Supervising Practices for Postgraduate Research in Art, Architecture and Design

EDUCATIONAL FUTURES
RETHINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE
Volume 57

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Supervising Practices for Postgraduate Research in Art, Architecture and Design

Edited by

**Brent Allpress, Robyn Barnacle,
Lesley Duxbury and Elizabeth Grierson**

*Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University,
Melbourne, Australia*

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FOREWORD

Creative Practice, Creative Economy

It is quite remarkable how the creative, design and expressive arts once marginal and marginalised have become central to the mission of the university. Indeed, under the ideology of the creative economy the so-called cultural industries have taken centre stage and in some senses displaced or eclipsed the role and place of the traditional humanities. The modern university was built around philosophy and literature. Kant talked of the “conflict of the faculties”, Hegel occupied the first chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin in 1811, and Henry Newman crafted the Idea of the university around a body of literature. In 2010 The United Nations released its *Creative Economy: A Feasible Development Option*, which details evolving concepts of creativity, cultural and creative industries and aspects of the “creative economy”, its multiple dimensions and cross-sectoral linkages. Its first *Creative Economy Report* was released in 2008 concluding that the creative industries were among the most dynamic sectors of the world economy and offered new, high growth opportunities for developing countries. As Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and Helen Clark of United Nations Development Programme note in their joint Foreword to the 2010 report:

This report builds on the earlier analysis of its predecessor, with new and improved data, showing how creativity, knowledge, culture, and technology can be drivers of job creation, innovation, and social inclusion. It suggests that world trade in creative goods and services remained relatively robust at a time when overall levels of international trade fell. It analyzes the rapid growth in the creative economy sectors across the South and the growing share of creative sector trade which is coming from the South.

Which university or nation can afford to ignore the ideas and analysis behind this report? The ten key messages (summarised and truncated here) are (pp. xxiii–xxv):

1. Even in times of crisis “the creative industries hold great potential for developing countries that seek to diversify their economies and leapfrog into one of the most dynamic sectors of the world economy”.
2. “The world economy has been receiving a boost from the increase in South-South trade”.
3. “A right mix of public policies and strategic choices are essential for harnessing the socio-economic potential of the creative economy for development gains”.
4. “Policy strategies to foster the development of the creative economy must recognise its multidisciplinary nature – its economic, social, cultural, technological and environmental linkages”.

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5. "A major challenge for shaping policies for the creative economy is related to intellectual property rights: how to measure the value of intellectual property, how to redistribute profits and how to regulate these activities".
6. "The creative economy cuts across the arts, business and connectivity, driving innovation and new business models".
7. "The creative economy is both fragmented and society-inclusive. It functions through interlocking and flexible networks of production and service systems spanning the entire value chain".
8. "Policies for the creative economy have to respond not only to economic needs but also to special demands from local communities related to education, cultural identity, social inequalities and environmental concerns".
9. "In the aftermath of the crisis, the firmness of the market for creative products is a sign that many people in the world are eager for culture, social events, entertainment and leisure".
10. "Each country is different, each market is special and each creative product has its specific touch and splendor".

This is considered the new development mantra and its principles for the United Nations' development programme. It is a powerful reassertion of the notion of the knowledge economy still couched within a theory of international trade and oriented towards a development paradigm and without the neoliberal recipe enshrined in the Washington consensus. Yet it also provides a philosophy and ethos for 'development' across the board and for developed countries.

It is in the context of this evolving understanding of development that the contribution of *Supervising Practices for Postgraduate Research in Art, Architecture and Design* edited by Brent Allpress, Robyn Barnacle, Lesley Duxbury, Elizabeth Grierson, from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Australia can be appreciated. *Supervising Practices for Postgraduate Research* makes clear the fundamental shift towards a model of applied practice-led research which, as the editors explain in their introduction, "offers an effective means to conduct research on knowledge both embodied in, and discovered through discipline-specific art, architecture and design practices". And they themselves note the centrality of such a conception to the "creative economy".

The shift can be contextualised as a response by the academy to global changes in knowledge generation. Today productive and creative forms of applied and situated knowledge are being validated for their contribution to innovation economies with universities and industry working in close partnership to forge a practice-focused research and innovation nexus.

