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## **HARDWIRED HEGEMONY: ART & DESIGN AFTER NEOLIBERALISM**

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### 1. The Political Fabric of the Art & Design School

The Art & Design School was, in its various incarnations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, not just a site of personal transformation but also a powerful engine capable of fomenting radical collective and societal change. It offered a crucible of experimentation and radical visions of what and how the world could be constructed through spaces in which it was possible to “desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future”, as argued the architect and founder of the Bauhaus Walter Gropius (1919). These institutions, if not already gone, are under pressure, out of step with a culture in which, as political theorist Wendy Brown notes, “social equality, liberty, and worldly development of mind and character are outmoded and have been displaced by another set of metrics: income streams, profitability, technological innovation” (Brown, 2015). It is now three decades since then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher initiated the assimilation of independent Art Schools into the British university system, a system that has since been fundamentally remodelled by fees, student loans and the drive to ‘modernisation’. The Art & Design School as described above has all but vanished in the neoliberal ‘knowledge economy’ of the contemporary university system in which art education is assessed and quantified according to a system of metrics unsuited to creativity, and where league tables and excellence frameworks of personal entrepreneurial ‘success’ and ‘student satisfaction’ are the only real measures.<sup>1</sup>

What is considered here is the Art & Design School in the context of the neoliberalisation of education through the Gramscian notion of hegemony: a dominant cultural form of power that is exercised through consent as

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<sup>1</sup> Universities minister Jo Johnson, outlines this agenda in a 2016 governmental White paper entitled *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*, May 2016.

much as coercion. In this context, we argue that the critical role of art and design has been stymied by a complicity between arts education and a specific conjuncture of marketisation of art and design. This sheds light on issues surrounding the ability of art and design to gain cultural traction, and, therefore to have transformative potential. For, in this paralysis of the socio-political imaginary, arguably “the future has been cancelled” (Srnicek & Williams, 2013). But, through this kind of structural analysis, it becomes possible, now, more than ever, for the Art & Design School to be reconsidered and explored, not as an exercise in cultural nostalgia to resuscitate a lost past, nor as a “new high quality challenger institution” (Johnson, 2016) to enable the government to “focus attention where it is needed most to drive up quality” (ibid.). Rather, we think that the Art & Design School may yet form a framework within which the experimentation and radicalism may yet be activated to reimagine and reengineer alternative models of the cultural landscape of the future. For, it seems to us no small coincidence that a seeming inability to imagine an alternative to the contemporary neoliberal value system is closely linked to the systematic dismantling of spaces where such speculation had previously thrived. The solution seemingly obvious: to redesign the contemporary sociopolitical landscape, we must create a space in which such reimagining can flourish and bloom, by undoing neoliberal managerialism beyond the horizon of fiscal reform. However, where previous similar arguments emphasise curriculum change, para-academic spaces, or building new Art & Design Schools, here, we argue that to get there, we need first to patiently unpick and understand the entrenching of neoliberal hegemony across all levels of the Art & Design School.

## **2. The Fall and Decline of the Art & Design School**

The Design School in its various incarnations, emerged from vocational industrial origins in the 19th century to become by the mid 20th century not just sites of skills training but places of personal transformation and socio-political engagement. The very notion of the “Art & Design School” as a cultural institution is now so embedded in the contemporary cultural mythos that at first glance it appears familiar and straight forward, uncomplicated and easy to pin down. Perhaps seen as the gaudy extrovert younger sibling of the older, more serious, staid Universities, an indulged and indulgent academic frippery, a marginal territory of contained madness, a Saturnalia of mavericks, visionaries, poseurs, charlatans and dilettantes.

But, under closer inspection it becomes slippery, receding, chimeric, and phantomic. It is steeped in myth and nostalgia. For example, many of its most quoted proponents were short lived: the totemic Bauhaus lasted barely fourteen years, its progeny Black Mountain College survived until 1957, and Ulm closed in 1968 after local authority funding was withdrawn, subsequent to students’ renaming it Karl Marx Schule. Similarly, Hornsey College of Art, which, perhaps along with Saint Martins with its infamous ‘A’ course, represented the apogee of the mythic English art and design school and with alumni that accounts for large swathes of contemporary English culture, closed down in 1973 four years after the student occupation that made it famous. Prominent survivors include: Les Écoles des Beaux-Arts in France; The Royal College of Arts (RCA) and Goldsmiths in Great Britain; Cranbrook and CalArts in the United States.

