

REFOCUSING AS AN INDEPENDENT LEARNER:

Interior Design and Decoration

A 2014 International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

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The Higher Education and Skills Group, Department of Education and Training (Victorian Government).

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i. Executive Summary

This applied research Fellowship sought to explore the way in which practitioners and academics approached the Design Process and idea generation as independent thinkers, and the contemporary idea of making, specifically in the discipline of Interior Design and Decoration. The area of investigation was generated from the initial observation of cultural change that is evolving in programs that teach design at foundation level, increasingly embracing a move towards engagement with digital technologies. The research is trying to gauge globally what the attitude to this is, and looking for insight into how to approach design process/ thinking.

The key findings of this Fellowship Report form three layers: ideas generation; learning design; and, the digital environment / blended output. Within the three layers explored, the common thread and the clear insight gained from the research is the validation that hands on with a strong craft / technical base and tactility are vitally integral.

The contemporary designer is still most successful when using a traditional framework that can be enhanced at key points by digital technologies. The process and practice of creativity has been impacted by technology, however the space of idea generation and design process is still very much embedded in the physical world to be most successful. Developing a culture, a way of working, of rigor, of experimentation and testing with multiple ideas, or an idea with many iterations, is a way to develop an articulation of this journey, to tell a story or create a narrative. The rigorous and exhaustive testing and experimentation determines the design direction, drives the process and generation of ideas and the choice of materiality.

So “How do we approach design and design communication in the 21st century”, and what will this look like into the future? With changing technologies, changing

attitudes to consuming and ascetics, changing and developing economies, and fast evolving blurring of cultures and borders across the globe. The world is getting smaller and more accessible in a sense, and what was once exclusive, is not in contemporary art and design culture.

The making (practice) of idea generation requires a certain environment of open, broad physicality. An environment in which ideas can be rigorously tested, academically and physically, shared and visualised in a variety of mediums and with a variety of tactility, an environment generous of spirit, experimental, open ended with a framework of layering, linear with a series of inbuilt circles for reflection and review. The rigor of the framework broadens the investigation, the small changes, built up, overlaid, filtered and reflected upon drives the journey, unfinished or with a specific outcome, all is valuable, and all create a sophisticated approach to idea generation.

This Fellowship has allowed for the development of three key recommendations which are outlined in more detail at the end of the report:

Recommendation 1 - Ideas generation: the practice of generating and developing ideas

Recommendation 2 - Academic learning design environment: A framework of scholarship

Recommendation 3 - Digital environments / blended output: A look at new ways of design practice.



Micro Nature in Architecture workshop outcome, Domaine de Boisbuchet, France

The Bamboo- and the Fibreglass-Dome, Jörg Schlaich Domaine de Boisbuchet Architectural Park, France

The finished, flattened world of the digital output removes the signature of the maker or creator, it provides too much information, too many layers that make navigation and understanding complex. Idea generation can also be rich when there is no outcome in mind, creating a catalogue to be curated and archived for future use, or not at all.

1. Fellowship Background

Aims of the Fellowship

This Fellowship has three major aims, which together identify the overall goal of improving the education programs available to those wanting to be considered as master in their chosen field of design.

- » To explore, experience and understand world's best practice of delivery of design education in the area of the sub-degree area, the emerging Associate Degree qualification.
- » To gain insight into how hands on skills are delivered in a HE environment, regaining the essence of skills training in design, specifically in the decorative areas such as soft furnishings and colour.
- » To explore the area of blended learning, and therefore address the changing nature that of education in responding to the evolving workplace, and expectation of the skill set of the graduate.



Chairs from the Vitra Design Museum, Domaine de Boisbucchet, France

About the Fellow

Nancy Everingham, Interior Designer / Educator

As an Interior Designer, Everingham has had 15 years' experience in the Architectural / Interior Design industry, working in both large scale Architectural firms, and smaller scale Interior Design firms. Her project experience has ranged from large commercial projects such as Federation Square, Crown Casino, Monash University Science Precinct buildings, to smaller office fit outs and residential projects, and working with Furniture Designers. The range of skills includes architectural documentation, presentation work and graphic design.

For the past eight years Everingham has been involved in the Vocational Education Interior Design and Decoration programs at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), in the capacity of coordinator, program development and teacher.

Qualifications:

Bachelor of Arts (Hons), Interior Design, RMIT University, Melbourne, 1998

Diploma of VET Practice 21697 VIC, Melbourne Polytechnic (formerly NMIT), Melbourne, 2008

Certificate IV Training and Assessment TAE40104, Selmar Institute of Education, Melbourne, 2007

Skill Base:

The Fellow's skill base has been built by experience gained in both industry and academic pursuits over almost 25 years. This includes, but is not limited to:

- » Conceptual design and documentation
- » Construction Documentation skills
- » Registered Building Practitioner Draftsperson Building Design Interior
- » Specification and schedules
- » Material boards and comprehensive product knowledge
- » Junior staff mentoring
- » Comprehensive presentation skills Large format graphic layout
- » Management and leadership skills
- » Administration and engagement with related databases and platforms
- » Program Coordinator Selection Officer duties (local and International)
- » Design, Development and delivery of coursework and assessment for VE and Associate Degree (AQF levels 5&6).

2. The Australian Context

The Interior Design industry has many facets to its makeup, and is very much driven by current trends and/or reference to a period or style. It moves with the times in a sense, and therefore its education is required to move alongside for the graduates entering the industry are relevant and trained to be work ready. The contemporary design practice requires graduates to hit the ground running, and requires these graduates to be productive from the commencement of employment.

James Harper, FDIA National President, Letter of Endorsement to support this fellowship noted that “Whilst the DIA’s primary concern is practicing, professional designers, we have recently been increasingly focused on Design Education and the impact this has on our Industry. Of note is the growing prevalence and importance of sub degree programs (Associate Degrees and Advanced Diplomas), which equate to AQF 6 level. We support these programs as an alternative to traditional Diploma programs as they offer higher standards of learning, particularly in areas such as professional practice.”

Therefore, there is a push from industry for educators to teach students at a higher level, as a qualification of a Diploma or below is increasingly not being recognised as sufficient; it has the required skill set but not the level and sophistication of critical thinking that the workplace requires. With the introduction of the Associate Degree qualifications (the sub degree area of AQF Level six) there is an opportunity for the Vocational Education area to provide a space to teach a broad range of skills, and incorporate the higher level of critical thinking into Design Education.

