

National Forum on Studio Teaching Proceedings

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National Forum on Studio Teaching

13 July 2007

College of Fine Arts

University of New South Wales



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Over 100 academics attended this one-day forum to discuss challenges and opportunities they encounter in studio teaching in architecture, art and design. The focus of the day was to identify shared and contrasting approaches to studio and to begin to prioritise issues that arise in these disciplinary areas. This report is a compilation of the day's discussions and serves as a scoping exercise for further research on curriculum development in studio teaching.

Professor Ian Howard, the Dean of the College of Fine Arts, and Associate Professor Janice Orrell, from The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, welcomed Forum participants. Associate Professor Bob Zehner (Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW) and Graham Forsyth (College of Fine Arts, UNSW) introduced the context of the Forum and themes for the day's discussions.

The National Forum on Studio Teaching was funded by a grant from The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Ltd.



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National Forum on Studio Teaching

Introduction

The studio experience is an integral part – many would say the integral part – in the education of architects, artists and designers.

Like many aspects of higher education, however, the studio model is undergoing change. Some changes, like the increasing availability and flexibility of information technologies, have been welcomed in studios to reflect ongoing changes in professional practice.

Students are changing as well – in terms of their interests, their capabilities and, even more notably, in the time they are able to commit to formal on-campus classes given their almost universal desire to maintain significant part-time employment during their university years.

All of us are also aware that there is increasing pressure on resources for studio teaching mainly around the amount of class and tutorial time that can now be budgeted and the extent to which dedicated studio spaces can be made available for our studio courses. Other issues include concerns over the extent to which we can adopt IT opportunities as they become available.

Not all programs have been able to maintain both dedicated studios and generous allocations of teaching resources to those studios, and many programs are now facing the challenge of how they can best provide a quality educational experience for their students in the context of limited resources.

The pressures to reduce studio spaces and teaching allocations are real. As we respond to those pressures it becomes even more important to come together to share our experiences – to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of what we now do in the studio setting, to lay the groundwork for studio teaching in the decades ahead.

This Forum is one of the steps along that path. Its focus is about dialogue and exchange, not necessarily to come up with “solutions”, but more so it is a chance for the people who practice in the studio to talk with each other about the issues they confront in their daily teaching practice. We are convinced that just as there are challenges on many fronts, there are also opportunities, and the National Forum on Studio Teaching promises to be a fertile ground in which to pursue this dialogue. We welcome you to the Forum, and look forward to your contributions.

Everyone assumes that the studio culture is a good thing. But it is difficult to sustain when so many students have jobs, staff are under time pressure, there is a lack of funding and a lack of 24-hour access. Students need to see that studios are useful.

**George Henderson,
Times Higher Education
Supplement, 2004**

Studio teaching issues to address:

...a reflective practicum demands intensity and duration beyond the normal requirements of a course. ... Students do not attend these events as live in them. And the work of a reflective practicum takes a long time ... time to live through the initial shocks of confusion and mystery, unlearn initial expectations, and to master the practice of the practicum."

Donald Schön,
Educating the Reflective Practitioner 1988

Assessment remains high on the list of student concerns just as it has for years. How, in a studio setting is feedback best provided? Public presentation with expert or peer review is a staple of most studio courses. Is that appropriate and/or effective? Students always want more feedback – that is a given – but how can this be done most effectively?

What studio experiences have we had that really ‘worked’? Are the better ones cross-disciplinary in nature where students from more than one discipline work together on a particular project/problem/brief? How does the ideal studio differ from the first-year experience to the final-year experience?

What aspects of “studio” and the studio experience are shared across the disciplines represented here today, and what appear to be the key differences? What outcomes, for staff as well as for students, are we aiming for? Reflective, immersive learning?

How do we best work with practising professionals as studio course designers and tutors?

How is the studio experience best facilitated? 24/7 access to dedicated studio space? Extensive contact hours (or access hours) to staff? What roles are there for online “virtual” studios?

Finally, is it possible to identify, by discipline, examples of “best practice” -- how can we tell? – or, even within disciplines, is it more likely that there will be a variety of context-specific examples of best practice?

Where resource constraints are an issue, what is the most effective way to convince administrators to increase those resources?

There is a feeling among some lecturers that many students today are producing significantly better work on graduation now than students were producing years ago when resource constraints were less of an issue. Why is that the case? Is it that the students are better? Is it only improvements in technology, or have we discovered ways to teach as effectively (or better) with limited resources?

Graham Forsyth (College of Fine Arts, UNSW)

Bob Zehner (Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW)

in collaboration with:

Elizabeth Musgrave, Doug Neale, Brit Andresen (University of Queensland)
Barbara De La Harpe, Fiona Peterson, (RMIT University) Noel Frankham (University of Tasmania).

