

Earned and Unearned Privilege

#workingclass is trending. Care no longer provided by the state but by the volunteers. Think back to when you were 14 they said on a form, might help you get a bursary because you are the first one in the family going to university...the fancy ones at school whose parents have made up jobs are at it again pretending they're chavs. Art school rich kids with ripped clothes whilst the benefit boy is spending his student finance on expensive off white trainers: performativity and confusion. 'Your English is so good!' 'er...thanks...I was born here'. Maybe because I was quiet for so long people thought I couldn't speak. So then perhaps they assume I'm an international student paying extortionate fees when I was actually born across the road and have a bursary. Student Finance, EMA, JSA, Bursary, ESA, PIP, Universal Credit.

Am I a sell out to use this confusion to my advantage?

Why am I too anxious to complain?

What price am I paying to be here?

University can be a shock, perhaps even more so in art school. The first time encountering people with allowances that are not job centre allowances and where many have been privately educated. It's hard to complain when you are supposed to be grateful but nothing changes without making complaints. A community comes about through shared complaint of the institution. What happens if you feel you can't complain, if you are the only one, how can you create community then?

I think about it being a privilege to volunteer and about the amount of volunteering that's expected before gaining paid work in creative environments. You either lose out or find yourself stuck working without any pay, stressing about paying for your travel. That's just the beginning, you start seeing open calls you have to pay to enter or galleries offering exhibitions and residencies but you have to pay to do it rather than be paid for your time. Is success earned if you can easily pay for it all with financial support from family?

It is not just art school. Tabloids shamed Katie Jarvis for having a job different from her acting (see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/50125396>). So not only are you expected to volunteer, you are shamed for taking paid work.

If I can't volunteer, how do I get experience?

Why is art romanticised as something that you have to suffer for?

What price am I paying to be here?