**The careers of fine artists and the embedded creative**

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**Abstract**

While there is a growing body of scholarship on the creative industries and on the career trajectories of graduates from creative industries programs, there has to date only been a limited amount of research that examines in detail the careers of fine arts graduates. Fine art is arguably the least ‘vocational’ of creative disciplines, in that there are relatively few employers that seek to employ fine artists as fine artists (Oakley et al. 2008; Blackwell and Harvey 1999). If fine arts graduates are not employed in their chosen field – that is, in the ‘Creative Trident’ terminology, in a core creative occupation – how do their careers parallel or differ from those of other creative graduates? Do they find employment as ‘embedded creatives’, using or applying their experience and practice in sectors beyond the core creative industries, or as ‘support workers’, enabling and facilitating the creative work of others? Do they experience portfolio careers? And how do their artistic training and attitudes to creativity affect their working relationships and experiences? This article draws on rich qualitative data about the experiences of a small group of graduates (including the author) who all graduated from the same course at the same institution in the United Kingdom in 1994, to provide some insights into the career paths and trajectories of a sample of fine arts graduates.

**Keywords**

fine art; careers; entrepreneurship; creativity; creative industries; Creative Trident; embedded creative

**Introduction**

Across the creative industries, ‘most creative [firms] start small, based on one or two people playing multiple roles’ (Bilton 2006, 27). Artists, however, arguably behave differently. An artist’s career is shaped, to an extent, by their ability to market themselves. Menger (1999) suggests that the ability to build a public persona is important to an artist’s career trajectory, in terms of acquiring and sustaining recognition for their talent. This can often be at odds with the underlying motivation of an artist where they are often driven by their artistic pursuit over any commercial imperative (Kubacki and Croft 2011). These motivations and drivers are explored in detail by Bridgstock (2013) who identifies, for example, key differences between artist entrepreneurs and general entrepreneurs:

arts has characteristics which distinguish it from entrepreneurship in other sectors, including contextual and sectoral features, the nature and processes of artistic work, the kinds of value that artistic work can add, and the motivations of the artist. Entrepreneurs in other fields are often ‘pulled’ to becoming entrepreneurial, driven by the challenge of starting a new venture or developing a new product. By contrast, artists are often ‘pushed’ to entrepreneurship through necessity. (124)

Whether artists share characteristics with other creative disciplines is discussed elsewhere. For example, while they tend to work on an individual basis there appears to still be a high level of networking in terms of sharing and collaborating on exhibiting opportunities (Bridgstock 2005).

Other issues have also been identified; for example, there are differences in terms of gender and artist careers, with female artists struggling to establish themselves and experiencing greater disruption and breaks within their careers (Brooks and Daniluk 1998). However, recent research suggests that potentially female artists, particularly female artists who are parents, experience something of a renaissance of their artistic output during middle age (Carey 2013). More generally artists’ careers are characterised by needing to balance a combination of types of work in terms of their artistic work, paid creative and paid non-creative work (Throsby 2007). Linked to all of this is work which seeks to establish the part that fine artists play more widely within the world of work, acknowledging that they frequently require work outside of their training. As Oakley et al. (2008) discuss when considering the impact of fine artists’ on innovation, more widely: ‘from an innovation perspective, the importance of this form of work organisation is perhaps less what it tells us about the labour market and more what it tells us about the crossover and cross-fertilisation of people and ideas across the arts, and between the arts and non-arts worlds’ (Oakley et al.2008, 6).

The creative entrepreneur has been identified as one who has the ‘creativity to unlock the wealth that lies within themselves’ (Howkins 2001, 128) suggesting that creative individuals might need only their intellectual capital to start an enterprise. The relationship between entrepreneurship and the creative industries is explored in *Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries; an International Perspective* (Henry and de Bruin 2008). Here further definitions of the creative entrepreneur are provided; for example, the ‘Art–entrepreneur’ is suggested to be someone who is a ‘holder of tacit knowledge that is realised as part of human capital and includes individual skill, competence, commitment and creativity based mindsets’ (Aggestam 2008, 30). While the literature related to the creative industries has focussed heavily on the entrepreneurial contribution these individuals make, recent research questions the rationale for imposing this entrepreneurial discourse onto the fine artist (Carey 2013).