Rosalind Walsh, Ruth McDermott (UNSW)

World Café

A large group brainstorming session was integral to the National Forum on Studio Teaching. Over 100 academics from Australia and New Zealand participated in lively discussion using a rotational model: the World Café Forum (<http://www.theworldcafe.com>).

The World Café methodology has the following stated principles:

- **clarify the context;**
- **create hospitable space;**
- **explore questions that matter;**
- **connect diverse participants;**
- **encourage each person's contribution;**
- **listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions; and**
- **share collective discoveries.**

The World Café is about building and connecting ideas in a collegial and convivial environment. The facilitator creates a series of small tables for participants who talk for a period and then move on to a new table, leaving behind one person who is appointed host. After a time, a new host is appointed at that table so the 'old' host can move on.

Conversation can be thematic, and progressively the thoughts and ideas are recorded visually at each table. The movement of participants means that ideas can be connected and built on each other, drawing on the knowledge and perspectives of the different participants.

By keeping a host at a table for a time, new participants are brought up to date or given clarification on previous thinking by someone who was present before. By then moving the host on, the collective history of the previous table is brought forward to the next table to inform ongoing conversation about the same topic or a different one.

At the Studio Teaching Forum, different pairs of questions were explored iteratively at the tables by small groups:

- 1. What does Studio mean in your discipline?**
- 2. What does best practice in Studio look like – examples here and overseas?**
- 3. What learning outcomes do we consider 'good' in Studio?**
- 4. How do we know that students achieve 'good' learning outcomes in a Studio? What criteria would we use?**

These small group discussions were followed by large group reporting of the ideas from a mix of disciplinary perspectives.

Dr Fiona Peterson, RMIT University

Associate Professor Barbara de la Harpe, RMIT University

world cafe

1. What does **Studio** mean in your discipline?

*How do students
know studio is
important?*

*How do you
distinguish
studio from other
subjects?*

Environment both physical and temporal

- Environment where students feel comfortable to work/ reflect/ present
- Space and time for reflection and exchange (student to student and staff to student)
- Risk - studio is a place to make mistakes in a safe environment
- Works sometimes not made in the studio but discussion/ feedback occur in studio time – this is valued across all disciplines
- Environment where students can make mistakes
- Primary based learning vehicle
- Space for interaction – nurturing
- Contact point between staff and students
- Collaborative workspace for conceptual development and production
- Place to demonstrate / talk / critique

Interaction

- Being together in a group – synthesise all things learnt about design
- Formative feedback and discussion around issue and process
- Incidental learning
- Group and collaborative learning
- Public work, peer review, performative dimension
- Students teaching students
- Active learners/finding questions

*Issue of taking
school leavers into
studio environment?*

question one

Pedagogy

- Way of thinking – process
- Integration of ways designers think
- “catch rather than teach” (models being an artist)
- Active and inclusive engagement
- Understand design - use the tools
- Having an understanding of new and old skills
- Cognitive learning
- Creative – problem and project oriented
- Student numbers driving a lot of learning processes
- Hands on / making/ doing
- Critique/ appraise/ verbal/ drawing
- Maintain traditional methods (drawing, making models) but also combine high end technologies
- Students integrate knowledge they bring with them
- Turning discourse into artifact/ system/ event

Can we learn from other problem based disciplines such as medicine?

If we lost the physical space what would happen? Control/ lead change rather than submit?

Outcome

- Process valued over outcome
- Prepares for professional practice, emulates practice
- Focus on assessment outcomes

world cafe

2. What does best practice in **Studio** look like – examples here and overseas?

*Studio Cult-ure –
exhibits strengths and
weaknesses of cult*

Environment both physical and temporal

- A physical environment that encourages communication
- Space needs to be flexible, e.g., Have pin up board, also allow for different furniture configurations
- Integration of technology is facilitated in a flexible manner
- Studio storage. Workshops – modelmaking needs “messy space”
- Sound proofing for music and machinery. Lighting
- Philosophical - place of experimentation (sometimes studio does not succeed)
- Storage space for students
- Dependent on space – time and reflection

Interaction

- Like traditional architecture studio - educated person
- Safe to experiment test ideas and be assessed as process of learning.
- Should vary in nature
- Collaborative learning
- Continuity for sessional staff.
- Peer collaboration and evaluation
- Site visits – physical encounters with the world

*Relationship
between traditional
vs contemporary
practice*

question two

Pedagogy

- An engaged process - not passive
- Reflection and evaluation – clearly communicated
- Development of thinking of students over the term
- Understands context but also individualises it. Becomes part of the students
- Staff are engaged in learning new things. Staff development
- At heart of it bringing informative contextual background into the studio. Essential that “stuff” is brought in for intervention, peer critique etc
- Avoids self plagiarism
- Way of creating an educated person
- Hands on practice – making, not just critique

Motivation. “Light bulb goes on”

