



nsead

*How we do things matters as much  
as what we do: ecologies of  
practice.*

NSEAD President's Address  
IJADE 'Ecologies' conference 2025  
Andy Ash

# The Practice of Practice

Ecologies, Care and  
New Ways of Being in  
Art & Design Education

NSEAD Conference  
Keynote – Part II

Continuity:  
Where we  
left off

In the summer  
conference: A  
Curriculum of Curiosity  
& Hope

curriculum → culture  
hope → practice

# How We Do Things Matters

What we do is not enough

How we do it shapes  
culture, belonging and  
creativity

How we do things matters  
as much as what we do

# Ecologies of Practice

- Learning happens through relationships:
- People
- Spaces
- Materials
- Conversations
- Shared rituals



# From Curriculum to Ecology

Curriculum = content

Ecology = conditions

We cultivate environments,  
not just lessons

# Reality in the UK landscape

Shrinking creativity time in  
schools

Reduced access to  
resources

Teacher attrition

Inequity in creative  
pathways

Agency  
Needs  
Community

Reflection changes  
the self.

Practice changes  
the system.

Agency must be  
collective.



# The Practice of Practice

Values in action:

Collaboration

Reciprocity

Context & care

Ethical making

# What Students Really Learn

Beyond technique, students learn:

How we critique

How we handle failure

How we share power

# Professional Bodies Must Shift

From gatekeepers  
→ gardeners

From judgement →  
generosity

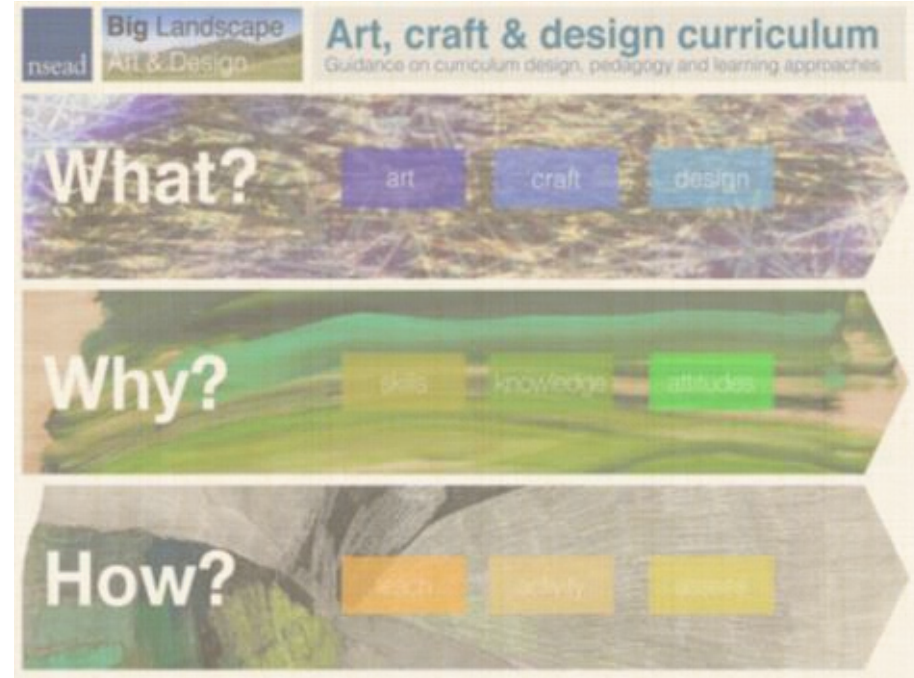
From compliance →  
culture

Collective  
Agency


Old model: I  
shape my  
practice

New model: We  
shape our  
ecology

# The Big Landscape



and the one-stop resource of the Big Landscape is a safe space to nurture and explore our thinking at our own pace. As well as using The Big Landscape, we watched an online performance piece by curator and artist Howardena Pindell titled *Free, White and 21* (1980), and then more recently we discussed *Visualise- Race & Inclusion in Secondary School Education* (Anwaari et al., 2024). These have cemented our realisation that as art and design gatekeepers, we needed to take decisive action. The 'Opening the Gates' (Figure 1) studio wall display became part of a colleague's performance management target for the year. In a way the wall display became a visual statement of our department's intention to address and move inclusion forward.



**Related concepts**

- How: Visual Literacy
- What: Culture Generating and Culture Using
- Why: Cultural Development (Cultural Understanding)
- Why: Curriculum Themes & Dimensions
- Why: Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity
- Why: Race & Racism - Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

**References & resources**

'Visualise Race & Inclusion in Secondary School Education'. Unknown place of publication: Freeland Foundation and Runnymede. [Online][13th November 2024] (2024) Anwaari, H. Begum, S. Hood, S. and Wylie M.  
<https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6148e959132a697...>

*Free, White and 21*. (1980) H. Pindell. [Online] Available through YouTube. [Accessed on 29th November 2024]  
<https://youtu.be/8MGuSjNDK98>

**Now! Recent Updates**

<https://biglandscape.nsead.org/case-study/visual-literacy-for-all/>



# Regional Networks





# **Oak Academy: Project Stats**

**568 lessons created from KS1  
– KS4**

**Over 10,000 hours worked  
across the project**

**2180 artists referenced  
across secondary curriculum**

**25 subject experts working  
KS1 – KS4**

**73% of users reported a  
positive impact on workload**

A  
Community  
of Practice

Hope begins the  
conversation.

Community  
sustains it.

Brighton Beach  
– Winter  
Starling  
murmuration







## Closing Message

The practice of  
practice is the art of  
becoming — together.

Your NSEAD needs  
you!

A. Ash,  
'Hands  
Breaking  
Rules', T+  
Gallery,  
2021



W: [1andyash.com](http://1andyash.com)

E: [andrew.ash@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.ash@ucl.ac.uk)



1andyash



A. Ash 'To make  
concrete',  
Regency Town  
House Gallery  
(2024)