In the UK, the popular conception of an art school arose as a string of independent locally funded and founded organisations in the latter part of the Victorian era, based on the principles of The Government School of Design. This had been established by Government official Henry Cole, who also masterminded the first Great Exhibition of manufactures in 1851 to train young people to work as designers or ‘ornamentalists’ in the manufacturing industry, especially textiles and ceramics. As Christopher Frayling notes in his essay on the RCA, “[c]oncepts such as ‘originality’, ‘self-expression’ or ‘creativity’ were completely absent from this system” (Frayling, 2009). As is clear, the instincts of these new institutes were neither high-minded nor emancipatory, rather they represented an industrial response to a deficit of skilled knowledge workers capable of fuelling the nascent creative industries. The utile nature of the education and implicit class stratification entrenched in their disciplinary systems is evidenced by the forbidding of “[d]rawing from life, or drawing things that moved, as opposed to copying things that stayed still” lest this “encourage students to become artists” (Frayling, 2009).

By the mid to late 20th century, English Art Schools had begun to evolve from their origins in the 1870s as vocational training centres for industrial applications of creativity, into sites of experimental activity in terms that extended well beyond an expanded view of the subject into broader questions about hierarchies, politics and purpose per se. Arguably, this resulted, in part, from a combination of the progressive Robbins report

published in 1962, which argued for the immediate and extensive expansion of the sector based on the principle that “higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so” (Robbins, 1963), and a Government policy that ensured that from “1962 until 1990 full-time UK based students studying for a first degree received 100% grants for maintenance, means tested according to parental income” (Wilson, 1997). But, this brief efflorescence in reality was a hiatus that was not to last into the decades following the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, who, as the author Hanif Kureishi noted, “actively hated culture, as she recognised that it was a form of dissent” (Kureishi, 2009). As part of her review of Higher Education, Thatcher systematically dismantled the art school, returning it to its industrial origin with a utilitarian instinct for vocation and purpose, and with a vehemence that studiously ignored its economic successes whilst castigating its apparent bohemian frivolity and contemptuous dissent. Thatcher initiated the education bill of November 1987 in *The Next Move Forward* (1987) Conservative manifesto, as part of her vision of Britain of the Future. This was a vision that would see UK independent art schools subsumed into mainstream academia, whilst introducing “market forces” to education: education as a commodity to be purchased, owned, and utilised for personal advantage.

In the three decades since *The Next Move Forward*, the independent Art & Design Schools have almost all been swallowed up by local polytechnics or amalgamated into, not polytechnics, but monoteknical sprawls such as the University of the Arts London comprising most of London art schools, or the University of the Creative Arts which consolidated the Kent and Surrey schools. All keen to emerge as a newly legislated class of University. The “haphazard and hasty” as historian Elie Kedourie put it (Kedourie, 1988) research assessment exercises (RAE) used to assess these new institutions, prefigured the increasingly marketised approaches to both university and art school, for decades to follow.

### **3. The “hardwiring” of hegemonic neoliberalism**

Since the changes initiated in 1987, the British education system has at all levels and by every government been systematically remodelled by the rhetoric of ‘marketisation’ in a seemingly endless regime of bureaucratic interventions in the form of inspections, classification, league tables,

fees, student loans, efficiency, utility and modernisation. This is entirely consistent with critics of neoliberal common sense, who have argued that the ideal of liberal individual freedom has effectively been replaced by a capitalist form of entrepreneurialism, and embedded into our ordinary beliefs and practices (Brown, 2003). This prevents the “precariat” of freelance designers, for example, from forming collective political agency, rather languishing in the local horizons of individual responsibility and blame (Woodly, 2015). But these changes in our education systems have not been wrought by the market forces apparently invoked as reformers, quite the opposite. The last three decades have seen the formation of an entirely duplicitous neoliberal facade, one in which the state has played an unprecedented level of control at every level of finance and curriculum whilst maintaining the rhetoric of free market economics. As Gombrich put it, “there is no free market competition in British higher education, but disjointed fragments of policy have introduced certain competitive elements” (Gombrich, 2000). It is for this reason, we argue, that a reformist approach to design education is simply not enough. Rather, it is necessary to first analyse and unpick the neoliberal hegemony in which we are all implicated.