*Studio as a rhetorical space
– logos, ethos and pathos*

Outcome

- Integrated sense of how assessment criteria relate to other subjects in program and to graduate attributes
- Assessment criteria published

world cafe

3. What learning outcomes do we consider “good” in **studio**?

*Studio is not a place
where skills are
acquired*

Thinking/ cognitive

- Problem solving - finding creative solutions
- Independent thinking – their version or solution
- Risk taking head on with individual responsibility
- Critical thinking = an ability to engage and flower in projects not yet invented
- Contextual awareness (ethical, cross- cultural, historical, theoretical)
- Good = risk taking conceptually. Especially as this generation is averse to risk taking
- Independent learners, Lateral Learners
- Research capability - how to get students to ask questions/ frame project
- Critical evaluation (judgment from peers, justification)
- Cross referencing – communicating- critique
- Understanding and clarity of intention
- Reflection – self analysis – critical skills

Collaboration/ team

- Studio practice is about difference, empowering students to think independently
- Collaboration – positive peer group stimulation
- Individual contribution to a collective whole
- Evidence of collaboration
- Communication/ sharing of ideas
- Team work/ collaboration – are we being inclusive? Go beyond studio
- Time to engage collaboratively
- Interaction – engagement - motivation

*Argue against transmission
of knowledge and for
transformative process/
experience*

question three

Creative/ visual/ process

- Visual literacy / visual culture
- Reflection upon outcomes
- Creative re- working of brief
- Space where imagination can flourish
- Engagement, experimentation
- Ability to take critical approach/ reflect
- Make connections. Process/ critique
- Student understands context – able to do something that is self reflective – unique
- Student and practitioner in safe place, Individuality of the work
- Conversation rather than transmission
- Interpretation/ translate, transform, transcend.

*What is relationship
of studio to other
classes?*

*...not by product
produced, but by
willingness to take risks*

*Problem is that the good
outcome is 10 years in the
future. Success of this must be
measured and proclaimed too.*

Skill/ practice

- Practical skills, professional abilities
- Executing ideas (skills)
- Handling of materials, a good artwork/ design
- Reflective practice – self evaluation

*At its worst it can be
peer “lowest common
denominator”*

world cafe

4. How do we know that students achieve “good” learning outcomes in a **Studio**? What criteria would we use?

What should studio's relevance be to practice?

Creative/ process/ collaboration

- Culture – establishing culture that will last
- Taking risks Personal development – observation
- Can be self determined/ aspirational
- Difference/ uniqueness of practitioner
- Get the students to be conscious of their process based on reflection
- Group dynamic - collaborative engagement (teamwork)
- Collaboration and participation and engagement
- Individuals in group are distinctive in group and have grown with the process
- Being able to speak about your work
- In the 21st C we need to lead our students through the process
- University – knowledge data base
- Our group does value stirring
- Changing the term “studio” for other pedagogies
- Studio becomes a problem solving activity not about other aspects
- Not explicitly described - many struggle to understand (staff and students)
- Things go wrong. Our idea doesn't come across

Cognitive/ Analytical/ Knowledge/

- Breaking authoritative moulds – work through, talk back, ability to talk about ideas, stand by decisions
- Today's students – here & now Non- risky
- Abilities to communicate, argue, discover, reflect
- Ability to take on a challenge/ problem solving
- University is a repository of different processes to knowledge and understanding
- We don't have to measure it, accepting that knowledge is tacitly gained
- What is the role of the acquisition of knowledge?
- Transferable skills to be adaptable and flexible to fit into new contexts

Does this studio have outcomes – research – real life jobs – further study?

question four

We don't have methodologies to say "we have done a great job"

