

Visual Culture Research Group, UWE, presents

# Re-thinking thinking in art and design education: thoughts on/from/with creative practice

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Arnolfini, Bristol

In a lecture theatre context, 'thinking' is formalised under a variety of labels including Visual Culture, Critical and Contextual Studies, and art and design history. Discrete curricula spaces such as these can give the illusion that there is an insulated space in which 'thinking' takes place, but how can 'thinking' be considered more broadly? Where is 'thinking' located within the studio setting and what does it mean to integrate thinking and making, and theory and practice? In what ways do both writing and making extend 'thinking'? This half-day symposium examines 'thinking' in art education, including its relationship to, from and within arts practices.

# Schedule of events

*13:00* Welcome and introduction

*13:30* Jenny Rintoul: 'Intuitive Integration: a proposal for course design'

*14:15* Joanne Lee: 'Forms and Mobilities: making writing thinking in art and design'

*15:00* Tea/coffee

*15:30* Katy Macleod: 'Art/Research/Critical Thinking'

*16:15* Discussion

*17:00* Close

# Jenny Rintoul

*Intuitive Integration: a proposal for course design*

Critical and Contextual Studies, Critical Studies, Contextual Studies, Visual Culture, Theory, Research, Art History and Contextual & Historical Studies are some of the many terms in circulation for forms of 'theory' in art and design education. Notwithstanding important differences, these terms allude to a common curricular 'space' that has long had a problematic position within or alongside the studio-based elements of art and design courses. It is the relationship between these 'theoretical' and 'practical' elements of an art and design course that is the focus of this paper – specifically what it means to integrate these elements, drawing upon FE art and design courses as case studies. This paper examines 'thinking' across these elements of an art and design course, and the knowledges therein, and examines the possibilities for their integration. The label 'integration' is frequently used in aspirational terms to describe an educational goal or process that will improve the student experience, engagement and understanding; integration is a reified term (and promise) that is unpicked in this paper through considering where it resides in a course and when it occurs in a student journey. I propose approaching integration as a future goal, and present a model that I term 'intuitive integration'. This model is based on affording students empowerment as learners and as artists, and relies on an understanding of intuition as a manifestation of seemingly disparate knowledges drawn together (integrated); in this model, intuition is a complex way of thinking and knowing and part of the rigour and integrity of art and design. On the way to arriving at this model, I ask what it means to create work using 'intuition' and in what ways this is a 'thought' process. I question also the relationship between intuition and critical making, and whether intuition can (and should) be facilitated through pedagogy.

## Biography

Jenny Rintoul is a Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture at the Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries and Education at University of the West of England. She has previously worked in dance, gallery education and as a FE teacher of Art and Design and of History of Art. She has taught Critical and Contextual Studies across a range of FE and HE programmes within Performing Arts, Musical Theatre, and Art and Design. Her recently published work, Rintoul (2017) *Integrating Critical and Contextual Studies in Art and Design: possibilities for post-compulsory education*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, builds on material from two previous publications: Rintoul and James (2016) 'That Tricky Subject': the integration of Contextual Studies in pre-degree art and design education', in *International Journal of Art and Design Education*; and Rintoul (2014) 'Theory and (in) Practice: the problem of integration in art and design education', in *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 33(3): 345-54.

# Joanne Lee

*Forms and mobilities: making writing thinking in art and design*

This paper begins with a consideration of how the practical forms of writing and making affect what can be thought: the format, means of production, site, presentation medium, and audience all shift what is possible or permissible to think. It will build on Caroline Levine's recent work, which proposes that critical attention to formal aspects such as shapes, patterns and arrangements challenge and unsettle conventional analytic models. Our thinking about on-going experiments and formal assignments is affected by the particular forms in which we try to develop ideas, or by the shapes concepts themselves seem to require; I will thus reflect upon the specific forms of the 'project' and the 'essay'. It is my contention that artefacts (made and written) produced by artists and designers can 'mean' in richly multiple ways, and that this offers an alternative to a certain narrowing of thought familiar from more traditional study/scholarship in the academy, in which singular or definitive conclusions are sought. I am interested to pursue a metaphor of the constellationary form in art and design, where diverse and potentially contradictory concepts are held in relation. I want to recognise too a series of spatial metaphors – of not staying put and crossing borders, of being chased around by ideas, of meandering and getting sidetracked, of oscillating or shimmering between positions – which seek to describe the thinking I have witnessed and experienced in my own teaching and research. The paper emerges from pedagogies developed within two undergraduate courses (Fine Art and Graphic Design) in different universities where 120 credit, year-long modules address practice and theory holistically. It draws too on current ideas about the critical non-expert position in practice-based research and doctoral supervision in art and design, where rules and methods for thinking are created and developed rather than being able to apply an existing approach.