Other research explores when and how enterprise and entrepreneurship is taught to ‘creatives’ (Carey and Naudin 2006), by looking for links between existing pedagogies within schools of art and design and the arguably entrepreneurial outcomes (Penaluna and Penaluna 2009; Carey and Matlay 2007, 2010). What has emerged offers reasonable insight into how this education might influence careers within the sector. For example, Carey and Matlay (2007) discuss ‘implicit enterprise education’, which refers to those aspects built into the teaching methods that potentially lead to entrepreneurial outcomes: ‘lecturers who are practitioners, the use of experiential learning, responding to real-life projects, the “crit” (for assessment) and the degree show’ (440).

Given the gaps in the research about the individual and lived experiences of fine arts graduates who emerge into a highly competitive industry without clear vocational opportunities this paper uses interviews to explore the career trajectories of a cohort of fine arts graduates. This research adds to a body of largely quantitative, survey tracking-based work that provides high level generalisable findings about graduates across universities and many disciplines, such as *Creative Graduates, Creative Futures* (Ball, Pollard and Stanley 2010), and observational and theoretical work around fine arts curricula and university engagement with creative entrepreneurship (Penaluna and Penaluna 2009; Carey and Matlay 2007, 2010).

**Method**

This study captures the career stories of a cohort of fine art graduates, through a series of one-to-one semi-structured and retrospective interviews. These took place some 18 years after graduation and 21 years after the commencement of their fine art course, giving plenty of time for the cohort to try out and settle in to their careers, and become established in one or more occupations. The sample group – which includes the author of this paper – had all graduated from the same course in the same year. Fine art was chosen as potentially the least vocational of the creative disciplines (Oakley et al. 2008), in terms of numbers of jobs adverts actively seeking fine art graduates to act as artists. The assumption was then that they would be ‘pushed’ into entrepreneurship; Higgs et al. (2008) suggest that some 92% of artists are self-employed, or working outside of their original creative discipline. Another recent survey suggested that self-employment among artists (72%) was considerably higher than for the creative industries as a whole (41%) (Jones, 2011:2).

The timing of the study and access to the sample group was also important. These individuals had graduated in 1994. This was three years before the term the ‘creative industries’ had emerged, meaning this group would have worked through the various UK local and national government policies for supporting the creative industries, initiated by the then Labour administration. Importantly the group was at an age where they were ‘at a point in their lives where personal responsibilities might have had an influence over their careers, e.g. parenthood, home ownership or other caring responsibilities’ (Carey 2013, 73). The sample offered a concentrated group, all of whom had had the same starting point, which offered insight in to how their creativity had developed and where it ended up taking them. The author’s own position and insider perspective offers additional insight and a shortcut to understanding some of the experience of the participants. Following a prolonged period of time pursuing the group, the eventual sample of those interviewed was eight women and five men, representing 22% of the original graduating cohort.

The next sections discusses the results aiming to answer questions such as: How did these fine artists fare within the jobs market? How useful was their fine art degree? Did their training have any bearing on how they were perceived within the workplace, and how did they perceive themselves? And how were they perceived because of their art school training?

**Fine artists in the workplace**

This section provides an overview of the types of careers that participants experienced, followed by an exploration of the effects of a fine art education in terms of how this cohort’s creative skills impacted on their sometimes ‘non-creative’ careers. Finally, the participants’ sense of themselves is discussed, in terms of their own artistic and career identity and entrepreneurial outcomes.

***Participants’ careers***

Following a brief spell of working as an artist, including living and working in an artists’ community, where she continued to make and exhibit work, participant 1 trained as an art therapist. Throughout this period she continued to make and exhibit her own work. This training led to a career working as a senior art psycho-therapist (currently on a part-time basis). Throughout this period she has continued to pursue her own practice as an artist with on-going attempts to exhibit and sell work. In addition to this she has had a significant parenting role that has impacted the time she spends in paid employment.