Evaluation / assessment

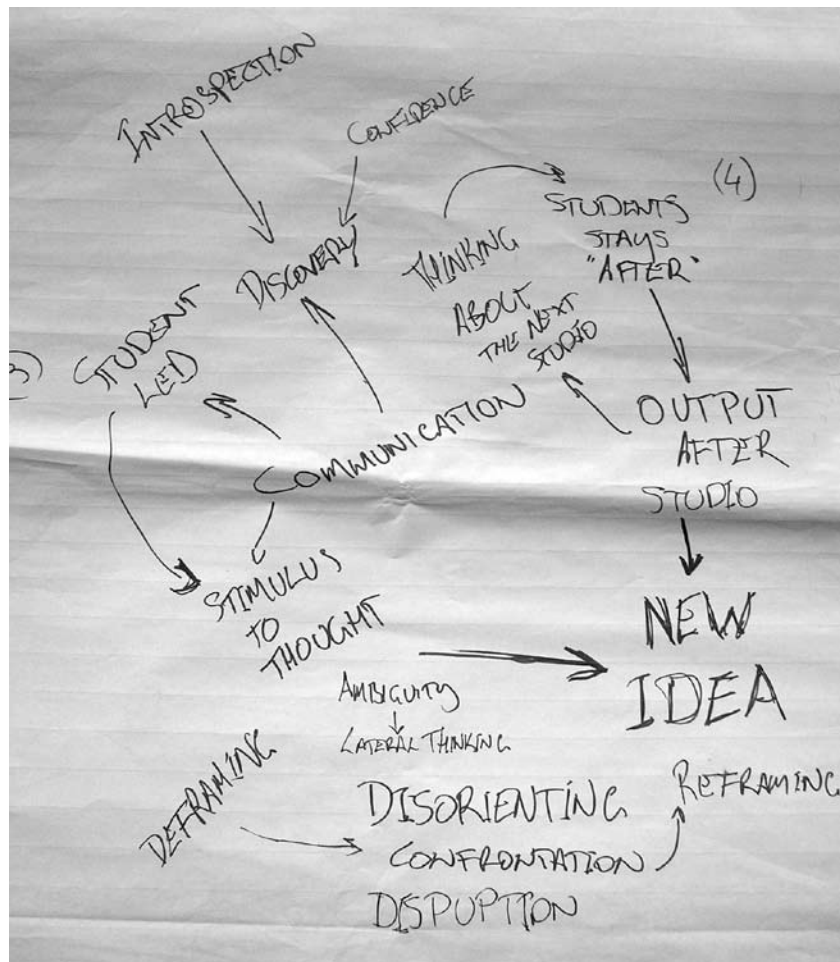
- Progressive evaluation (formative) vs summative
- Independent learners – self evaluation
- Grades could be based around effectiveness of process etc response to feedback
- Bid for grades and then test through peer review
- Assessment is a lazy way of motivating students
- Self critique in an informative manner
- Knowing "achievement" beyond the mark
- Educated "designer type person" (becoming one of these)
- Student demonstrate they have understood goal, reached goal and added individuality to goal
- What we want our students to be.....

Model of place of dialogue but different types of dialogue

University to practice

- Employers want a bank of basic knowledge
- Whose responsibility is it to 'catch student up'?
- Should uni be outside of professional bodies?
- Uni should have a disruptive mode which is reactive
- Professional critique/ skills/ communication
- Knowing context of arts/ design practice outside studio
- Guided gut-level professional judgment based on well articulated performance criteria
- How does studio relate to graduate attributes?
- Students entering their work voluntarily for awards – for the public space
- The 10 year plan What do grads look like? Develop appropriate methodologies
- What might we do altogether? - Students /educators /accreditors /professionals
- What we want our students to be...
- What's implicit and explicit?
- Did we do good for the world?
- Citizenship - Using knowledge well - Change agents
- Abilities to appreciate the different cultures of practice
- In an objective manner articulating beyond "self" – other educational values
- Balance between the greater good and studio practice
- Good outcomes are dependent on the "right student candidate" and the fuel he/she has to be "ignited"
- Artifact or process? How does this contribute to the future of design?

Project (what you need to learn) vs. studio (curricular purposes).



Concurrent Disciplinary Panels:

Environment and Challenges for Studio Teaching

In the afternoon the Forum participants split into discipline specific groups of Architecture, Art, Design and Digital Design.

Each group was addressed by two speakers who were involved with studio teaching within the discipline. Then the group discussed the topic “what are the issues facing studio teaching within your discipline area?”

This discussion was then summarized into 5 to 7 points for presentation back to the larger group later in the day.



architecture speakers

Eugenie Keefer Bell, University of Canberra

Varieties of studio teaching in Architecture – spatial types

- Generic 'class rooms' scheduled by the hour, 'Hot desking'
- Studio type, shared between years and/or related disciplines (such as interior design or landscape architecture)
- Dedicated architecture studio, with up to 24 hour access

UC Staff and Student perceptions of the value of the dedicated studio model:

- It contributes to a sense of common goals and shared purpose in the study of architecture
- It contributes to creating audience and enthusiasm for common activities and regular/additional/special programs, such as Wednesday lunchtime speakers.
- It facilitates small group discussions and impromptu 'desk crits'
- There is productive interaction between senior and junior students. This is further encouraged by the employment of top senior students as assistant tutors for 1st and 2nd years
- Junior students who work more consistently in the studio – and interacting with senior students – commonly achieve superior outcomes to those who attend only scheduled class times. This appears especially the case with younger students.

Perceived threats and constraints (both for UC and in general) for dedicated studios & studio teaching

- Universities hunger to reclaim 'underused' spaces (we resist in part through congestion which renders the spaces less desirable to others)
- Studio class hours longer than for other subjects, especially 3 hour lecture-based subjects
- Acquiring/maintaining adequate studio furniture/equipment. Maintaining adequate computers/licenses, OH&S issues, Security and storage
- Funding for staffing, including full-time, part-time and sessional.