Katherine Kemp, Director at ZWEI Architecture and Interior Design, commented at the RMIT Interior Design and Decoration Program Advisory Committee that “As a practicing design professional, and a current member of the RMIT Interior

Design and Decoration Program, Advisory Committee, it is evident that there is clearly a skill and learning gap in the current education between Higher Degree and Diploma students. This is leading to a shortfall of well-rounded, skilled and digitally competent graduates entering the design industry... Instead, industry is having to mentor and up skill entry level professionals to enable young designers to develop and grow within the profession. Although mentoring is not an unusual requirement within the design industry, there is need for design education to innovate and deliver to the needs of the marketplace.”

The industry is becoming increasingly international and global in its reference, and the destination of graduates educated in Australia can often be “off shore”. Alongside the increasingly global nature of the industry, it is entering and becoming entrenched in popular culture, and its “airplay” has increased significantly in the last few years alone. This popularity leaves the doors open for a great deal of uneducated designers believing they can enter the industry. Therefore, graduates must display a level of sophistication of skills and thoughts that is attained by a design education.

How do we “train for the future”?

In the identified area of design, Interior Design and Decoration, can a digital environment of learning successfully integrate a “hands on” skill base, retaining the essence of skills training in the design focused creative industries, which traditionally has a strong focus on the ability to “touch and feel” as an underpinning arts and craft base.

James Harper, FDIA National President, noted that “As this is a new level of study for this discipline, the DIA also supports more in-depth research and a greater understanding of the teaching requirements for Associate Degree and Advanced Diploma courses in Interior Design and Decoration.”

This area of Interior Design and Decoration, the essence of Decoration must not be forgotten. There is a danger as we move to a higher level of qualification in this area, that the design is foregrounded, whilst the rich depth and sophistication of the decorative, craft based area is overshadowed.

If the Education sector does not begin to explore a sophisticated blended approach, across the delivery of “hands on” skills to the use of embedded technology (both software and digital interface) in design training, to gain insight and to better understand how to adapt teaching practice and material for the learner of the future in design education it will fall behind, and it will not produce graduates that are equipped, or indeed relevant, for the modern workplace. Vocational Education in the areas of Design must begin to change its image, as the apprentice no longer exists in this area.

3. Identifying the Required Skills Enhancement Areas



*Images left to right:
Creating spaces
folding, bending
from 2D to 3D
(Idea Generation
Processes Workshop,
UAL: University of the
Arts, London, UK)*

There are examples of areas in Australian industries where there are weaknesses in innovation, skills, knowledge, experience, policies and/ or formal organizational structures to support the ongoing successful development and recognition of individuals and the sector.

The focus of all ISS Institute Fellowships is on applied research and investigation overseas by Australians. The main objective is to enable enhancement and improvement in skills and practice not currently available or implemented in Australia and the subsequent dissemination and sharing of those skills and recommendations throughout the relevant Australian industry, education, government bodies and the community.

The Fellowship explored Interior Design and Decoration, rather than addressing all creative arts, and focused on defined areas within the discipline, looking at international activities and outcomes in the following areas:

1. Design thinking / process
2. Textiles
3. Colour.

Skills Enhancement 1

To document, develop and experience skills of design thinking in relation to skill based creative design.

- a. Become a learner at a foundation/sub-degree level in institutions that embody world's best practice of design education.

Key destinations:

- » Go Hasegawa, Tutor Micro Nature in Architecture workshop, Domaine de Boisbuchet, France
 - » Ilga Leiman, Tutor Idea Generation Processes workshop, UAL: University of the Arts London, UK
- b. To learn more about the subtle shift in the kind of material and imagery required, this sophistication of imagery and a more investigative approach to learning that is required in this space.

Key destinations:

- » Thomas Ellingsøe, Country Director, Kvadrat, Copenhagen DL
- » Rianne Makkink, Director, Studio makkinkbey, Rotterdam NL

Actions-Outcomes:

- » Document the experience and process of being a learner in a creative field, to investigate and engage with a new set of material and imagery.
- » Develop a "pattern" for the integration of hands on skills and higher level critical thinking to be used as a template for development of teaching, using Colour and Design process as examples.

Skills Enhancement 2

To explore the shift to digital platforms in the specified areas of Colour and Design process, delivering a rich and technical outcome, how to design and embed a range of technology applications to a range of outcomes.

- a. Experience innovative teaching practices that seek to engage and enrich the learner in the blended environment of learning, an insight into the learner experiences in such environments.

Key destinations:

- » Ilga Leiman, Tutor Idea Generation Processes Workshop, UAL: University of the Arts London, UK
 - » Blandine Lelong, Teacher, ENSAD (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs), Paris, France
- b. Experience the integration of “hands on” skills training into a qualification that delivers a higher level of critical thinking and a more independent approach to learning, and to experience “the design process” in a highly sophisticated delivery.

Key destinations:

- » Thomas Ellingsøe, Country Director, Kvadrat, Copenhagen DL
- » Ellen Sillekens, Director European Projects, TextielMuseum/ TextielLab, Tilburg NL

Action/Outcome:

- » To document current digital engagement that is the benchmark for Design Education, and produce a “toolkit” that explores and describes the shift identified in SE1 for teachers in a currency (interface) that is current for the contemporary learner.

Skills Enhancement 3

To document and exchange ideas of current design education internationally, and experience current practice of design education, and the expectations of industry.

Key destinations:

- » Thomas Ellingsøe, Country Director, Kvadrat, Copenhagen DL
- » Ellen Sillekens, Director European Projects, TextielMuseum/ TextielLab, Tilburg NL
- » Rianne Makkink, Director, Studio makkinkbey, Rotterdam NL
- » Colin Priest, Program Leader Interior and Spatial Design, UAL: University of the Arts College of the Arts Chelsea UK
- » Jennifer Conroy, Sculptural Ceramics First Class Honors in 3D Design, Staffordshire University UK

Action/Outcome:

- » Document the findings of current practice of design education. Set up a series of conversations with international design practitioners, exploring individual responses to the changing face of design education and engagement.

4. The International Experience

In the environment of the learner, first and foremost learning how to learn provides a way of thinking where the student can set himself or herself up for academic life. In order to refocus as an independent learner, a strong sense of the direction of their study needs to be in place, in order to make the decisions of what their own learning may look like. This model offered an approach to design training that does not exist at VE level, due to the requirements and constraints of training packages in these design areas, and the historical idea of training for a trade as an apprentice. The notion of de-contextualizing the learning process is strong at a higher level of design training, taking it out of the constraints of the institution, allowing the space of an environment of open, external physicality. The Norwegian architectural firm, Snøhetta, talks about “allowing for being creative and sharing, distinguish places for deep concentration, intense interaction, serendipitous encounters, and visualization of new ideas, talking and walking” in their publication IDEA WORK Lessons of the Extraordinary in Everyday Work.

As an independent thinker, the learner must be able to develop a ‘critical’ approach to their own work and processes, driven by a deeper understanding of their own intuitive aesthetic and fascination, thus employing the idea of lateral, creative thinking. Having a physical knowledge and experience fosters a greater sense of self and deeper engagement and mastery in the chosen discipline.