Working now as a senior lecturer within a school of art and design, participant 2 is, in addition to his lecturing role, an active art maker. He describes this: ‘if I was to sum it up in terms of what I am as a practitioner, I’m a creative director, which was pointed out to me by one of my senior colleagues about five years ago.’ His career has evolved from an initial split of working as a practising artist and doing non-creative work (e.g. bar work) to sustain his practice, moving within a couple of years to a design and management role working within a small graphic and web design company to his existing role, teaching and managing design courses. Throughout this time he has continued to make and exhibit work.

Participant 3 left her artistic practice relatively early and concentrated on working within healthcare and roles within care homes. This led to retraining as an art therapist. She has for the majority of her career worked as an art psycho-therapist. In addition to this she has a significant parenting role that has impacted the time she spends in paid employment. She has ongoing aspirations of picking up her arts practice, but has made no attempt as yet to develop this.

Like most of the others in the cohort, participant 4 started out her career hoping to work predominantly as an artist. This led to a succession of jobs loosely connected to the creative industries sector, but frequently administrative in nature. Finally, when the struggle to source employment which would be creatively fulfilling seemed unachievable and she was unable to tolerate working any longer in roles that were not satisfying to her, she trained to become a school teacher. She works part-time as an art teacher in secondary school, ‘as my Head of Art says, she uses all her creativity inspiring the kids to do their final, you know, get their pieces together and final work together.’ While this indicates how her fine art practice is embedded in her working life she also maintains her arts practice and has had ongoing exhibiting opportunities and makes a small income from sales. Additionally, she has a significant parenting role that has effected the time she spends in paid employment.

Following a number of years working in various roles within the arts, participant 5 has spent the majority of the period since graduating as a full-time parent. Throughout this period she harboured an intense desire to continue her creative practice. However, this is not to suggest that she has felt bereft of creative output as her relationship with creativity evolved: ‘when I was at home with the kids, I realised that creativity was lots of things and lots of, you know, it was cooking a meal and it was making some marmalade.’ At the time of writing, this has manifested as a re-focusing of her career. Having gone back to university and studied illustration, she is now working as a freelance illustrator and artist and works on paid commissions.

On completing her degree, participant 6 went back home to her family. She took retail jobs to pay her way and soon stopped making art. She did however take on some voluntary work within a notable art gallery. This led to a new direction:

it gave me a real insight into how galleries worked and how creative the process is of my working with artists, so that kind of took me on a different trajectory. ... I was still naïve as to what curating was as a practice. … I moved to London and started managing to get work in gallery spaces, but still doing voluntary work, which led to curator roles, eventually.

Several jobs and moves around the country and she now works as the director and curator at a small but notable art gallery in the UK.

Participant 7 is a design and technology technician in a secondary school. He has been working in this occupation for approximately 12 years. In addition to this, he makes and designs bespoke pieces of furniture. Soon after he graduated he went to live and work in an artist community. Here young artists worked and exhibited and attempted to forge their careers. After a couple of years the community broke up and the buildings were demolished. What followed was several years of freelance work, commissions, set design and finally, having moved around the country, he moved to London where, having spent a year working in a record shop and having a break from the pursuit of creative work, he then participated in a furniture design course. Not long after that he was appointed in his current role. Initially this was viewed as an opportunity to have paid access to a workshop but subsequently his view has evolved: ‘I never thought I’d be there for 10 years, but 10 years later, I’m still there and it’s now a full time job and I do enjoy it, I mean, I've discovered that I really enjoy working with students, young people.’ He continues to pursue and make a small income from his own work.

Participant 8’s career began like many others with a variety of creative activities. He remained in Wolverhampton, producing small urban street art, working on visuals for night clubs and collaborating with other recent graduates. This led to some sound work and a brief career as a musician creating electronic music and a move to London. Following some managerial and creative differences, he ended his music career and spent a number of years working in a succession of non-creative jobs feeling unfulfilled creatively. A number of chance encounters and a confident and creative application form led him to a coveted BBC traineeship. Working as a ‘creative’ (formerly referred to as a ‘promo’ producer) he was quickly promoted and has built a career working for a number of well-known British TV companies and channels in a full-time capacity in this role.