Relationship of studio teaching and studio practice to the RQF

Richard Tucker, Deakin University

Collaborative learning and sustainability teaching

1. Collaborative learning

- Can we teach design as we were taught it? We tend to teach as we have learnt.
- Relates to resources, 'normalisation of the curriculum - tactics to solve the problem:
- Design components in all lecture subjects to counter reduction in Studio teaching
- Building from inception to construction is a group activity
- Unfair assessment – why group design projects are universally unpopular?
- Need to be very carefully constructed
- Online self-and-peer-assessment model
- Careful team selection techniques – reduces the possibility of dysfunctional teams.
- Teach team-working skills, Studio team contracts

2. How do we teach sustainable design in the context of studio? Sustainability is a very hot topic.

- Design teachers we have an opportunity to lead in this area
- Sustainability taught as a lecture topic. Innovative ESD (Environmentally Sustainable Design) solutions require multi-disciplinary teams from the beginning
- Student expectations and student misconception of sustainability as an 'add on'
- Transformative process in the studio where the student i) gets sick of not learning anything and then ii) starts learning independently.

What are the issues facing **Studio** in our discipline?

groups

Design has been reduced by cutting down on studio time.

Pedagogy

- Disengagement from students: how do we get students to appreciate studio teaching? Balancing all they have to do
- Students don't bring their "work in progress" – don't see it as important
- Confusion about what the role of the studio is – mismatch in expectations of what the purpose is
- Need to encourage a multi-modal way of learning
- Peer-to-peer learning is perhaps the most valuable aspect of studio
- Virtual studio – we should expand our notion of studio – need to find a way of 'connecting'
- What kind of message do you send to students re the importance of the studio?
- Group work - you can only do this in the studio
- All good things can't be done in 3 hours – sometimes need a longer time
- Goals and roles – should be thought through and defined at the outset for students

Infrastructure/ space/ resource

- Space: Does it matter or not? Contentious issue of ownership.
- Academic workload capacity: more time is now spent on management and administration. Also time spent with sessional staff who only come in for a short time. Space – studio is a physical community
- Time contact hours, access, etc.
- Regularity of contact –if student misses one session, the teacher may not see them for 3 weeks
- Number of students – higher number of students but lower number of staff-quality control is the biggest issue
- Equipment –access to a workshop, printing centre etc.
- Space – physical and virtual – a blended environment gives the most opportunities – pin-up appointments; peer-to-peer learning
- Face to face is what we don't want to lose. Studio is a 'way of learning'

Students/ assessment/ outcomes

- Assessment: this may change how students see the studio space
- Maintaining student engagement
- 40% engaged – how to draw in the other 60%. Variety in how much studio time is given in different universities
- Student Diversity –expectations have changed. There is now a very different student cohort in terms of socio-economic situation; personality; etc. Idea of 'buying a degree'
- Student Engagement: Students are now part-time and working; plugged into i-pods, mobile phones – staff often have difficulty connecting with students. How have we modified the studio environment for today's students?

Are we allowing enough time for studio to happen?

University/ industry/ practice

- Normalisation of the curriculum – design is now 'just another subject'
- Research - Challenges and opportunities of integrating research into the studio
- Differentiation –we want to maintain varying degrees of intensity – reflects the environment of the profession. Replicates the practice

1. Lutz Presser, University of Southern Queensland

Role of the studio:

- “anarchic headspace” as well as a geographical space
- Opens up your head (think tank)

Good studio teacher is a:

- good facilitator
- facilitates independent thinking
- encourages difference not sameness
- fosters the “thinking artist”

Bad studio teacher:

- encourages mimicry / pretension
- damages creative ability
- dominates students

Issues

- We have to defend this form of teaching within universities
- Limitations on how many students in a room - students need individual attention and group learning
- Lecturer needs a good overview of the progress of the group

2. Matthys Gerber, University of Sydney

Issues

- No institutions in Australia solely run for artists by artists (all amalgamated with Universities) therefore all Schools becoming more similar
- Problems with the existing model
- Multiple markers indicative of lack of trust of judgement
- Model: links art to craft (skills) – makes it difficult to think purely visually
- Emphasis on team / institution rather than individual teachers producing individual students – tension with the discipline
- Encouraged to teach generic techniques - there are no generic techniques
- Why is individuality discouraged in Art Education institutions in Australia?
- Proposed the idea of an open studio where students are loose from the fabric of the discipline – similar to the German model of “charismatic teaching” (told it wasn’t possible)
- Teachers employed on the basis of academic qualifications (e.g. PhD) rather than practitioners with experience
- Limiting for students to be placed in a particular medium early in their program (i.e. painting, photography, print media etc).

