participation at this conference, which is ideally placed to exploit the community of art and design educators and researchers drawn from 730 member institutions across 69 countries. Cumulus thus provides a unique itinerant context for and means of exchanging/converging knowledge to elevate “the positive role of designers and artists in creating sustainable and humane futures for all” (Cumulus, 2024). The collective context of the Cumulus forum “represents a dynamic ecosystem for internationalization and global mobility, knowledge exchange, and collaboration in art and design pedagogy, research, and practice” (Cumulus, 2024). The wealth of pedagogic experiences, diverse epistemologies, and methodologies brought to Cumulus conferences is sought to strengthen the emergent research model of FAST UK. The four research scenarios proposed by FAST UK include:

- Student Voice & Alternative Art Schools
- Art School: the role of the institution
- Decolonising the Curriculum
- Civic/social responsibility: third places / third spaces / third sector.

Student voice & alternative art schools — Those studying art and design are rarely asked for their visions of the futures of their practice, or when asked, their visions are diluted or overwhelmed by the avalanche of competing interests and economic forces within arts institutions. This Pedagogic Futures Forum is proposed as a student-led, inter-disciplinary, and inter-institutional space in which current students can meet to discuss the future directions, modes, spaces, and aims of art school/HE in the UK. It builds on previous Alternative Art School collectives (Gale, 2017) and current student-led groups such as the Offshore Art School at Kingston School of Art. As a mode of research-in-action, tests in gallery foyers, publications,

talks, and workshops (Festival of Futures, June 17 – 20, Kingston-upon-Thames, UK), these autonomous student forums are connected and sustained through Instagram and accessible digital platforms enabling diverse voices and suggestions to be added to the mix. The members of the itinerant art school model collaboratively conceive and configure their own new power structures to facilitate accessional interventions, provocations, and contexts (for a more expanded historical or global sphere of possibilities).

The Anti University, *Blueprint for Counter Education* (Stein & Miller, 2016), and Black Mountain College provide a backdrop to the emergence of free or collective self-managed arts schools such as the School of the Damned, the Islington Mill, Open School East, and The Margate School in the UK, and the Parallel School or Maumaus in mainland Europe. Representatives from these schools and intra-institutional schools-within-schools such as the Alternative Art School (Gale, 2017), Offshore Art School (Gale, 2014), Department 21, and Splinter will be invited to speak to the concept of art school from beyond academic boundaries, module systems, curricula, and assessment processes. These self-organised (co-operative and collective) schools are cited here as examples of previous or alternative models that can be analysed and evaluated as spaces from which to learn or to build other practices. Such models face challenges in terms of resources and financial capital but are gaining in popularity due to the high degree of collective ownership amongst the participants, the freedom of pedagogic processes, and a focus on the core value of art practices. They can be susceptible to the aforementioned hierarchies, privilege, and structural challenges that formal institutions battle but offer another position.

Art School: the role of the institution — Art school has a heritage of rebellion, a healthy counter-cultural critique of societal norms and political positions expressed through the visual and performative tools of the arts. Alternative Art Schools, as listed above, are examples of additional and parallel spaces through which students can channel creative activity and thinking, and we can usefully draw on these examples through a contemporary lens to imagine models for the future. Students who are undertaking a formal education in a formal setting are still able to continue discourse and conversation in a variety of spaces outside of the

A formal institutional framework but a less measured, less assessed, and more convivial context for such dialogic practice is made possible. With the impact of generative AI working collaboratively with students (robot and human) and the advancement of computational practice and machine-led making and learning, where does this leave the institution? If what students need to learn is ‘intent’ and to understand bias, AI references, and context, perhaps the institution itself becomes the hub of human-centred learning. We propose that this necessitates an urgent need to reframe the institution as the mediator of these, thinking through this history of Art Education in order to position ourselves in a future space of critical relevance.

Decolonising the Curriculum — From reading lists to interrogating and dismantling hierarchies of power in contemporary institutions, decolonising the curriculum represents a shift in motion within UK art schools. Whether systemic changes rather than superficial name changes are a result may depend on the leadership and inclination of each institution, but good examples can be found in several colleges and current courses. Understanding history from the position of now and learning from the recent proliferation of curatorial platforms and biennales celebrating non-Eurocentric practices and voices that would once have been silenced offers reassurance. But there is still a long way to go. Sustainability, not as popular rhetoric for a poster campaign but rather an integral philosophical agenda, is a key component in establishing a balance between human and non-human cultures. The Western art world (as just one part of a broader network of consumption) has not held sustainability as a core value until relatively recently, with organisations like Julies Bicycle helping arts institutions to work better (or to help make things ‘less worse’). It is the responsibility of art schools and institutions to help shape a community of practitioners and makers who consider the future and the origins of the materials they use.