Participant 9 works as a buildings manager. She left art school with the intention of pursuing a career as an artist. This led to a move to London, where she spent a number of years attempting to ‘break into the London arts scene’ and was a recipient of a number of government funding initiatives. During this time she also took paid work as a health and safety advisor, where her employers paid for her to be trained; this led to a Master’s degree and an eventual career change. She has not been a practicing artist for the last 15 years and instead has concentrated on building her career in buildings management. She has subsequently left the UK and has recently been involved in the design and build of new ‘eco-buildings’. Participant 9 is one of the three participants who no longer consider themselves to be explicitly working within the creative industries. However, she still identifies herself as creative within her career.

Participant 10 moved back home to London following completion of his degree. Quite soon after graduating, he sought employment due to financial necessity. Initially he found work as a photocopy technician and later as a digital print technician. This has developed into his career. In terms of his creative output he has continued to make art and pursued a writing ambition despite not attempting to exhibit or sell his work. He views his work as a print technician as an opportunity to be creative ‘there is a creative aspect to it, so at least I’ve got that and you know, it’s quite important, ‘cause I did the office job and it just bored me to hell, nice company but I have to be doing something creative, otherwise I’ll go spare.’

Participant 11’s career began with a flourish of activity including a Fine Art MA and a fair amount of travelling, creating and exhibiting throughout, her work making use of photography. However, within a couple of years, the need to make money led her to taking a role within a local newspaper as a photographer. While there she was able to exercise her writing skills, was quickly promoted and within six months had moved to London and was working for a national newspaper as a journalist. She continued writing, both as a journalist and travel writer for 10 years before chronic illness led to a career break. While recovering she left London and resumed her artistic career and now works as a full-time artist and freelance writer away from the somewhat cut-throat environment of the newspaper industry.

Following her first degree, participant 12 undertook teacher training; however, not long after she graduated she decided that ‘teaching was not the right career path.’ Due to family commitments she needed to be geographically located in a particular area and took on a succession of short-term jobs. A number of years passed and eventually she took an entirely different career route. Responding to a newspaper advert, she made her way into ‘business banking’. Like other female participants when she started her family, having begun to build her career in banking, she started to work part time and caring commitments became her main priority. It is with some regret that she highlights that ‘I have not even pursued it [art] as a hobby.’

Following a brief spell of moving back to his family and working in bar jobs, Participant 13 enjoyed a successful career working as a freelance and micro-business owner/manager in London for over 15 years. Here, his work was as a creative within a creative companies working as a special effects artist within the design and media fields. A desire for a different kind of lifestyle for himself and his growing family led him to emigrate outside of the UK where he now runs a small business outside of the creative industries.

***Types of careers***

Broadly speaking, the careers of the participants fall into the three main types of creative work: ‘“specialist” creatives, including creative workers in creative industries; “support” staff in those industries providing management, secretarial, administrative or accountancy back-up; and creative individuals ‘embedded’ in other industries not defined as “creative”’ (Higgs et al. 2008, 3). The majority of participants in this study (10 of 13) were working in what could broadly be described as creative roles. This was split between those who were arguably ‘embedded’ outside the creative industries and those who were ‘specialists’ within creative organisations.

It is worth taking a moment to provide a distinction here. These categories are in some ways problematic for fine artists. For example, two of the participants were working as art psycho-therapists. In these roles, it could be argued they were ‘applying’ their arts practice in a similar way to those who worked as art teachers, but neither of these occupations is classified as creative according to Higgs et al.’s (2008) definition of creative workers. It is important to note that they were ‘applying’ their arts practice as opposed to ‘practicing their own arts practice’; they were applying creative-cultural expertise to an output other than art, and thus did not fall into the Trident categorisation of creative workers. However, they might be seen as ‘embedded creatives’ in a broader definition of the term, as they were employed doing creative work in organisations outside the creative industries.