In general, neoliberalism goes hand-in-hand with the depoliticisation of cultural and social interaction from Thatcher’s famous proclamations against “society”, to New Labour’s “giving society”, and “social citizenship”. As such, we end up with an emphasis upon individual responsibility, which conceals the ways in which we are positioned by structural power relations, and so prevented from collective antagonism against them (Woodly, 2015). In this sense, Brown argues that neoliberalism is a mode of governance that is not limited to post-Keynesian economics and the specific way in which the state is both utilized, and given credibility, by the markets, rather it also “produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new organization of the social” (Brown, 2003, p. 37). This is to say, neoliberalism is a “dominant political rationality that moves to and from the management of the state to the inner workings of the subject, normatively constructing and interpellating individuals as entrepreneurial actors” (Rottenberg, 2014, p. 3).

In the context of higher education, through mechanisms such as the privatisation of debt through the student loan system, there is

a personalisation of the cost of study onto the individual, which also entrenches the notion that any benefit of education is seen solely in terms of personal gain. Former Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove's proclamation that "if you don't benefit from a Uni education you shouldn't pay for those who do" on a Sunday morning BBC politics show is an example of this. It is an attempt to consolidate a specifically neoliberal set of norms around education and taxation, whilst also sanctioning any attempt to consider education in terms of the wider social good. Altruism, abstraction and collective endeavour are ignored or sidelined here, and education is not seen as a collective project of societal development and intellectual exploration, but a purchasable advantage for financial rather than abstract benefit. As such, higher education in general, and Art and Design in particular, are being warped by notions of salary, vocation, enterprise, customers and pseudo-metrics that seek to hardwire a culture of competing market economics and corporate individualism into its

2 We should note, as a measure of shifting ground around this point, that since the 2017 General Election in the UK, the rising fees model has been undermined by both Nicholas Timothy (ex-advisor to Theresa May), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/08/16/university-tuition-fees-pointless-ponzi-scheme-theresa-mays/>, who describes it as an "ultimately useless Ponzi scheme". Similarly, Andrew Adonis, who acted as architect of the fee restructuring programme under Blair has since claimed that rising fees are a kind of "Frankenstein's monster" doomed to failure. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/07/tuition-fees-scrapped-debts-graduates-andrew-adonis>.

economy and philosophy. Not so much 'lifelong learning' as lifelong earning, with its correlate, lifelong debt.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that as Brown (2003) argues, neoliberalism also erodes democratic activity in multiple ways. For example, many supposed liberal democracies have witnessed a process of de-democratisation, which has carved-off key aspects of state and corporate decision-making from ordinary democratic practices, leading to an increasingly minor role of citizens in political decisions. By reforming the political through the lens of the economical, neoliberalism entails that our citizenship no longer guarantees political agency. This leads, according to political theorist Chantal Mouffe (2000a), to a democratic deficit due to the widening gap between ordinary citizens and political decision-making, and a perception that the interests of political expertise often works against the former.

Consider, in this regard, the way in which student feedback in the Art & Design school is managed through a system of metrics that are designed to appear democratic, whilst also reinforcing a normative disposition upholding ratings required for TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) and league tables.<sup>3</sup> Apart from the QAA benchmarks, which regulate grading and level descriptors as well as subject descriptors, these are all public-facing metrics. They are framed in the neoliberal rhetoric of competition, markets, metrics and comparisons leading to choice, quality and value for money. These norms are reinforced by state-controlled financial structures (including loans; Tier-4 immigration access; visas; OfS; QR funding; grants; funding councils), which are themselves situated within a contradictory narrative of self-managed value, competition, self-improvement and personal responsibility/accountability. At an institutional level, universities have responded to these systems by creating parallel power structures that often supercede, override, or bypass traditional academic collegiate fora such as Boards of Studies, with mission statements and core value documents that are created autonomously by senior management and marketing departments, and used as mechanisms of governance through personal development reviews, quality "enhancement" reviews, course reviews, and student-feedback systems. In this context, many Design educators have witnessed the ways in which our students have an increasingly narrow understanding of employability, and what it would mean to be a "good designer". But, whilst educators (often) battle against these conceptions in the studio, the architecture of norms, systems, and spaces recursively reinforces them.