The younger generations of designers are expecting to work with a certain level of digital engagement, however this creates the ability to produce and communicate too much information. The output can be generic, and the simplicity and identity of an individual's hand is lost. What is the balance between the environment of digital environment and the physical landscape? In order to be cutting edge, to train for the future, all the layers need to explore. The skills to become adaptive and agile,

but also physical, having a great sense of communication and collaboration. The following are summaries of the international experiences that seek to explore and validate these notions.



A circle of learning at the Micro Nature in Architecture workshop, Domaine de Boisbuchet, France

4.1 Go Hasegawa, Micro Nature in Architecture Workshop (C.I.R.E.C.A. Domaine de Boisbuchet, France)

The Micro Nature in Architecture Workshop is run by the C.I.R.E.C.A. Foundation at Domaine de Boisbuchet in France. The foundation runs a series of design workshops every summer to promote and support design thinking and development, to allow designers to create and build communities of practice. This workshop was run by Japanese architect Go Hasegawa, and it focused on developing micro environments in nature.

The workshop centered on a response to the title of the workshop, therefore the projects developed and evolved organically, through a process of discovery. The

foundation for a freer approach was set with regard to developing the project. Each participant was presented with a statement, not an involved brief which outlined the key deliverables expected, and so each participant needed to engage as an independent thinker, through a process of negotiation with other individuals and groups to articulate the ideas and direction.

The timeline was shaped by the development itself, to setting the brief, developing the idea and testing the idea before the actual making of the installation. Many skills



Images left to right: Outdoor / hands-on workshop - Micro Nature in Architecture (Domaine de Boisbuchet, France)

were tested and validated throughout the entire process, and furthermore a level of critical and independent thinking was engaged and tested, which with a more formalized approach would not have engaged. The idea of visually communicating the idea is replaced with the actual physicality of the testing, experimentation and the outcome. This model offered an approach to design training that does not exist at VE level, however the approach did rely on an already well-established foundation skill set.

To work deliberately without a brief or end goal can allow space to test ideas and ways of visually communicating, making the space to be creative, not to be constrained or worry if the objective is being achieved.

**A series of interventions on the landscape;
the silence of the lake
the noise of the river
the intimacy of the site
connection to the ground
use of the wind
a curated site
where does the site start?
magnify
micro observatory
contain / frame the view
stones of the river
by the mill
what does the viewer get/ what is left behind
weaving grass/ leaves
sensories
weaving into the landscape
controlling the view
different ground scapes
variety of materials
urban approach
fences / river
define the journey
the tree
time
deconstruct the idea of the tree
clay apples as they fall
the gathering place
weaving between
in the artificial nature navigation by boundaries.**



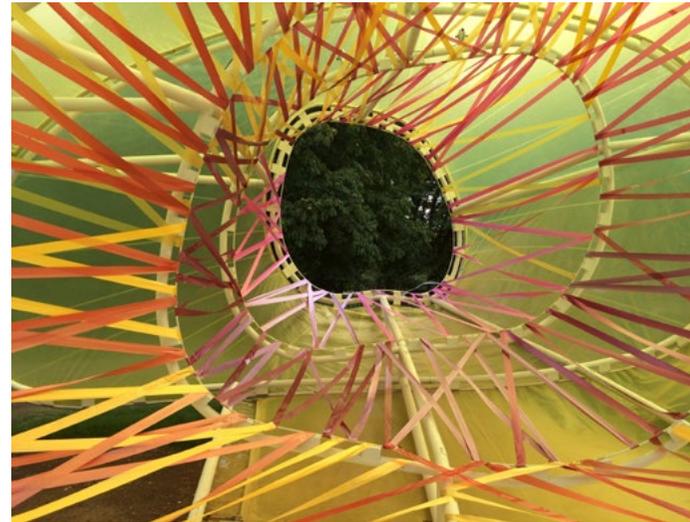
4.2. Ilga Leiman, Idea Generation Processes Workshop (UAL: University of the Arts, London, UK)

The workshop was designed to offer an experience of simply how you could generate ideas, as working deliberately without a brief or end goal can allow space to test ideas and ways of visually communicating.

The workshop was structured to build up your visual articulation through two-dimensional work through to three-dimensional work, using a diverse range of design inspirations. Each day focused on a material and dimension, along with site visits to develop a journal of visual ideas. The information collected does not need to do anything specifically, it is there to inspire, spark or just quietly sit.

Thinking through drawing, the idea of linking ideas and the practice and process of making. Through the process of making a series of small changes, ideas develop, creating a narrative, a story of the process and in each iteration, making the small changes along can push the design project. Often the source will not be the outcome, making the space to be creative, not to be constrained or worry if the objective is being achieved, allow yourself to be creative, messy, and willful, be brave to find your own style.

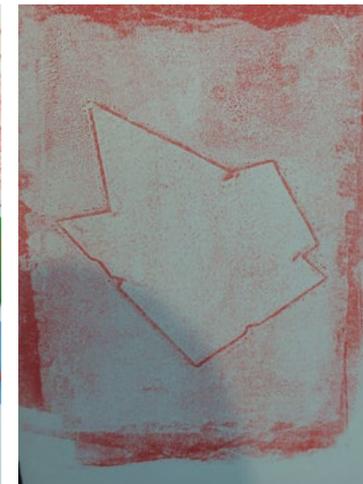
The idea of keeping a catalogue of ideas was discussed. It could be digital, a series of photos or scans. It could take the form of a sketchbook, or simply a folder where scraps are kept, a 'live' visual diary to generate and store ideas, and as a result build up a catalogue of you as a designer. The curation could be by type, colour, and texture or could be classified over and over again to reinterpret the source.