Civic/social responsibility / third places / third spaces / third sector — Reconfiguring and relocating the art school beyond the ‘bubble’ or ivory tower of the art school/academy FAST UK seeks to integrate discourse and knowledge with the local communities in (their) third spaces (neutral community spaces such as cafes, bars, village halls, libraries). By repositioning the forum for debate and action from the academic institution to the spaces that belong to the community, opportunities to meet new audiences on

their terms are enabled. Such collaborative discussions and joint activities have already been established with The Community Brain (2024a) in the Kingston/Surbiton area of southwest London. Such partnerships and Knowledge Exchange collaborative projects provide opportunities to test the value of arts education methods and social interventions in context. Collaboration and communication with charities / third-sector organisations are featured as a means of grounding ideas in relation to local environments and meeting the needs of local people in the civic sphere. Including and empowering local people through a convivial exchange of creative transferable skills extends the edges of the art school itself to encompass a new dialogue of collective potential.

6. Summary

While we can agree with the Erasmus+ funded FAST 45's claim that the world of 2045 – or indeed tomorrow – might look very different and that the future is unknown, the coalition of contributors from arts education and business propose that we take a more proactive role in shaping the future landscape of higher education. In a participatory approach to mapping, imagining, and interrogating future scenarios for the arts and culture sectors, FAST 45 has built a substantial body of research material which they have sought to share within the wider arts and design educational community. The invitation to participate in the project of empowering arts institutions through the diverse stakeholders engaged directly or tangentially with its production and delivery struck a chord with us, the instigators of FAST UK. As a small group of UK-based educators from graphic design, fine art, and film, we were inspired by the inclusive approach of the conference leaders and the inclusive nature of problem-finding and debate. Inspired by the optimistic attitude of those attending the event, FAST UK was conceived of as a means of anticipating and shaping our collective futures by utilising the inherently imaginative, intellectual, and creative resources (human, strategic, methodological) nurtured and developed in all art schools, whether at a local, regional, inter/national, and global scale.

The urgent need to remind arts and design educators of their inherent yet overlooked and undervalued ability to explore ideas and visions of the possible as part of an interdisciplinary and international coalition of creative thinkers comes at a time of crisis in the UK. The need for new ideas and methods in and for the arts, culture, and education sectors in the UK and more globally is laid bare in this paper, as the political climate in post-Brexit Britain has seen the value of arts education dramatically decline in recent years. What FAST UK aims to instigate is a UK-wide collective research community of inter-connected stakeholders in arts and design education futures thinking for and with arts educators, students, and (local) communities. Research collaborations have already been established within the neighbourhood surrounding Kingston School of Art (The Community Brain, 2024b) facilitated by Dr. Gale's membership and role as Professor of Ludic heterotopias in the semi-fictional Free University of Seething. Drawing on the transdisciplinary skills and experiences of the current FAST UK team, each member is reaching out to connect with communities of practice to build scenarios for testing radical pedagogies and expanded notions of practice in the arts and Higher Education.

The small team (collective) of UK-based educators who present this paper were inspired by the rigour and creativity of the FAST 45 initiative and resolved to create an aligned but distinct thought experiment in arts education futures for the UK, as no such group currently exists. FAST UK draws on areas of local expertise and academic progress made in recent years, such as in embedding EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) into curricula and establishing respectful forums for Students' Voices. FAST UK is envisioned as an agile research project that speaks to the common concerns and proposals emerging from the FAST 45 Learning Resources and extends threads of enquiry to incorporate unexpected insights and future unknowns. The FAST UK team is seeking a community of practice through the Cumulus conference in Budapest this year as an opportunity to converge the rich knowledge resources available at this global meeting of educators, students, and researchers. We have the ambition, with your support, to anticipate and shape our collective futures by utilising the inherently imaginative, intellectual, and creative resources nurtured and developed in our art schools at a local, regional, national, and global scale.

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