What are the issues facing **Studio** in our discipline?

groups

Pedagogy

- Cyclical teaching versus progressive learning from first year – benefits to a model that allows a cycle of constant reflection and then moving on
- Making way through diversity – first year foundation; 2nd and 3rd year general; 4th year and post-graduate – specialisation
- Are we teaching what we practice?
- Constraint of the institution to inhibit critical creative thinking
- Encouraging the individual and collective
- Visual Art is simply not being taught in Art School
- Role is broader than educating fine artists

*Do we know
why our students
want to come to
Art School?*

University/ industry/ practice

- In moving to academia we haven't defined the epistemology
- Measurement is success of the alumni (e.g. exhibitions etc) – but where does that place the subversive or provocative?
- Ultimate success is students still producing at 60

Students/ assessment/outcomes

- Students in a course / studio come from very different degree structures (e.g. some doing Bachelor of Fine Arts, some international students who are doing painting as a single subject etc)
- Students' skill base?

Infrastructure/ space/ resources

- Not always conducive to a space where the irrational is allowed to happen
- Comfort levels of space – studio classroom / virtual; luxury of space taken for granted? Studio an unfamiliar place for some students
- Administration – how does one administer the instruction of individualism?
- Technology – do we continue the drive to make 2D into 3D

Soumitri Varadarajan, RMIT University

- RMIT Industrial design has 4 year program. Staff student ratio 1:16
- Course has been placed in Architecture school but this place it not conducive to industrial design. A particular model is being imposed on ID
- Course has been remodelled and is now integrated into other disciplines at the higher years
- Students can now choose which studios they do based on topics
- Topics are based around lecturers' research area – this is based on RMIT's decision to get "onto the research bandwagon". Studios themselves have become research projects
- Students know the studio subject in advance and "shop" for the areas in which they have an interest
- Two years ago conventional assessments were taken out. Students then "signed up" for a particular grade. Lecturers then give feedback along the course as to whether the student is "tracking" for that grade

Richard Goodwin, College of Fine Arts, UNSW

- Personally committed to studio practice – employs 4 architects
- Runs Porosity Project about the porous city – public space in the city. Runs an intense studio with students overseas – take students outside normal experience – a kind of hot house
- Problem is spatial. Design does not have the same studio space allocated to sculpture and painting. Design involves making physical models as well as new media engagement
- International studios could have output book, film, exhibition. Boundaries between disciplines are important but make them "permeable"

What are the issues facing **Studio** in our discipline?

groups

Pedagogy

- Studio is about giving evidence of your thinking to others
- Competition is good – people push each other. However, time wasting can be part of the process
- Ability to keep the best of studio experience but recognising change in students
- Need more from education theory about how people learn to validate and explain how learning happens in studio contexts
- “Action” Based a hot house engagement
- Event orientation - engagement and co-operation
- Invite others in – open up
- Needs immersion
- Externalisation of process
- Integration of delivery systems

Students/ assessment/ outcomes

- Model of assessment at RMIT. The situation is actually quite “stressless” as it becomes not about assessment but achievement. Students have picked the studio and aspired to a certain grade – the onus is on them to achieve. Students are notified at week 7 if they are not tracking for the chosen grade
- Student peers can be elected to give feedback – often these are quite scathing
- Reflective part of studio is under particular threat – students need time for reflection

The need for an articulated pedagogy of studio T & L that moves beyond the charismatic teacher.

University/ industry/ practice

- How do we create the framework to get support for Studio Teaching from government, universities, industry?
- We need to use information so we can develop an argument to talk to other disciplines
- We need to take other faculties (e.g. Engineering) along with us – bring them in and show them the effectiveness of methods
- This project (Carrick Studio teaching) should be about developing ways to talk to upper management

Infrastructure/ space/ resources

- When you don't have the space at uni – you go home, work and then bring the evidence in. If you don't do this you don't know how you got there
- Decline in the amount of and access to dedicated studio space
- Staff- student ratios – pressure through increased numbers
- Professional trust and professional recognition
- Studio/ teaching/ research nexus – pressure of demand for teachers to be researchers
- Off campus studios → intensive delivery
- Diversity with the discipline and infrastructure needs