The emphasis is on a form of creative practice harnessed to project-based knowledge work that encourages intensive knowledge exchanges between teacher and student (or should I say co-investigators or co-creators), and between university and industry where the emphasis is on *knowledge as enactment*, *knowledge as doing*. Yet the element of criticality is not to be forgotten in the market or in trading knowledges that demand an applied and entrepreneurial context. These are critical models of social and public entrepreneurship.

FOREWORD

The emphasis on knowledge as a social practice has taken a long time to mature from its early formulations in the work of Wittgenstein and in Bourdieu, before it begins to get institutionalised in the doctrine of the reflective practitioner with Donald Schön and Chris Argyris in the 1970s, and accounts of “practitioner cultures”.

What this new collection does so well is to adopt a creative approach to the notion of supervision in art, architecture and design and to examine, as the editors phrase it, “emerging modes of postgraduate research and supervisory practice”.

This is a very astute and valuable contribution to the literature on supervision in the applied arena with a series of excellent discussions on creative practice-based research, pedagogical practices of supervision, creative writing and the creative work in process, “generative praxis”, distance supervision, doctoral exhibitions, supervision of designers, and a range of related issues and concerns. I particularly like the phrase of Linda Daley who talks of “Pedagogies of Invention”.

It is a path-breaking, path-finding book that will be of great assistance to all kinds of professionals and students across a wide range of disciplines and with important lessons for all doctoral supervision. It is an exciting and accessible book and a great achievement for a group of colleagues in a leading institution.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Brent Allpress is the research coordinator in the discipline of architecture in the School of Architecture and Design at RMIT University. His teaching, postgraduate supervision and research focuses on contested and informing relationships between design practices and discourses, particularly in the context of emerging digital design technologies. He was the founding editor of the project-based design research journal, *Architectural Design Research*, an international first in the field.

Dr Robyn Barnacle is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Graduate Research at RMIT University where she runs a seminar series and course on supervision of higher degrees by research pedagogy and practice. She also leads, and is otherwise involved in a variety of other research projects and quality improvement initiatives in the area of research education. Robyn's research interests focus on research education and pedagogy, research practice and knowledge generation, ontology, embodiment and learning. She has published widely in these areas and supervises higher degree by research candidates in a range of fields, such as education and design. Robyn holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from Monash University.

Dr Catherine Cole is Professor of Creative Writing and Deputy Dean, Faculty of Creative Arts, Wollongong University, NSW, Australia, and previously of RMIT. She has published numerous novels, non-fiction books, anthologies, poetry, short stories, essays and reviews. She is currently leading a research project on creative communities, which examines the role of UNESCO's Cities of Literature in conjunction with Melbourne, Iowa and Norwich. She has extensive experience of teaching in a number of Australian universities, and has been a Writing and Research Fellow at the University of East Anglia, UK, a resident of the Keesing Studio, Cité International des Arts in Paris, and an Asialink writer-in-residence in Hanoi, Vietnam. As a former member of the Committee of Management and the Executive of the Australian Society of Authors, Catherine has links with Australian writers, publishers and critics.

Dr Linda Daley is a senior lecturer in literary and communication studies in the School of Media and Communication, RMIT University where, until recently, she was a Director for Higher Degrees by Research. She supervises candidates undertaking research degrees by project and thesis. Her recent publications focus on the intersection of continental philosophy with literature, photography and film, and with a particular emphasis on invention, pedagogy and sense-making.

Dr Peter Downton is Professor of Design Research, RMIT University. His research includes the production of knowing and knowledge through designing and making, models in thinking, and people's relations with physical environments. Having begun in 1974, he currently supervises Ph.Ds. covering aspects of design in architecture, fashion, industrial design, interior design, landscape architecture, and

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

other fascinating domains. His books include, *Design Research* (RMIT Press, 2003); *Studies in design research: Ten epistemological pavilions* (RMIT Press, 2004); and with Mark Burry, Michael Ostwald, and Andrea Mina (eds.) three books under the generic title *Homo Faber* (Archadia Press, 2007, 2008, 2010).