15th Serpentine Pavilion designed by Selgascano Architects, on the Serpentine's lawn in London's Kensington Gardens



Minerals at the Science Museum, Kensington, London



Images left to right: Exploring the surface, Mono Printing at the Idea Generation Processes Workshop, UAL: University of the Arts, London, UK

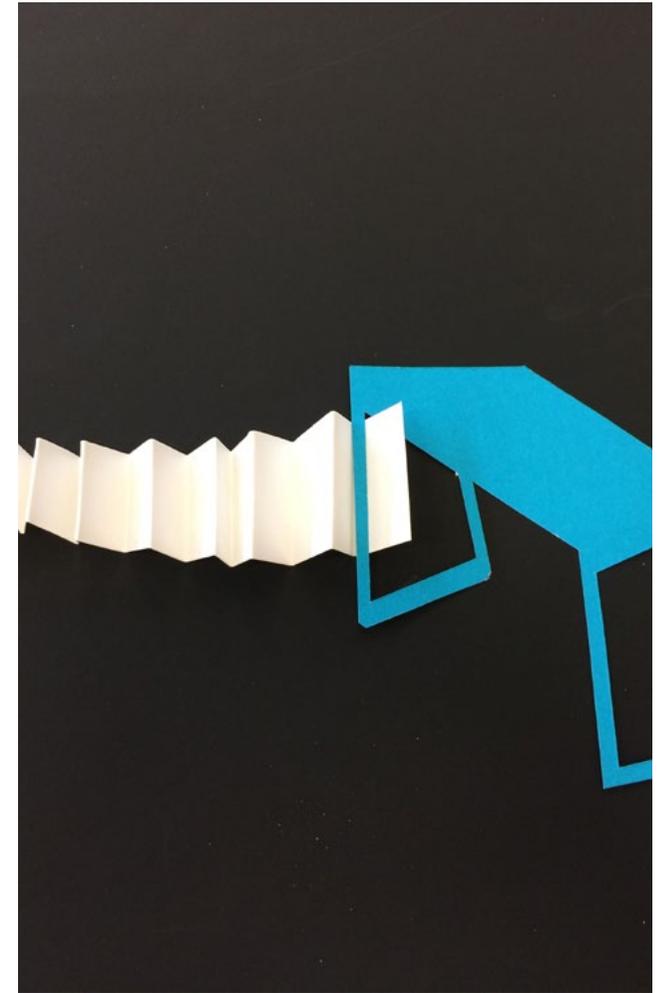
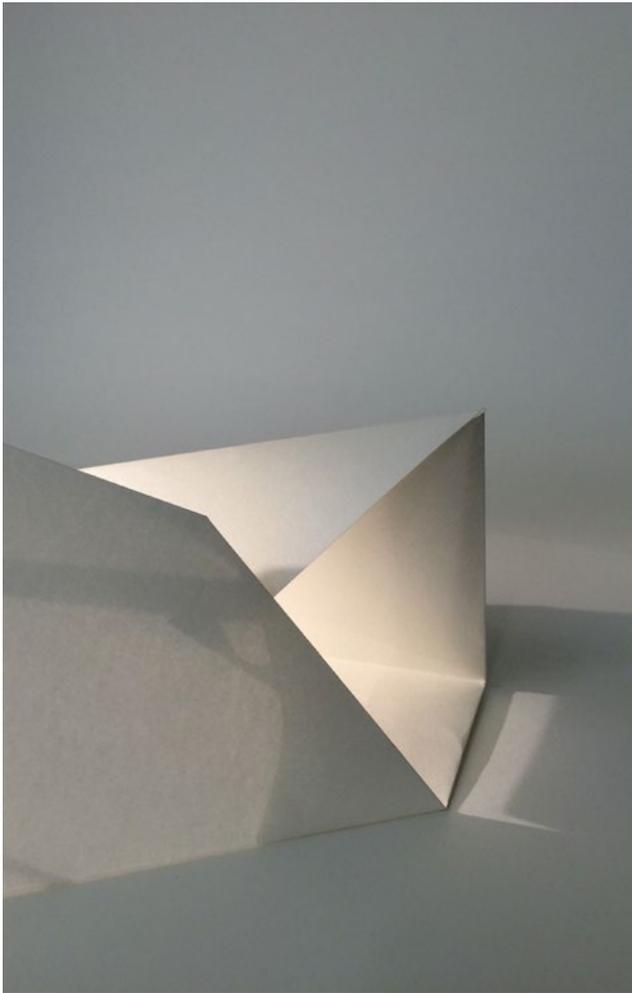
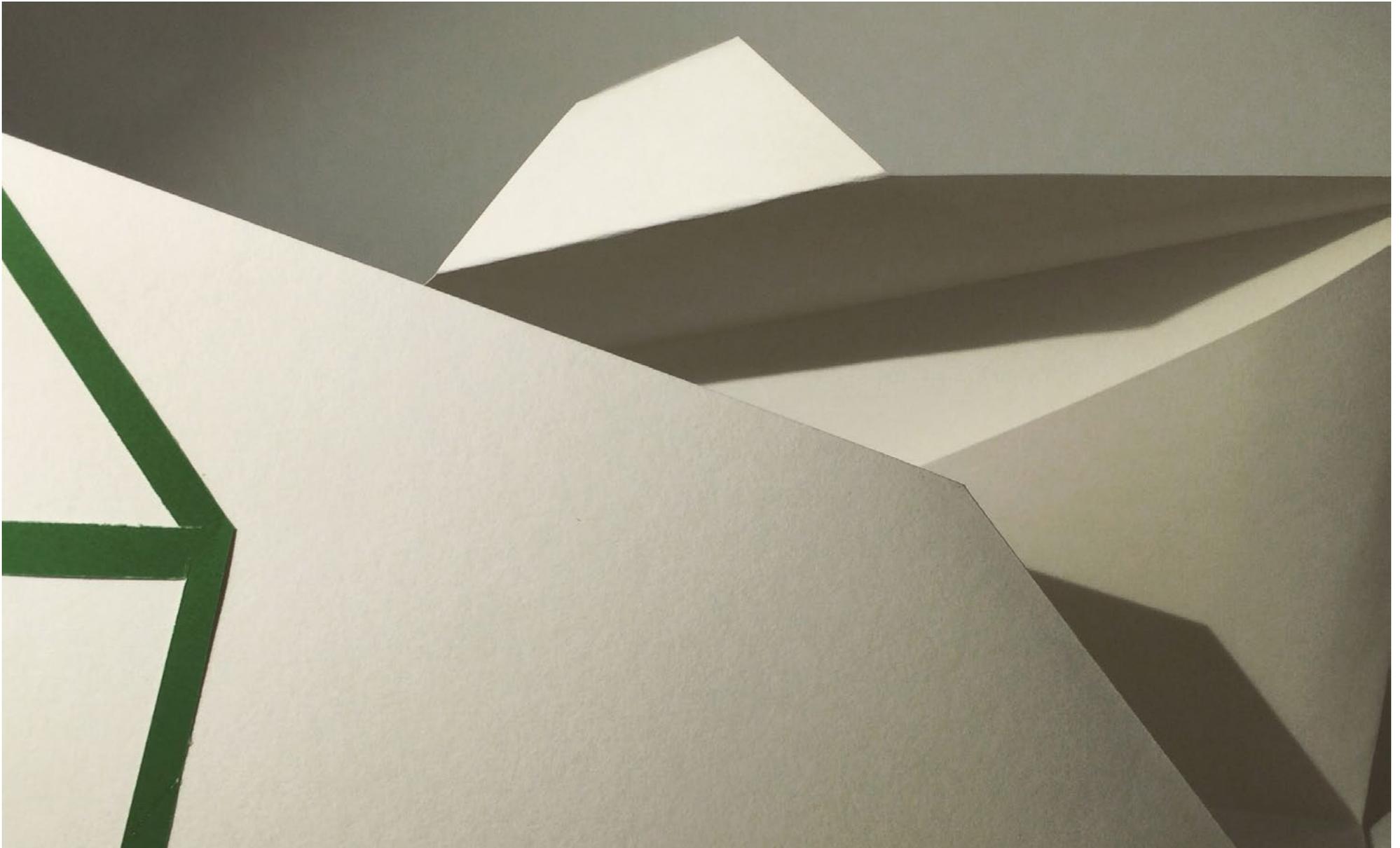