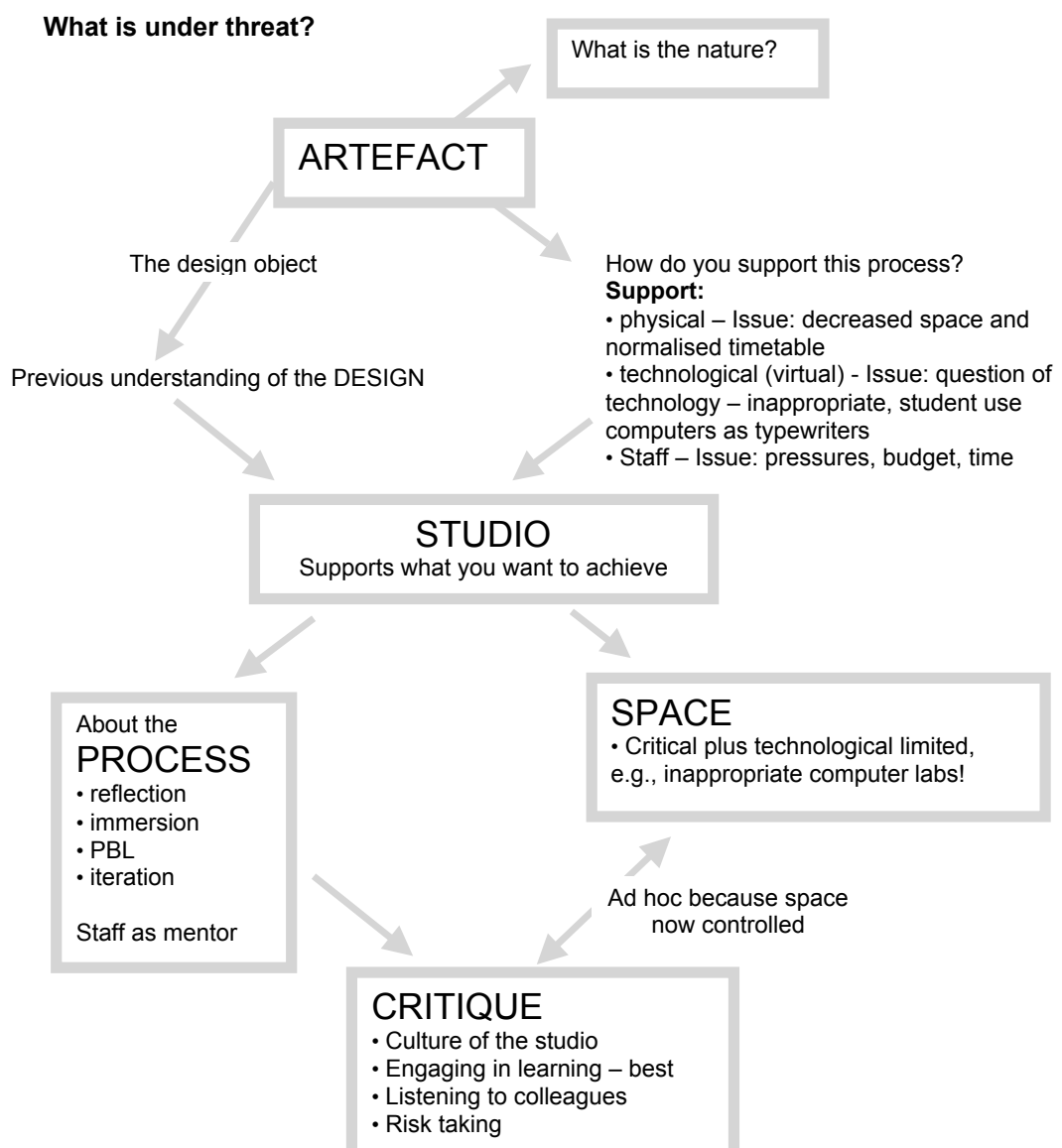
digital media speakers

Peter Smith, RMIT University

- Has designed three degrees to address needs in the computer games industry for qualified professionals including artists, designers and programmers
- Studio model is digital labs for about 20 students
- One of the key drivers is “nerds, artists and designers” - as in industry – working together, i.e., industrially engaged
- Peter commented on the ‘graduate month’ in the UK where there are massive exhibitions for the public, i.e., the reach is beyond and into society
- Peter thinks that the ‘master – apprentice’ relationship is very much alive, has contemporary resonance as it provides a livelihood for students

This is a dynamic discipline not static – how to respond to emergent opportunities.

Michael O'Docherty, Queensland University of Technology



Equity
issues
– not so
much with
hardware
but
software
costs

What are the issues facing **Studio** in our discipline?

groups

Pedagogy

- Perception that studio is play space where there is learning and +/- creativity Question is how do you assess this?
- Studio is Exploration and Experiment
- 'PLAY' and Creativity (alternative investigation and experiment) Seen to be unrigorous and unstructured
- Studio is an object of study
- For digital media, critique is part of formative process but digital media is summative - so impacts on the artefact produced
- Studio may be solo but responsibility to take account of all that/who is involved
- Encouraging contemporary practice and current curriculum:
- Emergent contexts and opportunities
- Issue not just the studio but working with the wider community
- Students need intellectual and mental freedom to develop and life long learning so they can come back to learn more
- The artefact is different, eg, to architecture, the space is different, process different but the critique is the same
- The curriculum needs to be open enough to adjust it as required
- What is the studio, ie, = process, space, critique with a generic output identified but the process only begins at the end of the program and beyond – so industry readiness is complex
- Critique and process Your job is to invent something, so need to identify the key things students need and then 'unlock the box' of what is studio

