

**Dear UAL: you  
are breaking my  
heart.**



A letter by  
Nikita Papucevics to  
everyone at UAL.

It is 4 AM in South London. It feels like I ran out of tears forever after crying all these weeks continuously. I haven't slept well. Insomnia is a b\*tch, right? This is not a letter full of demands. I don't need your refund, I don't need you to change my course. I just want you to read this.

When I first moved to this country full of dreams and ambition I didn't imagine getting this far, living or even studying art in London - the capital of creative world (something UAL is keen to share). Honestly working at Tesco's and getting paid more than 2 euros per hour would have made it for me. I could live the way I want to live, supporting my family and being an openly gay person, which I wouldn't be able to do back home. I remember looking at UAL's website, watching these videos, reading about an art university that is unlike anything else I've seen. This massive cathedral of Arts scattered all over London. This network of some of the best art students and educators that gathered from around the globe, working together in beautiful studios packed with machines and changing the world with the power of creativity. 3 years ago, I would never believe that I will become part of this "factory of joy".

When pandemic hit, and everybody was forced to close their doors - Universities had a choice. They could pause any ongoing studies until the situation improved, allowing art students to have a fair and safe education on-site, equally accessing the facilities and studios without the need of reducing the quality of their work for the sake of continuation. Universities could reimburse the students instead of charging them fully 9 to 20K for an online art education. They decided to continue studies instead. Movements and organizations were formed to fight this. Pause or Pay was one of them - a campaign launched by UAL and RCA students to fight the inequity and negligence. Universities like UAL - (non-profit organization that for the 3rd year in a row now is ranked "2nd best in the world for Art & Design") decided to ignore these movements, blacklisting them and forcing their staff to neglect any mention of it. How can such big organization employing hundreds of artists neglect such a movement? How can the leading art university representing the art industry in the UK decide one day to stop supporting their students? When I read the very first and very vague response from UAL to Pause or Pay's campaign I realized what sort of organization I was soon to be educated by. I started researching, even considered to drop out and join one of those alternative art schools instead, and even thought of creating my own one. How can the art industry be so bureaucratic? How can we be openminded and innovative when we are dictated the kind of things we should be in an environment where art students are just cash cows?

The truth is - art universities like UAL don't even try to change the industry, instead supporting the neoliberal old and tired way - an "empire of simulation". Nobody believes or wants to support this system, but it seems like nobody in the art world cares enough to change anything. Instead, it seems like UAL is keen on continuing on turning the ambitious art students into "professionals" incapable of thinking outside the box or the industrial and capitalistic way of producing artwork catering to the people "on the inside", being completely incapable of using their knowledge outside of Central London.


Artists now are individuals fed by the institutions like UAL that by choosing the path of studying at an expensive and conservative university in Central London - you will become successful. They push their famous alumni whose work seems to fit in perfectly within the system, proudly implying that this is what you will achieve by choosing them. UAL is not an art university anymore, but a successful PR campaign with Grayson Perry acting as a colourful mascot.

This letter of complete sorrow and disappointment I address to you - people of UAL: course leaders and board of executives (who I truly believe should all resign and jump off the cliff), and especially you - art educators. I want to encourage you to unite together and fight. By acknowledging the state of the art industry, the corrupt and raped by consumerism art world - we can start the wave of change, together! Art tutors - speak up! Tell your students about Pause or Pay. Tell your management off. Join the protests, share the links!! Become the activists that you want your students to be.

UAL has the power and connections to unite the art world, to change how Government sees the arts, make them essential, make the education free. Educators have the power to educate the students - change how they see themselves as professionals, discourage them of continuing this culture of being blindly ambitious and fame-driven artists. UAL - there is still time for you to make a U-turn and make up for the dreadful year we experienced as students and decades of the "joy factory" you claimed to be.

*"If art is the critical alternative to society then it must function critically and alternatively. Artistic ambition is not just a matter of aesthetic objectives, it is particularly a matter of the values that artists affirm through their practice. Art has the capacity to define its own terms of production and the burden of responsibility falls on artists."*

*- Sophia Kosmaoglou.*



My name is Nikita Papucevics.  
I am a first year Illustration student  
at Camberwell, and my artistic heart is  
broken.  
When joining this course, I was an  
illustrator dreaming of becoming an  
educator, an activist, a true artist.  
Now I just want this nightmare to end.  
I believe in UAL, in it's tutors and my  
peers. I love Camberwell, but I cannot con-  
tinue my studies here or at any other uni-  
versity without questioning the institution  
and fighting for change.  
Art is bigger than the society itself. I  
believe that art is the real magic or God  
- it shouldn't be industrialised.



ual:

# Your Creative Future Starts Here

Inspired by work of  
Soviet activist artists  
Alexandr Faldin and  
Svetlana Faldina.