Dr Lesley Duxbury is the Deputy Head, Research and Innovation in the School of Art at RMIT University. She is an artist who uses print media to emulate and recreate experiences and perceptions of the natural environment, especially the atmosphere and its phenomena, and her current projects and publications address climate change action and mitigation. She has exhibited for over 25 years in Australia and the UK, with solo exhibitions in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, and more than 50 selected group exhibitions in Australia, Korea, Austria and Hong Kong. She is the recipient of Australia Council Visual Arts Board funding (2011 and 1996) and has completed public art commissions in Perth (2004 and 1996). Her work is held in all major public collections in Australia.

Dr Pia Ednie-Brown, Associate Professor at RMIT University's School of Architecture and Design, is a design researcher, educator and theorist with a research practice, *onomatopoeia* (<http://onomatopoeia.com.au/practice/>). Based in the architecture programme and the Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory (SIAL), she has directed numerous creative research projects involving multiple disciplines across the arts and sciences. Her book *Plastic green: Designing for environmental transformation* (RMIT Press, 2009) offers an account of one of these projects. From 2009 to 2011 she led an ARC Discovery research project seeking to re-theorise innovation for contemporary design practices in terms of coupled ethical and aesthetic concerns therein.

Dr Elizabeth Grierson is Professor of Art and Philosophy at RMIT University, and for seven years Head of the School of Art (2005–2012). She is a research leader of RMIT Design Research Institute and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts UK, and has a long experience of supervising and examining postgraduate degrees. She was a practising artist and theorist in NZ for over 20 years, Visiting Research Fellow at University of Brighton, UK (1997–98), and since 2001 executive editor, *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies*. Her books include, *Designing sound for health and wellbeing* (co-author, ASP, 2012), *A life in poetry: Nicholas Lyon Gresson* (ASP, 2011), *Doctoral journeys in art education* (ed., ASP, 2010), *Creative arts research* (co-author, Sense, 2009), *A skilled hand and cultivated mind* (co-author, RMIT Press), *Thinking through practice* (ed., RMIT Press, 2007), *The arts in education* (ed., 2003).

Dr Philip Samartzis lectures in the School of Art, RMIT University, and researches in the areas of sound art, acoustic ecology and spatial sound practices, with a specific focus on climate change and environmental sustainability. His Ph.D., *Surround sound in installation art*, examined the place of sound in contemporary art practice through a range of site determined sound art projects. In

2010 Philip was awarded fellowships by the Australia Council for the Arts, and the Australian Antarctic Division to document the effects of extreme climate and weather events on the human condition at Davis Station in Eastern Antarctica, and Macquarie Island.

Dr David Thomas was born in Belfast, N. Ireland. He studied art at the University of Melbourne, Monash University and RMIT University where he is an Associate Professor of Painting. His paintings, photopaintings and installations employ monochromes and painted reflective surfaces to address issues of the perception of time and space. His work is exhibited in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, USA and Europe, and is held in numerous private and public collections including the: National Gallery of Victoria; Australian National Gallery, Canberra; Art Bank; Museum of Modern Art at Heide; Chartwell Collection; Auckland Art Gallery, NZ; and Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany. He also curates and writes on contemporary art.

Dr Laurene Vaughan is an Associate Professor in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University and Research Leader in the RMIT Design Research Institute. She has melded a career of practising artist, designer and educator in Australia and internationally. Her current research is investigating the historical and cultural evolution of vernacular artefacts: their making and their meaning. Laurene supervises masters and Ph.D. students with a focus on research through practice. In 2011 she was awarded an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation Award for her sustained contribution to this teaching practice.

Kevin White is Associate Professor and Deputy Head, International Development, in the School of Art, RMIT University and has a major role in supervising doctoral candidates in the Asian region. He is a ceramic artist whose current research focuses on interpreting the porcelain traditions of Japan and the Japonisme seen in British ceramics of the nineteenth century. In 1978 he was awarded a prestigious Japanese Ministry of Education (Monbusho) scholarship for postgraduate research in ceramics, in Japan, studying under the late Professor Yutaka Kondo at Kyoto City University of Fine Art. He then worked for three years in the Kyoto studio of Mr Satoshi Sato, a member of the 'Sodeisha' group of contemporary ceramic artists. In 1985 he completed his Master of Arts at the Royal College of Art, London. His work is held in public and private collections.

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