University/ industry/ practice

- University/ industry/ practice
- Criticism from employers, eg, they don't know how to run a business
- Solution may be partnerships with industry and research to strengthen and broaden what we are doing
- Do we want them 'ready' or great conceptual thinkers (big companies like this)?
- There is considerable lag between program design (1 year), approval and student graduating – so how do you accommodate this Need to get back to fundamentals – a foundation (critical thinking etc)
- When you intersect the digital industries we need to lead

Students/ assessment/outcomes

- Students want to be discipline based – they want to come up with an artefact
- Multi-disciplinary - different backgrounds (students) and content (media)
- Assessment - Artefact versus Process Does the journey have to have a destination? This has impact on both institutional and academic quality assurance
- Dealing with multidisciplinary students – animation, film and TV, web, multimedia, games, photography
- How does digital media teaching deal with multi-disciplinary backgrounds? This has impact on staff as they need to accommodate everyone This is difficult
- Students need intellectual and mental freedom to develop life long learning so they can come back to learn more

Infrastructure/ space/ resources

- "Social space and the internet" – studio as community
- What is this space? – social and safe and risk taking – can be physical and virtual
- What is an 'integrated space' – synthetic space?
- Studio teaching often comes down to 'equipment' in this case software
- The virtual studio – blended learning physical and virtual space
- What is this space? Agreed on 'social' – type of engagement, 'communication and collaborative space' – about people talking to each other – not necessarily physical space
- Issues around software are considerable
- Software or project or something else (applied and active learning)
- Dynamic content, emergent opportunities
- Copyright
- Inflexibility, one size fits all, software is for corporate use

combine high end techno

Studio is - different way
things - having an un
of new + old skills

Studio - depends on disci
according to yr level

Studio is about cogni

EMBODIMENT OF DESIGN

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

LAB/STUDIO

ETHICS COLLABORATION

STUDE

EXPLO

STUDIO

ALLOWS FOR

CREATIVE

QUESTION

PROBLE

Conclusion



Summary of discussions

Architecture

Space: Does it matter? A physical community? A virtual community? - 'Efficiencies of space'

Student engagement: Are we modifying the studio environment for today's 'nintendo generation'?

Integrating virtual technology into the studio environment: Need for a 'wireless' system

Student Diversity E.g. Socio-cultural differences and those they are designing for

Staffing Need to teach 'smarter'. Teaching quality /complexity of sessional staff

Assessment How do we assess effectively e.g. 'social relationships' in a studio environment

Curriculum and research In the sense of 'mode of delivery'

Art

1. **Develop better measurements** for arguing for studio – against finance and space constraints.

2. Clearly identify what our **epistemology and pedagogy** are....

3. There is tension between the **individual and the collective**

4. Tension between **desired approach of studio and institutional constraints** – best practice is often sacrificed.

5. **Visual thinking** is an issue for a number of different degrees.

Specialisation – a need for it.

6. **Limitation of curriculum** – limits experience and limited geographically. Studio becomes bland.



across all disciplines

Design

1. **Articulation of the studio (pedagogy) not justification.** Need to communicate with public, politics etc better. Communicate externally and internally.
2. **Pressure on delivery systems** in terms of space, time and technology.
3. **Money:**

Raising it	Attracting it	Controlling it
↓	↓	↓
Industry	Grants	Policy decisions etc
4. **Research/ teaching** nexus
5. **Raising public profile.** Accreditation . “anyone can be a designer”.

Digital Media

1. **Play and creativity** (exploration and creativity)
2. **Social space (not necessarily physical) collaboration (communication)**
3. **Multi-disciplinary background and content**

↓	↓
students	media
4. **Software** or **projects** or something else
5. **Curriculum inertia** (dynamic content emergent opportunities)
6. Assessment **artefact vs process** QA



Where to from here.....

The National Forum on Studio Teaching, supported by a Carrick Institute grant to the University of New South Wales, was a collaborative venture involving the UNSW, the University of Queensland, RMIT and the University of Tasmania. The Forum is also a starting point for a larger project, Curriculum Development in Studio Teaching, a research grant under the Carrick Institute Discipline Based Initiatives: Common Curriculum Issues program.

This Studio Teaching Project (2007-2009) aims to describe and investigate current models of studio teaching models in architecture, art and design in Australia. The research will involve several integrated stages including an ongoing review of literature; surveys of architecture, art and design programs; and case studies of 'best practice' and/or especially innovative approaches to studio teaching. The Project aims to develop disciplinary specific benchmarks for studio, including examples of effective practice across a range of disciplines that undertake studio teaching in its various forms. Analyses of the Project's data will be informed by collaboration with relevant stakeholders both from within the higher education sector, and from the professions and professional practice.

Participants in the July 2007 National Forum on Studio Teaching will be among those contacted as part of the Curriculum Development in Studio Teaching project, and we look forward to their continuing interest and involvement.



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