## Biography

Joanne Lee is a Sheffield-based artist/writer/publisher with a curiosity about daily life and ordinary places. Much of her work develops through a serial publication, the Pam Flett Press, which explores the visual, verbal and temporal possibilities of 'essaying' the everyday, and via the opportunities for production that arise in dialogue with creative and critical friends. This practice informs academic publications including 'Essaying the Pamphlet' in *Art, Politics and the Pamphleteer*, forthcoming for Bloomsbury; 'On Not Staying Put: Georges Perec's 'Inter(in)disciplinarity' as an Approach to Research' in *Literary Geographies* (2017) and 'I see faces: popular pareidolia and the proliferation of meaning' in *Materiality and Popular Culture: The Popular Life of Things*, Routledge (2016). She co-curated a strand of Unconditional Love, the Society for Artistic Research's Spring Meeting at Chelsea College of Arts (2015) and has presented at the Graphic Design Educators Network and Paradox European Fine Art Forum amongst other pedagogic platforms. She is currently Senior Lecturer in Graphic Design at Sheffield Institute of Art.

# Katy Macleod

*Art / Research / Critical Thinking*

What are the spaces for thought in the arenas of Art? Thinking about Art has always raised questions about what the capacities of Art are. Perhaps one of the most compelling capacities of Art is to provoke thought, to tease thinking that is already established and substantially understood into a different configuration or maybe it's more complicated and elusive than that. Because artworks provoke a kind of re-thinking and this is partly to do with how apperception fits with the logic of explanation. Art's essential business is to provoke, to think ahead of what is already conceivable, imaginative invention contingent upon and also against the contemporary context. Think of Leonardo da Vinci's design for a diving suit. Invention and imagination, imagining things as other than they are or appear to be, are the stuff of Art. My particular research interest lies in understanding the thinking involved in the practice of Art when it encounters the framework of the PhD. It is then that an Artist researcher has to present a formulation of process and realised artworks as research demonstration. In fact, as research thesis. Academic research conventions adhere to written argument and proof of research legitimacy but research through Art cannot be fully presented or understood in this way. To accept that writing about research carries the thesis reduces Art to what one of the artist researchers I have worked with called a mute dependency.

Artists undertaking PhDs to advance their thinking about the practice of Art have had to imaginatively invent research Art demonstration through newly conceived writing appropriate to the contingencies of the research Art project. They have kept art and writing in play so that their equivalence precludes any easy explanation of research process and subject. Each of the PhDs I shall cite delivers an event of research, a kind of live demonstration of the conceptual schemata of the research. This requires a high level of thinking, also invention and imagination. This is thought which occupies a very different space from the that of research geared towards demonstration of the full context and comprehensive literature of a research subject leading to systematic evidence of research validity and probity; the latter is a controlled intellectual endeavour removed from the turbulence of imaginative invention. In the examples of PhDs which have compelled my interest, the endless adjustment of art to writing contingent on contemporaneous research conditions exerts an exacting pressure on research formulation. I shall maintain that in the context of Art making, this process is strategic, critical thinking.

## Biography

Katy Macleod ran Critical Studies, Fine Art at Exeter School of Art, University of Plymouth, from 1990-2007. From 1996 – 2000, she undertook research into 'student and supervisor experience of doctorates in Fine Art' and subsequently researched into doctoral submissions with Lin Holdridge, 2001-2003, (AHRB funded 2002-2003). Related publications include Macleod, K & Holdridge, L (Eds) (2005) *Thinking Through Art: reflections on art as research*, Routledge, and 'Writing and the PhD in Fine Art' in Biggs, M & Karlsson, H (Eds) (2010) *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. Katy has extensive experience of examining in the UK at undergraduate and graduate levels. She is currently a Reader in Fine Art at Kingston University. Research investigation into PhDs in Fine Art, funded by Kingston University and conducted in collaboration with Neil Chapman, titled, 'The absenting subject: research notes on PhDs in Fine Art', was published in *The Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Vol. 13.2, 2014. More recently, a keynote paper, 'Art Project PhDs' was published in *Theorem: theory as practice and practice as theory*, Cambridge School of Art Doctoral Research, Anglia Ruskin University, 2017.

[katymacleod@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:katymacleod@hotmail.co.uk)