For the majority of participants, it could also be argued that there was an element of ‘portfolio’ work, in that they were on the one hand employed and to a greater or lesser degree applying their fine art training, and on the other they remained practising artists outside of formal employment. There were, for the majority, on-going attempts to make, exhibit and sell their own art work, often on a self-employment basis. As established by Throsby (2007) artists frequently undertake one arts-related employment activity to financially service another. Two participants managed to make art as their central activity, and means of making a living. However, there remained blurring of employment type boundaries and cross-overs, as well as a lot of movement between arts employment undertaken. Throsby (2007) highlighted ‘three alternatives: creative work, arts-related work and non-arts work’ (395); this definition would seem to fit slightly more comfortably with this group than strict Creative Trident classifications of creative vs non-creative. What also became evident was that even those who identified themselves as those not working within either a creative organisation or carrying out a creative role appeared to be behaving creatively and, in some instances, attributed this to their fine art education.

The careers of artists are frequently piecemeal, in that they may be managing a number of roles at a given time, frequently using paid ‘other’ work to subsidise their arts work (Throsby 2007). The experience of the cohort studied here bears out this finding. Although it is somewhat beyond the scope of this paper, there was evidence that some members of the study group experienced a protean career (where the emphasis and direction of the career sits with the individual as opposed to an organisation [Bridgstock 2005]). There was a tendency, particularly amongst the female participants, to be working on a number of projects at the same time, including some paid work and unpaid carer or family responsibilities. While often precarious, another potential advantage to portfolio careers is the flexibility they allow. This means employment can be tailored alongside other interests or priorities.

**Art school education**

Previous research suggests that one way of measuring the impact of the fine art degree can be measured in terms of a fine artist’s contribution to innovation, in the sense that there is a ‘cross-over’ or cross pollination from their creative work to their non-creative work (Oakley et al.2008). This was evident in the present study when participants engaged in multiple concurrent roles, who tended to express their ability to approach ‘non-creative’ tasks more creatively, to be more concerned with aesthetics than their ‘non-artist’ colleagues, and to be able to manage their time well. Interestingly this extended beyond the creative work activities. As one participant identified, the self-discipline required in fine art education, which is frequently characterised by self-directed pedagogies, was a useful precursor to a life of project management. These types of skills have been identified elsewhere in discussion surrounding the potential impact of art and design education on the development of entrepreneurial attributes (Carey and Matlay 2007). These findings suggest that there may be unanticipated benefits of some of the ‘implicit’ enterprise pedagogies within art and design education: they imply that the use of the ‘crit’, practitioners as lecturers, project-based work and student managed workloads, amongst others, (Carey and Matlay 2007; 2010; Carey and Naudin, 2006; Penaluna and Penaluna, 2009) have the potential to develop business skills amongst artists.

The interviews with the cohort provided some evidence to suggest that skills developed through fine art training were manifesting within the participants’ work lives. Although participants felt to an extent ill-prepared for life beyond university – for example they had not been provided with any ‘explicit’ enterprise or entrepreneurship education – there was a suggestion that other benefits and entrepreneurial outcomes, characteristics and traits had accrued from their fine art course:

People that have done fine art they are self-disciplined and they drive themselves, but that doesn’t always connect that you can be self-disciplined and drive your own practice, but the marketing of your practice is a separate thing and reaching the people you want to reach and understanding your practice enough to be able to break it down, it’s like a different skill. (Participant 5)

This suggests that the practice and self-led nature of the courses equip graduates with the discipline required, but the practical business skills associated with running a business, for example marketing and financial accounting skills, were missing. However it also indicates that as employees these individuals might be able to apply this self-discipline within an organisational setting.

I suppose being at art school, you become more aware of design and promotion. (Participant 7)

This participant highlights the access to and development of the individual’s design literacy and, it could be argued, how design is used within a marketing context.

In a funny kind of way it gave me a great sense of time-management and allowed me to think creatively about all kinds of things not just art. Studying art gives you the ability to have a creative perspective on most things. It’s given me the confidence also to try new things, which inevitably has led me to where I am now. (Participant 13)

Interestingly, this final participant, a serial entrepreneur both in creative and non-creative enterprises, credits his fine art education with equipping him with business skills in terms of time management, but also offering him a creative outlook and the confidence to try other career options.