Take for example, the QAA (Quality Assurance Association for Higher Education) benchmark for Art & Design in comparison to a subject such as Philosophy, or even Chemistry. In the former, there is a clear emphasis on audience, work, and employability, where in the latter two, they are noticeably absent. Since there is clearly no founding principle in the benchmark statements that a vocational aspect ought to be intrinsic to an undergraduate degree, why is vocationality

3 For example: KIS (Key Information Sets or Unistats) is a course comparison site that extrapolates NSS data, and is positioned as a tool for course election prior to application; UCAS, which is a non-profit NGO that deals with all aspects of University applications and enrolment; the NSS (National Student Satisfaction survey) which is a compulsory annual metrical monitoring system, whose data drives KIS and TEF.

so heavily taken to define Art & Design? As mentioned in the previous section, Art & Design education has, throughout its various incarnations, often had a relationship with industry capital and commerce, which in many instances may be characterised as beneficial. But, financial accountability and culpability is as problematic here as it is for the sciences (think of the medical sciences, for example). Moreover, unlike the sciences, there is little to no culture of research in Art & Design that is not always already situated within not just the current financial constraints, but also system of subtle coercions and constraints that seek to tether all such practice to adumbrated acceptable norms.<sup>4</sup>

In other words, neoliberalism in the context of Art & Design has engendered a specific and sophisticated form of common sense, where this “neoliberal common sense” deploys constraints and configurations as if they are simply factual (Woodly, 2015). The scaffolding of our courses reinforces this commonsense, as does the way we are in thrall to the metrics of student feedback, which, in turn reinforces precisely those neoliberal principles. In general, competition has replaced exchange as a central market principle, so according to Brown, we have become individual “companies of one”, competing, rather than exchanging, with each other. In this competitive individualism, inequality becomes norm, where we are at ongoing risk of failure, redundancy and precarity, even concerning basic needs of food and shelter, whilst often not questioning our individual responsibility for these inequalities (Woodly, 2015). It is in this ‘common sense’ of neoliberal capitalism where the rhetoric of competition is posited as the lifeblood of all innovation, invention, efficiency and creativity, the arbiter of all quality, value and cost, and which runs through the ways in which we become disposed in our practices as design educators, students, and in the Art & Design School itself.

Neoliberalism, here, captures a loose, complex set of mechanisms, practices, and norms, combining neoliberal managerialism with an occluded state intervention to forge competition across the sector, and is often *disavowed* by those espousing some of the norms upholding it (Gilbert, 2013). Therefore, we may take up Brown’s analysis (2003) to suggest that the hegemony of neoliberalism in the Art & Design school is a form of *capillary power*, in Foucault’s sense, which exists only in action — — — — — as “something that circulates” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98), and “is employed and exercised through

<sup>4</sup> Though it is worth noting that increasingly the academic spaces of scientific research now exist inside corporations.

a net-like organisation” (ibid). Power, in this view, neither requires our assent, nor must it be routed through discursive ideology, rather it may be better considered in terms of material and normative practices, which are shaped by a landscape of power that “consists in guiding the possibility of conduct” (Foucault, 1980. p. 789).<sup>5</sup> So, for example, a major problem that we face here, is that benchmark statements *define* the subject, since any attempt to validate (and revalidate) a course will be cross-referenced against them. By implication, the extensive emphasis on vocational parameters will result in conditions and requirements that any Art & Design course must meet, which other courses are not required to fulfil. So, Art and Design in higher education is defined and delivered through the triangulation of a matrix of benchmarks, metrics, and financial regulatory systems. The ways in which these operate together mean that any individual changes to the financing of HE, the curriculum, or institutional structures will be insufficient to retool Art & Design education to any meaningful degree. The key claim that we want to make here is that it is simply incorrect to say that higher education has been remodelled as a company, as if it were possible to overturn at the level of management, or to reform design education. Rather, it is impossible to separate the norms of design education in the context of neoliberalism from the specific material practices in which they are inscribed.

There is, therefore, no easy exit or escape. In our experience, so many people we meet involved in Art & Design education in the UK have a fantasy of starting new institutions; new Art & Design Schools that would somehow evade and escape their implication in neoliberalism. Indeed, this fantasy will become increasingly possible given the deregulation of the sector in the recent Higher Education bill (mentioned in the previous section). So what is it that stops us? Is it the anxiety of unwittingly becoming disposable neoliberal stooges accommodated to be deployed to fulfil the governments desire to break up the cartel of Vice Chancellors (until no longer needed)? Or perhaps the deeper nagging doubt; the knowledge that they will only replace the current status quo with newer perhaps leaner and more ‘efficient’ copies of systems in

