

**Mud, muddy, muddier still:  
Pedagogic research in the arts  
university**

PgCert/MA Academic Practice in Art, Design and  
Communication

Wednesday 11 January 2023

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# Ice breaker

What are your feet touching?

What's touching your feet?

Pairs in breakout rooms. Discuss for 5 minutes.

# Aims of the session

- Demystify research through sharing two projects in progress.
- Consider the potential of creative methods for researching arts university questions.
- Start thinking about what aspect of your academic practice you would like to investigate.

# Material noticings

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*‘To notice is to make a distinction, to create foreground and background, to distinguish some ‘thing’ from its surroundings.’* (Mason, 2002:33)

# James Corazzo

Associate Professor in the Art and Design Department,  
Sheffield Hallam University

National Teaching Fellow 2022.

Please note questions for James in the chat.

# **Drawing (from) your context**

Draw your current learning experience of this digital classroom.

You have 2 minutes to draw. Then upload your drawings to the Padlet link in the chat.

Then we will put you in pairs to share and discuss for 2 minutes.

Back in this room, put one word in the chat to summarise.





# Starting points



Adler, J. (1979) *Artists in Offices*



Winstanley, P. (2013) *Art School 7*

# Studio studies

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‘...distributed creation [which] allows one to account for the active and enabling **role played by the materials and technologies participating in creation processes**, undermining the distinction between form and matter that informs traditional notions of creativity.’ (Farías and Wilkie, 2016:5)

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‘a **near total lack of studies** that directly researched tutors and student’s experiences and use of the material space of the studio in (HE) art, design and architecture education’ (Corazzo, 2019:1261)

# Why workshops?

- ‘what we move about in, our ambient milieu’ (Perec, 1974:5)
- Lack of cross-disciplinary studies.
- Ubiquitous, unexamined Art School pedagogic mode or device.
- ‘Devices *do* things. But *what* do they do?’ (Law and Ruppert, 2013:229)

# Working research question

How is knowledge production constituted through sociomaterial\* relations in arts higher education workshop practice?

*Sociomateriality: the social (people) and the material (things) are entangled.*

# Theoretical framework

‘... **new materialism** attempts to make clear how unexamined habits of mind obfuscate our responsiveness to the horrors of environmental devastation and aims to lay the human subject on a horizontal vulnerability (as opposed to a vertical relation to hierarchy) in order to build a mutual constitution from which an ethics of naturecultural entanglement can grow.’

(Sonu and Snaza, 2015:259)

# Why does this matter?

‘Sustainable development should be elevated as both a guiding purpose and organizing principle for curricula, permeating all subject areas while simultaneously cutting across disciplinary boundaries.’ (UNESCO, 2022:8)



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‘It matters what stories tell stories; it matters whose stories tell stories.’ (Haraway, 2019:565)

# Research design

## Postqualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2011)

A concern with creative difference and rejection of normative research practices which reproduce inequities.

Uses philosophical concepts as tools of inquiry rather than prescribed research methods.

# Research design

Postqualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2011) ???

or

**Bricolage** (Kincheloe, 2001)

Following Levi-Strauss's concept of the bricoleur or craftsman, bricolage is an assemblage of different methods, responsively collated into a coherent whole.

Heavy use of reflection as connective tissue.

# Research design

Postqualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2011) ???

or

Bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001) ???

or

**Creative ethnography** (Elliott & Culhane, 2017; Pandian & McLean, 2017; Estallela & Sanchez Criado, 2023)

Use of creative methods; collaboration with interlocutors; acknowledgement of ethnography's inherent creativity.

# Research methods

- Workshop observations across UAL, across disciplines
- Focus on human and more-than-human intra-actions
- Field notes, inc. photography and contour drawing
- Creative non-fiction texts.

# Library drawing pilot

- Contour drawing (Nicolaidis, 1941)
- Salience hierarchy: ‘the most noteworthy, the most interesting or the most telling’ (Wolfinger, 2002:89)
- ‘The first step in thinking about the force of things is the open question of what counts as an event, a movement, an impact, a reason to react.’ (Stewart, 2007:16).

# Some bad drawings



# Noticings

- Bad drawing > good drawing? (Farthing *et al*, 2012)



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- Bad drawing > good drawing? (Farthing *et al*, 2012)
- Draw first, write later = epistemological shift towards less fixed, more expansive thinking.
- ‘To draw is to look, examining the structure of appearances. A drawing of a tree shows, not a tree, but a tree-being-looked-at. Whereas the sight of a tree is registered almost instantaneously, the examination of the sight of a tree (a tree-being-looked-at) not only takes minutes or hours instead of a fraction of a second, it also involves, derives from, and refers back to, much previous experience of looking.’ (Berger, 2005:71)

# Departure points

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‘I’m speaking of impressions that are like the back of the tapestry that I’m trying to follow, and it seems that the other side of the tapestry is as logical, and after all, as well drawn – in any case, not more badly drawn – as the front I show to others.’ (Foucault, 1968/2013:40)

# Drawing (from) your noticings

Draw something that you've noticed at UAL that interests you. **Or** draw something that challenges you.

2 minutes to draw. 8 minutes to share in pairs.

When sharing: respect the drawing in terms of what it means to the author; resist offering your own interpretation use the material qualities or other specific elements to ask them questions that will help them make sense of it.

# A messy turn?



‘We didn’t come here to extract meaning but to ask questions, to probe the environment. We came to meet the mud, not as a thing, but as a material condition.’  
*(Lutsky and Burkholder, 2017)*

# Closing

What has been most useful for you?

What remains muddy?

Notes in the chat.

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