While explicit enterprise education was lacking for these participants, there is some evidence to suggest that the existing methods of teaching fine art may well lend themselves to implicit enterprise education and to the development of entrepreneurial traits. And yet without explicit business skills being taught, upon graduating some students were unable, and perhaps to some extent unwilling, to fully exploit their talent for economic gain.

The fine art training of the participants did impact on how they perceived themselves and also how their colleagues perceived them in the work place.

I feel like it’s gone through waves, you know, I’ve been doing my degree when I thought, oh this is really my identity as somebody who makes art or whatever.

(Participant 1)

I still feel that I’m still practising, but not making work.

(Participant 6)

I realised I’m completely mental, because I hadn’t done any work for, what, 10, 15 years and I still pictured myself as an artist.

(Participant 5)

It is strange but I was thinking of it this morning ‘cause I thought about what I was going to say and I guessed you'd say, well, what is your job and I thought, well, straight away I said technician in my mind, then I thought, oh actually, I am but honestly, I don’t see that as my full thing, I am, don’t know what you call it, but like a sort of the furniture maker as well, you know, even though I don’t get loads of, well, hardly any money from it. Mentally, it’s still part of my job, I'm still trying to push it.

(Participant 7)

What is evident is that the participants of the study have retained a strong sense of themselves as artists and have a desire to create. There appear to be many factors that inform this apart from satisfying their human need (Pratt 2004), although their compulsion to create clearly helped to reinforce their artistic identity and their continued sense of presence within the art world. Interestingly, this was still the case in some instances for those who have not been actively involved in making art for a number of years. Their training appeared to have had other legacies in terms of how they were perceived by others as well as how they approached tasks:

Everyone called me ‘art teacher’ in the news room, because I'd come in … I even dressed artily and of course … Canary Wharf, people don’t dress like that, they're all in black pinstripe suits and I was arty, I suppose, so they called me ‘art teacher’ and so, it really felt that somehow I didn’t belong, but maybe my brain belonged there, but the rest of me didn’t.

(Participant 11)

I have to do a lot of project management and when doing so feel like the design process and creativity are really drawn upon.

(Participant 9)

Generally speaking the participants’ views of creativity expanded as their own careers took on broader remits. A somewhat negative assessment of their expanding views of creativity would be to suggest that this was a convenient adaption to sustain their ongoing sense of self as a creative individual. These last two extracts (one from a buildings manager and one from a journalist) highlight the ongoing importance of the ‘creative self’ to the participants, and the impact of this ongoing creative identity on how participants engage with others, how they are received by others, and they ways they undertake their ‘non-creative’ work (as defined by Throsby 2007).

The careers of the participants went through periods of feast and famine in terms of their own personal creative work, which may be considered reflective of the well-established tension within the careers of artists and other creative individuals between art and commerce (Throsby 2007). Within this there appeared to be both push and pull factors contributing to entrepreneurial activity. For example, push factors manifested when participants felt that the only way that they would be able to carry on with their artistic practice, which they craved, was by adopting entrepreneurial options/behaviours. Similarly pull factors emerged when participants saw that entrepreneurship offered them the freedom to create. Amongst all of this there were additional tensions. There were practical considerations, such as how to go about selling one’s own work? This led to the identification of a number of different values that participants associated with their work, which made selling and marketing problematic. These included: aesthetic, financial, and emotional values and the inter-relationship of the three presented blocks to entrepreneurial activity. This insight appears to confirm Bridgstock’s observation that artists are often ‘pushed’ into entrepreneurship out of necessity, rather than choosing an entrepreneurial path (Bridgstock 2013, 127). Entrepreneurial activity, in terms of being an artist, was seldom a deliberate attempt to build a business and was more often an outcome (the participant who was a serial entrepreneur created businesses beyond the creative industries). Nearly all of the participants identified far more strongly as an artist or a creative person than as an entrepreneur. Many of the tensions, including a perception that the wider arts world was opposed to commercialisation of their (the participants’) art work often left participants flailing, without the knowledge or confidence to behave entrepreneurially.