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<sup>5</sup> So, hegemony cannot here be understood in the sense as it is by some commentators (e.g. Lash, 2007), namely involving the imposition of explicit ideological principles. On this, see the excellent discussion complex power across both material infrastructures and social norms in (Williams 2015).

which they're already embroiled? This *hegemonic* neoliberalism has made and remade institutions and human subjects through a largely coherent hegemonic project that has been massively complexly engineered across wider social, political, economic, and cultural domains, as well as the institutions in which Art & Design is enmeshed. These systems of hardwired hegemony exist at national, institutional, departmental, and personal (staff and students) levels, in a complex matrix of interconnected state legislated (and locally enforced) metrics and benchmarks. That is to say, hegemonic neoliberalism is *hardwired* into our systems, now tightly managed in all aspects of curriculum, classification, assessment, funding, and access as a highly entrenched and tightly regulated system of power in which we are all implicated.

#### 4. To kill a zombie

In UK politics, it seems that we are witnessing the neoliberal conjugation of progressive liberalism with marketisation beginning to give way to both ethnonationalism and new forms of socialism. This is most clearly visible in the ideological and institutional failures of the so-called centre ground together with a resurgence of popular democracy against political 'expertise'. This is in evidence in a multitude of ways from, for example, the exercise of agency in the Brexit vote on behalf of what Lisa Mckenzie terms the "invisible working class" (Mckenzie, 2017), to the massive increases in Labour voter share in the June 2017 general election against the background of a hostile British press, and parliamentary in-fighting; from the callous anti-immigration propaganda of UKIP and the *Vote Leave* campaign, to the football chants of "Oh, Jeremy Corbyn" across the country from Leeds to Glastonbury; from the "no deal is a good deal" bombastically anti-market slogan of Theresa May's Brexit negotiating position, to the use of Conservative party soundbites against themselves, whether "coalition of chaos", "magic money tree", or "strong and stable". In an era that has often been characterized by the supposed economic necessity of an Austerian form of neoliberalism, it seems that the edifice may be crumbling around us.

Yet, we should be wary of proclamations about the end of neoliberalism, particularly since this would suggest a failure to grasp its complex machinery, as both common sense and large-scale infrastructural, institutional, political, and material project. And, whilst diagnoses are

always tricky, it seems that we are at least witnessing a crisis at the level of neoliberal common sense, in which the everyday becomes political again, and we are struggling to rethink how we understand the sociopolitical realm.

In the 2017 Manifesto *For the Many not the Few*, the Labour party of Great Britain stated that "Labour believes education should be free, and we will restore this principle. No-one should be put off educating themselves for lack of money or through fear of debt" (Labour Party Manifesto, 2017). Pledging that, if elected, Labour would "reintroduce maintenance grants for university students, and (we will) abolish university tuition fees" (*ibid.*). But will the removal of the fee system on its own be sufficient to undo the cultural changes that have shaped Higher Education? Fee removal is, undoubtedly, instrumental in a project of large-scale shifts in common sense, towards a consideration of education in terms of the wider social good. With this, perhaps we may begin to move beyond Higher Education as a utile project of self-enhancement to slot into the employment market's criteria, the cost of which follows us through our working lives in the form of never-ending debt repayment. This would undoubtedly improve things financially for prospective students and alleviate the debt burden, but would reforms that dealt only with the superficial aspects of funding, in danger of creating a 'zombie neoliberalism'? In that, whilst the fiscal mechanisms that drive and empower the current status quo may be removed under a Labour government, the hegemony has been so thoroughly ingrained into the culture and systems of power, promotion and decision within the institutions, will remain tacitly and implicit despite their explicit removal.

These exist in a matrix of metrics, frameworks and values that range from the abstraction of the mission statements, core values and strategy documents that populate university websites, across the metrics and league tables that seek to compare universities across the world using the many excellence frameworks that seek to calibrate and evaluate education to the granularity of the subject benchmark statements, assessment frameworks that directly control the contours, content, context and remit of subjects, scholars, staff and institutions. Not only what is taught, how it is taught, why it is taught and when it is taught, but also how, why and when it is assessed. As described above, at

ground-level, these are implemented through the Quality Assurance Agency mechanisms and sanctions based on benchmark criteria and disciplinary measures, the goal of which is the internalisation of a form of governance in which, shorn of connection with anything remotely valuable, metrics take on a kind of reality in and of themselves. The very real effects of these pressures are taking their toll on all of us, staff and students.