Image left: Working with paper cut outs, folding, from 2D to 3D at the Idea Generation Processes workshop UAL: University of the Arts, London, UK

Image middle: Exploring the surface, Mono Printing at the Idea Generation Processes Workshop, UAL: University of the Arts, London, UK

Image right: Working with paper cut outs, folding, from 2D to 3D at the Idea Generation Processes Workshop UAL: University of the Arts, London, UK



Working with paper cut outs, folding, from 2D to 3D at the Idea Generation Processes Workshop (UAL: University of the Arts, London, UK)

4.3. Colin Priest, Program Leader Interior and Spatial Design (UAL: University of the Arts College of the Arts, Chelsea, UK)



Adaptive reuse, The Skip Garden, Kings Cross, London

This visit was to meet with the program leader of Interior and Spatial design at UAL Chelsea, a Bachelor program which encourages an experimental and creative spatial design practice that is both contextually and intellectually adventurous. The program was developed out of a fine arts base, and therefore has a specific culture of exploring an idea.

For students to navigate the later years of the program, a strong sense of the direction of their study needs to be in place, to make the decisions of what their own learning may look like. This independence and skill to make decisions is critical in this environment - the student is designing their own program. How is this culture established for cohorts to develop the independence? Learning how to learn provides an invaluable platform for study.

Priest describes the culture of learning by looking at the journey and the narrative, a 3D design criteria with a passion for making, exploring materials structure form and surface, with experimental use of the sketchbook to develop ideas. Studio culture is varied, and is developed and harnessed in the studio depending on the tutor/ background, with a focus on human scale / material / how things fit and work.

The program has a strong pathway for students to enter from Foundation programs, however Priest believes coming to the program with traditional foundation training often needs to be undone. However, with previous study, the students already have an idea of academic life and the expectations of study.

In creating a more independent approach, student's paths are diverse, and the range of outcomes is diverse, however are the skills relevant for industry. There is a low engagement with agile blended learning, and therefore the resulting skill set does not provide the agility industry is often looking for in a graduate. UAL generally has very little blended learning, as they believe blended learning does not allow for a diversity of conversation. Blackboard use was too clunky, and did not offer the aesthetic quality the program demanded.

Also, having to manage the system for staff was time consuming. Priest described the move to Moodle with a key member of staff managing the setup and style of

the platform / setting the style for the coursework as a way of integrating more blended learning into the community, and in turn becoming more outward facing to industry and the broader design community.

Priest goes on to describe that the programs are a gradual move to digital assessment with essays and blogs, and to using social media as a way of setting up a culture of communication within the school community. As far as enriching the learning process, the intimacy within the studio environment cannot be found online. The process is to be about the tactility of materials, and exploring the mechanics and engaging in the physical world. The digital engagement is through the theory / historically based areas, and now through social media, as way of having a contemporary currency of the generation.

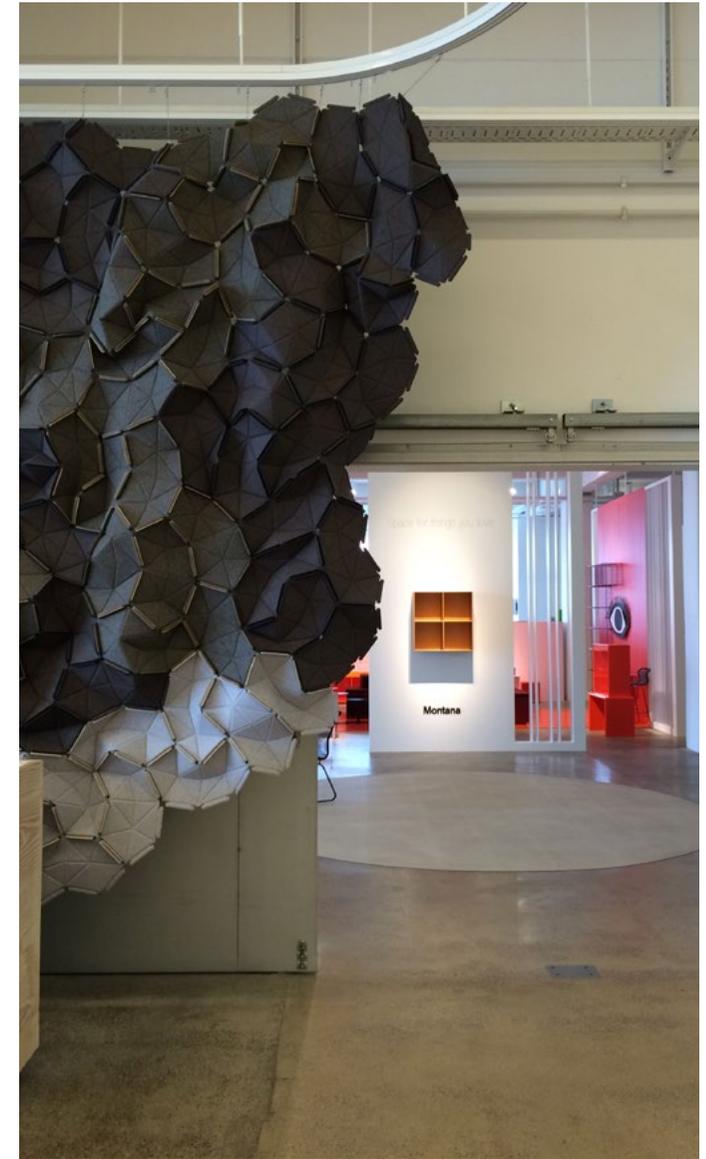
4.4 Thomas Ellingsøe, Country Director, Kvadrat, Copenhagen, DK



Kvadrat Showroom Pakhus 48, Copenhagen, Denmark



Natural fibre, Kvadrat Showroom Pakhus 48, Copenhagen, Denmark



Images left to right: *Clouds* by Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, *Kvadrat Showroom Pakhus 48*, Copenhagen, Denmark

Kvadrat is a Danish fabric company that design and produce their product. They are a global company with representation in most countries, using a model by which architects and designers specify the product for their clients, with no direct to public sales. The design culture that the product and the company is renowned for is a very deliberate way to connect with the design world. It creates a culture whereby designers and architects have a greater understanding of the breath of application of the product.