**Conclusion**

This article has provided insight to the lives of fine art graduates and the sometimes complex relationship they have with creativity, and how their training impacted on their careers and on their status as employees and as self-employed workers. What is clear is that this group strongly identified with being an artist and expressed a strong ‘compulsion to create’. In amongst the stories provided by the participants is insight into how they continue to manage their compulsion to create and how this spills over into other sometimes non-artistic aspects of their careers, in terms of how they approach tasks, manage and motivate themselves.

The scale of this study means that while rich and insightful the findings are not generalisable, they do provide a starting point for further research. Future research could usefully look to a broader cohort to examine whether or not these findings are transferable, and whether or not they are unique to fine artists. This would offer an opportunity for deeper exploration of the spill-over effects of their creativity into the wider workplace and offer a better understanding of the contribution those trained in fine art make to the workplace. Among these findings are implications for educators within creative disciplines, and particularly fine art educators. What was evident was that teaching methods, or the art school pedagogy, reinforced artistic identity. This suggests that lecturing staff have a responsibility for managing the expectations of students, but also should recognise themselves as potential role models. While careers ranged from those embedded, specialists to non-creative, entrepreneurship continued to feature in terms of continued forays into self-employment. It was clear that while explicit enterprise education was limited if not non-existent within their fine art degree, it is important to consider its role. This is not about imposing a hard economic imperative on the world of fine art. It is about helping enable those artists to continue practising. This is an important distinction and suggests that the teaching of enterprise could be delivered by other fine artists or subject specific experts, as opposed to generic enterprise educators.

The benefits of a fine art education to the wider workforce remain somewhat unexplored. Although for these participants there is a suggestion that it provided them with an opportunity to truly explore their own ideas and philosophical positions. It offered them a freedom and a requirement to be self-managed that arguably provided them with life-long skills. It also appears to have offered them the opportunity to approach their general working lives, regardless of destination, with a high level of creativity and problem solving attributes. This suggests that there is scope to redress how we value fine art education and the potential contribution it makes.

It is important then, finally, to consider the careers of fine artists in terms of embedded creative work, in the broadest sense of the term. Of the participants discussed within this paper there is evidence that the nature of ’embeddedness’ of a fine artist is harder to pin down. In the majority of cases, participants have what could be described as portfolio careers, generally made up of a core occupation within or outside the creative industries, in addition to their arts practice. There is a suggestion that, for the most part, they bring with creative expertise to the firms with whom they are employed, however this does not manifest as clearly as it might for other creative disciplines. The creativity of the artists would seem not to be embedded in the same way as it might be, for example, for a designer. Instead, embedded artistic creative expertise often manifests as facilitation of others’ creative output; this appears to be particularly the case of female participants and in the majority of cases in this study followed some further training. Although not the focus of this paper, there are further indications that gender also has a bearing on the type of career and the balance and type of embeddedness of the career. For example, the female participants seem more likely to have an embedded facilitation role while simultaneously continuing their art practice, while male participants appear to be more traditionally embedded as creative roles, albeit not as fine artists.

While the participants’ careers have evolved, for the most part they started out hoping to forge careers as professional artists. They continue to aspire, albeit to differing extents, to work as artists. Career choices and trajectories have for the most part enabled participants to continue their arts practice or to satisfy their creativity.

**Notes on Contributor**

Dr Carey has a creative background; initially a self-employed audio-visual artist and film-maker. Her interest in technology led to co-running a web design and marketing consultancy. For the last 10 years Charlotte has worked as a researcher and now Senior Lecturer in Creative Industries Marketing within Birmingham City Business School. Her research has focussed on the creative sector and entrepreneurship education and as well as growing body of publications in peer-reviewed journals she has presented her research at: Creative Enterprise (2006, 2008; 2011) IEEC (2010) ISBE (2004-2014) and Keynote speaker at the Cultural Entrepreneurship Conference Pori, Finland (2012). She is the co-chair of the ‘Creative Industries Entrepreneurship’ track for the annual ISBE (Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship) conference. Charlotte’s PhD: “Gender and Entrepreneurship in Creative Industry Career Journeys” is currently being developed for publication.

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