Quite clearly, these problems cannot be solved by reformism at the level of curricula. It is our conjecture, that this is *at least in part* the reason that, whilst the neoliberal consensus has appeared to falter, challenged variously from both left and right, art and design have been conspicuous in their absence as cultural vanguards. It is no accident, for example, that the seemingly well-intended attempts of critical design (based in the RCA's Design Interactions program), whilst attempting "to challenge narrow assumptions, preconceptions and givens about the role products play in everyday life" (Dunne & Raby, 2011) gained little purchase beyond the gallery and the academy. Rooted as it was within the academic structures discussed above, it is little wonder that critical design as "more of an attitude than anything else" (Dunne and Raby 2011), is shorn of any actual political content, or structural analysis. That is to say, its being so enmeshed in the implicit neoliberal value system of the Art & Design School, perhaps led to critical design ultimately languishing as "a form of sophisticated design entertainment: 90% humour 10% critique" (Dunne and Raby 2011). With the implicit drive to the utile and the vocational that the neoliberal education system demands of its institutions, academics and students, do these problems with critical design suggest that the incessant urges and demands to valorise any endeavour with a purposefulness within the neoliberal value system preclude, or at least undermine, any real ability to produce meaningful or effective critique thereof? In short, can the Art & Design School in its present form be seen to be so complicit in or compromised by the neoliberal values embedded into the institutional structures that it is a part of as to be inimical to any attempts to produce a genuinely critical art or design?

A central question in this context, then, is whether or not the template of the Art & Design School may be considered either a doomed and redundant structure so compromised as to be beyond repair or an unfinished project that, with careful thought, could be repurposed as a machine for counter-

hegemonic common sense? Could, in this setting, a reconfigured notion of the radical pedagogies of the "art and design school" purge itself of the insidious rhetoric which currently shapes it and sidestep any urge to nostalgia, to be repurposed and utilised in the radical re-engineering of design education? We realise that we have, perhaps, frustratingly, offered few positive proposals in the above. This is both purposeful and promissory. For, as stated above, we do not think that curriculum reform, fiscal reform, nor simply 'exit' from the current systems could do anything near enough to overturn them. Nor, more problematically, do they approach those systems from the correct vantage point, since it is of utmost importance that we think about the complexity of power across our media, socio-cultural lives, institutions, education, financial systems, and its many other instruments. This is to think of power as operating across a shifting landscape in which common sense and material systems both constrain and enable certain people in different ways. In other words, we need to see the institutional spaces of the Design School as political, rather than focusing on state power and governance as the only modes through which politics, and democracy, are exercised. So, for example, whilst philosopher Jacques Rancière's conception of a *critical art* asks us to "produce a new perception of the world, and therefore to create a commitment to its transformation" (Rancière, 2015, p. 142), we need to begin first with a structural analysis of the complex systems of power in which our perceptions of the world are currently rooted of the kind we have begun in this essay. Far from the depoliticised neoliberalism, then, we may think of power in terms of ideas of common sense, acceptable opinion, and the ways in which we take for granted the structures of our daily lives. Politics lies, as much in room booking systems and student resits as it does in the productions of the studio and lecture theatre. This is to engage in the repoliticisation of everyday life, and to engage in changing the terrain of common sense, and the systems and practices through which neoliberalism is propped up. In other words, as we have argued throughout, to understand this new situation, and the crises in which we find ourselves, we need to view power as hegemonic; as diffused throughout popular culture in complex interactions rather than just confined to more obvious manifestations of political and institutional power. On a more promissory note, it is exactly this theme

that we intend to take up in future work. So, perhaps, in beginning with the above analysis, we may construe future platforms retooled as machines to counter this reality, with the capability for adaptations and revision, and, therefore, to create spaces within which it is possible to create art and design beyond neoliberal common sense.

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## Contributors

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**Laura Gordon** is a designer, researcher and educator based in London (UK). She teaches Visual Communication at the Royal College of Art, and is co-founder of Crowd Talks.

**The Decolonising Design** was founded in 2016 by eight design researchers, artists, and activists stemming from or with ties to the Global South, as a response to Euro- and Anglocentric socio-technical politics and pedagogies of design as both a field of research and praxis. In that sense, the group does not aim to offer an "alternative perspective" on design, but rather to question the very foundations upon which the discipline was established.

**Silvio Lorusso** is a designer without qualities, an artist without a gallery and a writer without spell checker. He is currently based in Rotterdam (NL) and writes on the blog *Welcome to the Entreprenariat*.

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