The digital world is a currency that commercial business cannot escape. Kvadrat has identified and is willing to embrace how they as a business can connect to clients with their product digitally, and on a global platform. This points to a greater trend and change of culture across samples of materials and finishes; where once the material library was a big part of the Design Office, it is now focused more online for up to date, and more accessible access to samples. The product is a very tactile product, and at some stage of the process needs to be in the hand. A staged approach has been developed with the product for the customer to have exposure to the fabrics firstly digitally.

Development of digital technologies is inherent in this model, and agility of staff to engage and understand how to use these technologies is also fundamental. This produces another area of the business to ensure the tactile quality, the correct colour and application of the products are correct. It is a significant change in culture from the very traditional idea of a binder of fabric samples in the Design office. The younger generations of designers are expecting to work with a certain level of digital engagement, both through communication and engagement with the product. The staff “tools” and training needs to adjust accordingly to meet this expectation.

Design thinking and process is a very important underpinning for Kvadrat. They ask designers to conceptually use their product, which comes back to the idea of not having a finished product. They are asking for an idea of where are the outer boundaries of how the product can be used, “the educational effect on our corporate culture”. They ask well known Architects and Designs to conceptually use their products in very creative ways.

4.5 Rianne Makkink, Director, Studio makkinkbey, Rotterdam, NL

Makkink is a practicing designer at Studio makkinkbey and an academic at Eindhoven Design Academy in the Masters program. The practice research arm of Studio makkinkbey, ProofLab, is about interdisciplinary work, observing and exploring the same objectives from different perspectives, from work to communication to mobility. There is a very physical approach to experimentation and testing of ideas, that breaks down the more traditional idea of the design process, or how you create a framework for a creative outcome. The design process as a part of any individual project, or specific outcome, needs to address a broader picture. A catalogue or curation of a series of ideas generation, built up, catalogued, may be tested in other ways, to inform and generate the next process.

As a foundation to becoming a designer, the process should be very physically involved with ideas, materials and processes. The idea of visually communicating the idea, is replaced with the actual physicality of the testing, experimentation and the outcome. The student must develop a 'critical' approach to their own work and processes, driven by a deeper understanding of their own emotional aesthetic and fascination. This could be informed by theory, but must be bedded in their own psyche. To decontextualise the learning process, out of the context of the classroom, allowing the learner to understand the context on a broader scale. The journey therefore is not from learner environment to practitioner, but encourages a more holistic understanding of how to transition ways of doing. The journey begins, as you would practice, with collaboration as a very important aspect to expand the role of any given idea into a greater meaning within its context.

The digital generation has given the individual the ability to produce and communicate too much information. The output can be generic, and the simplicity and identity of an individual's hand and thought process can be lost. The layering of information, and paths of exploration are not always clear through digital generation of ideas, the outcome of the project is too quickly come to, discarding the path (or the journey) as the critical part of the design process.

4.6 Anne Maher, Exhibition Designer (Graduate of the Design Academy, Eindhoven), Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, NL

Maher, a graduate of the Masters of Social Design, Design Academy Eindhoven, and now installation/ exhibition designer / artist working in the Netherlands, is a former Teacher of the Diploma of Interior Design and Decoration, at RMIT, Melbourne Australia.

Based on teaching in the Diploma program, Maher believes that foundation skills are still very important, and often the rote learning and step by step instruction is the best way to learn. As a graduate working in an office the rote nature of commercial practice reinforces this notion. It provides a toolkit that underpins the ability to produce and communicate ideas, to explore and test visually. There needs to be a rigor to do this, and a method by which it is done. The foundation skills can then be used with a more critical approach in terms of Design Process, the boundaries can be removed that we created to support the engagement with the skill, and the skill itself can go on to be reinterpreted in new ways.

The students need to develop a style or an aesthetic that is based on individual research and critical response to the design environment. The environment is very critical, and therefore the student critical and analytical skills are important to formulate a response. A sound ability to curate, look broadly, to create a narrative or journey rather than a facade.

The environment of the Design Academy is very hard working in Maher's experience, and fast in terms of production of testing ideas, methods and materials over and over again. The need to learn how to push the boundaries / to be critical of the work is crucial when translating the training to the commercial environment, to work hard with many variations and iterations of an idea. The constant questioning, finding new responses to both the academic arena but also through to the physical materiality and spatiality of the idea.

To develop a method critical appraisal of work, to take any feedback, positive or critical is central to the success of developing as a design, says Maher. When the learner is brave enough to be able to be agile with ideas and have the courage to vary the journey, Maher could see the outcome can be richer and more deeply resolved. The process of pushing an idea has allowed the freedom of extended creativity, beyond the comfort previously operated in. At the Design Academy, a freedom to pursue ideas that might not be seen as mainstream, and to push the envelope is the culture of learning, Maher explains that through the BA (Bachelor Program), the ideas are “dragged”, through the Masters, “pushing” the ideas, creating a fascination and a discovery of a path is explored. The environment of design culture that is part of the fabric of the Netherlands supports and drives these notions of experimentation. It makes mainstream that which often exists outside the mainstream, commercial reality.

4.7 Ellen Sillekens, European Project Manager, TextielMuseum/ TextielLab, Tilburg, NL



TextielMuseum/ TextielLab, Tilburg, NL



Images left to right: Thread at TextielMuseum/ TextielLab, Tilburg, NL

Sillekens is the Project Manager of the European Textiles Program, which invites students, who are enrolled in a Masters program from all over Europe, to undertake a course at the TextielLab. The program is an eight-week workshop at the Lab, followed by seven weeks of work experience in Como, Italy working with Textile manufacturers. The framework is a collaboration between the student, a product developer and a technician at the TextielLab (a key element of the program as it mimics the process in the industry). The program and the Lab straddle the academic environment and commercial or professional practice. It is outside and free from the constraints of both, allowing true innovation and exploration in a new environment and context.

The environment is fostered to support exploration, innovation, testing of methods with a variety of materials and techniques, and to find a new way of thinking using traditional techniques, and Sillekens describes the TextielLab as vibrant, energetic, celebrating new and old in an inclusive manner. It celebrates its work within the lab, in a contemporary and designed environment, it is cutting edge, and the agenda is brave. An environment that encourages the pushing of the boundaries of the norm.



Images left to right: Tufting in action at the TextielMuseum/ TextielLab, Tilburg, NL. (middle) Thread textures and fibres at the TextielMuseum/ TextielLab, Tilburg, NL. (right) LOOMS at the TextielMuseum, Tilburg, NL

The program is supported by a vigorous foundation of extensive materials, which are constantly sourced and updated, contemporary and traditional machinery and techniques, and an attitude of designing for the future, of maintaining a vibrant and contemporary craftsmanship. As Sillekens explains, the building and transferring of knowledge is crucial to keep current old techniques.

