

Introduction:

# today and tomorrowland

*How do we ensure the next generation of creative practitioners will maximise their contribution to the cultural, social, and economic well being of society? How do we maintain a dynamic and interdisciplinary learning community, which allows both staff and students the opportunity to nurture, develop and exploit their creative abilities towards their own professional intent? How do we foster conceptual development and an idea-led ethos towards creative risk that seemingly has no boundaries? These questions and how we address them are at the core of the School's overall mission in which 'we believe that creativity is the currency of our time and that it has no boundaries'. Subsequently in 2009 this dynamically led to the implementation of a highly integrated approach through the combined strategies of Research and Enterprise and Teaching and Learning.*

## **The School Research and Enterprise Strategy**

Our overall School goal for research and enterprise is to be a thriving community of creative practitioners, who research, share, co-learn, develop and exploit creativity in all its forms. For this goal to be attained we recognised that a positive cultural shift needed to take place; where students and staff are intrinsically part of a research and enterprise culture at all levels through the creation of an inclusive knowledge building interdisciplinary community. The strategy recognised the importance of both tradition and innovation on both curricula and resources. Our strategy also acknowledges our perception of the sector and the push-pull between maintaining professional practice standards within an inclusive education model. We play with intrigue by asking and responding to what a contemporary art, design and architecture school might be

in 2010 and beyond; the polemics addressing a vocational and skill-based school with the ephemeral depths of conceptual thinking. An art, design and architecture school has a responsibility to enable staff and students to become articulate and confident concerning creative risk giving their work a critical and competitive edge. Crucially what remains important is the impact of their work on society.

The pedagogical and political turn of the past 20 years has seen many schools change their subject and resource infrastructure to embrace new cultural markets. This sensibility has provided a new understanding of the relationship between staff and students, work they make, the spaces they occupy and new questions that arise on the status of interdisciplinary work once it has left 'the studio'. Alongside curriculum development it is essential that staff locate their

research within one of the School's Research Units; to locate oneself creatively, pedagogically, physically, emotionally, philosophically, socially and even politically. The strategy is an enabler acting in such a way as to help us comprehend the intentions and implications of research within art, design and architecture education.

## **A question of knowledge in interdisciplinary creative practice**

So what do we mean by 'knowledge' in a context of interdisciplinary art, design and architecture education? Contentiously it involves the complex dialectic issues of integrating creativity and sometimes subjective thoughts into academic research. To integrate our career aspirations within research and to make it available as a valuable source of knowledge in professional practice. This has brought two contrasting sets of practices and beliefs into close proximity and the challenge to render them into each other. A symbiotic ideal that brings together academic cultures of research, characterised by epistemological debate on the constitution of knowledge in contrast to creative practices that focus upon the making, designing and studying artifacts and aesthetic experiences. In epistemological terms this marriage can be described as a live tension between explicit, propositional knowledge and tacit, experiential knowledge. Paradoxically what becomes clear is that the process of creative work in the context of academic research is not always clear.

Within the Centre for Research these epistemological concerns on propositional and experiential knowledge are addressed by bringing researchers, practitioners, thinkers and writers from different disciplines together to articulate, contest and define 'research' and 'knowledge' toward a collective dialogue. This collage of subject discipline and knowledge cultures involves how creative practice-led research measures with other fundamental research paradigms: scientific, humanist, phenomenological and how the boundaries of humanism and science require the continuous working of philosophical frames.

## **Teaching-research nexus**

Since the conception of the School's Research Strategy there has been a growing momentum to further integrate learning, teaching and research where staff become research active and also maintain high quality teaching and learning. Importantly as part of this relationship teaching and research is constantly enriched subsequently leading to innovation and excellence.

This process has also strengthened our commitment in not only providing postgraduate but also undergraduate student opportunities to participate in research projects. Historically in the 1970s Joseph Beuys nurtured teaching in his artistic practice, any interpretation of his work is generally synonymous with the theories he taught at the Dusseldorf Academy. Informed by such models a teaching-research nexus has been introduced into the research strategy. We provide an environment where staff and students can investigate and establish research processes together. This optimistically has wider positive implications for society and culture and the value of a creative education. Pedagogical research has shown that students value the fact that their tutors are engaged in research, particularly if the research has esteemed professional recognition. Students also value an inclusive research culture in the progression of their own career aspirations and the development of a subject-knowledge. Arguably one of the traditional reasons to teach was to work with your students so you can replenish your own ideas about art and design making. It is through a teaching-research nexus that institutional routines can and should be appropriately reviewed in this context.

Looking at the horizon, we speak from the moment, out of the realization that this is what we do as creative practitioners and educators, and perhaps also out of a certain currency that will one day encapsulate the future.

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