For the students, a foundation is established of techniques to underpin the ideas of what can be achieved. The design idea and supporting method needs to be tested over and over again, and a culture of rigor has been established to support

this way of working. A key driver in students is motivation, with a freedom to fail through exploration, guidance and support to build up from the failures, to learn and re-interpret.

Where digital technologies allow for extended practice and design to be realized, the “handwriting” of the individual can still be seen, and it is an important part of the development of the designer/ technician.



Image top left: Festive design by Wieki Somers in the Atrium of the TextielMuseum, Tilburg, NL



Image top middle: Thread at TextielMuseum/ TextielLab , Tilburg, NL



Image top right: Fibers and weaves, Textile Cabinet made by Simone de Waart of Material Sense, at the Library TextielLab , Tilburg, NL



Image bottom right: Textile Cabinet made by Simone de Waart of Material Sense, at the Library TextielLab , Tilburg, NL

4.8 Blandine Lelong, Teacher, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France

Lelong is a teacher of textile design at the Decorative Arts School in Paris, which deliver a five-year Bachelor program in Decorative Arts. With a focus on colour, the first two years are to develop the foundation skills, with a specialty chosen in third year. The specialties range from ten areas: design (object, textile, fashion); graphics; illustration; set design; interior design; photography; movies; and, art (sculpture and painting).

Experimentation is very important to build the hands-on knowledge, explains Lelong, with a variety of mediums and contexts. For example, the use of the colour or the material must be understood, both from a theoretical point of view, but also how it behaves under and with different conditions. The professional use of the colour and material needs to be understood, and it is important to look outside the discipline for inspiration and reference, it is important to widen the gaze of the student, to be engaged on many differing culture levels. In order to “live” what is being seen by the student.

The student must have a hands-on knowledge and experience, before the translation to digital, as the use of digital software to replicate colour cannot start at the beginning. The eyes and hands stay the most important, to first practice without a screen, as the digital is often misleading in this area. We can use different sorts of material - ink, pastel, dyeing, fabrics - with their own qualities. Most of the students want to use computer to make the process faster and easier to complete, but the program at the Decorative Arts School puts the emphasis on the true color, to truly understand its context.

4.9 Jennifer Conroy, Sculptural Ceramics First Class Honors in 3D Design, Staffordshire University, UK

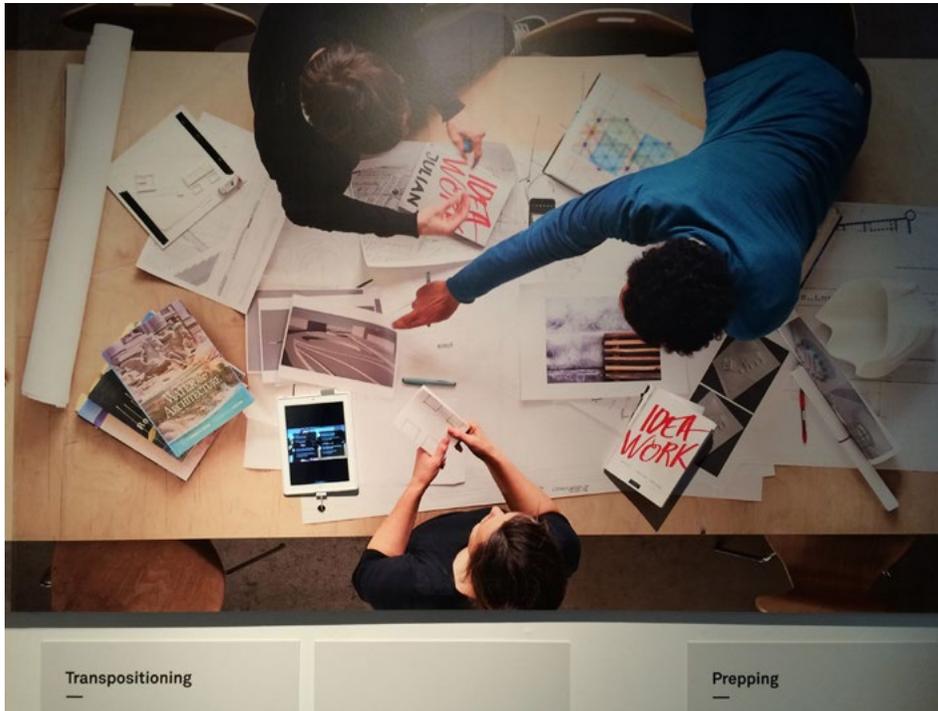
Conroy is an independent designer-maker specialising in sculptural porcelain. Inspired by the natural world, Conroy produces a range of tactile organic forms, exploring fragility, imperfections and subtle surface decoration. Themes are embodied through explorations of curves, folds, undulations, creases and crevices, thinness of form portrays delicate curves and explores the influence of light and shade as shadows are cast from paper thin porcelain forms.

Often exploring multiples of hand built forms for bigger wall pieces and installations, Conroy creates interior landscapes from multiples of the same form, each hand crafted to create a unique form each time within the theme of repetition. Craft still is an area that is very well regarded, and has had a revival in the interior space, however to be contemporary the skill needs a complementary digital output. Within the discipline new ways are constantly emerging that embrace blended output or technologies.

Conroy believes the graduate needs to tech savvy, social media savvy, having a combination of conceptual skills, a strong sense of creativity and strong technical skills. With the hand exploring and testing not only ideas but materials and ideal applications.

The future of contemporary design marketing is moving to social media, rather than more conventional forms of promotion, such as folio etc. To have a presence in a Design community you must have a strong social media identity, which brands your Design aesthetic, with the curation of this identity handled extremely well. It crossed the boundaries between public and private, your professional appearance and your private world. Design Education needs to address this digital skill set as part of the emerging identity of the designer, and the need for this skill set professionally enhances the need for a strong skill set blended design communication.

4.10 SNØHETTA, Idea Work, Exhibition of Process and Practice, Danish Architecture Centre, Copenhagen, DK



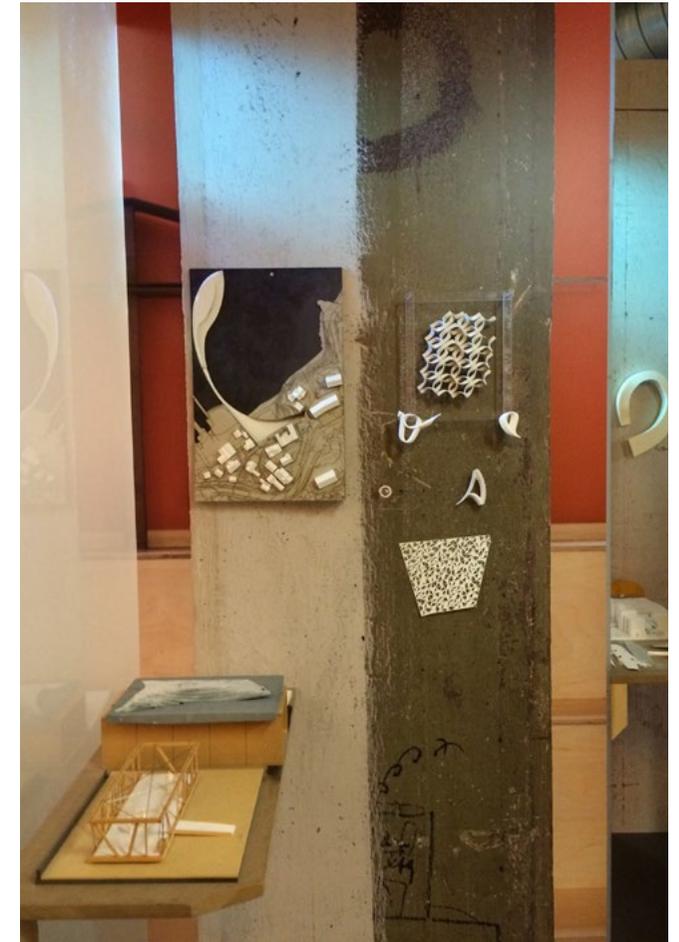
Transpositioning collaboration, SNØHETTA Idea Work, Danish Architecture Centre, Copenhagen, DK

This exhibition is based on the practice of Snøhetta, an architectural practice from Norway. The interesting aspect of the practice of Snøhetta is the approach to the Design process and creativity. The firm has produced several publications that look at their process, and approach of the office and practice.

The exhibition explains and identifies how design work is approached. The work is very physical, and the engagement is tactile and the materiality focused and celebrated. For example, as a team building exercise, the whole office including the administration staff are involved in getting to know the various aspects of the practice in workshops in which multidisciplinary teams are given design problems to solve, and present back to the team. Engaging in the workshops, in a pin-up, and describing how the parts come together to form a whole. The idea of hands-on is identified as getting physical, whether it be by sketching, visual communication or making models with or without a sense of materiality. It also allows the agenda of making public, or sharing the idea.

Idea Work, organised into three sections, with the start of the exhibition defined by an entry through a tunnel. The first section is dedicated to the people and the ethos of the firm and the office. The office defines an inclusive, informal nature, where staff and clients can come together to talk, discuss and share ideas and projects. As with most European offices, the lunch table is a central and very important part of the office. Snøhetta believe taking time to share meals with our colleagues is critical to our process, human interaction shapes the spaces that Snøhetta design and the way they operate. The team should be visibly collaborative, and share the process. A very open channel of visual communication is vital to the depth and breadth of the design process.

The second section looks at the modeling shop, which is where ideas are tested, materials are looked at, and the idea of tactility comes in. The area is messy and half-finished and is a real working space of creativity. Snøhetta believes in the interaction with ideas, conceptual and with tactility when they are transferred into physical form. Some ideas are tested and remain unfinished, to be reference or inspiration for a new generation of idea, a spark to start a new journey. The highly



Workshops for play, at the Exhibition of Process and Practice, Danish Architecture Centre, Copenhagen, DK

finished pitch, project proposal / outcome, model, image may not always be the answer, or the most creative; incidental, untested or finished allows for creativity to continue, open and develop to something maybe most amazing.

The strong message here is that the space for creativity must be made within a commercial environment. Academic environments often promote a wide gaze, and the realities for practice narrow that gaze. It still can exist and a playful approach can be successful that includes the client as part of the Design process.

5. Recommendations

The Fellow has considered the new knowledge gained and has identified three significant recommendations that reach across industry and the VE sector.

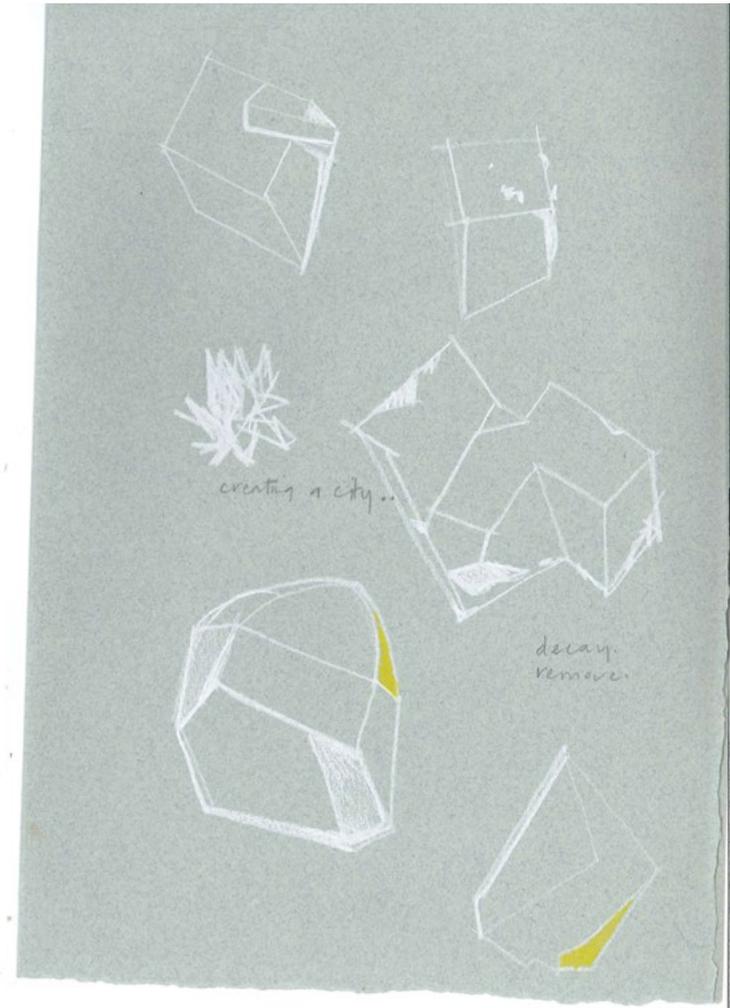
Recommendation 1

Ideas generation: the practice of generating and developing ideas

It is recommended that sub degree courses develop a foundation for the learner to be able to generate ideas and engage in a meaningful design process, its core being the ability to generate ideas to support the design process. This will also begin to provide a point of differentiation within the VE sector and into the industry that students are being trained for - between the Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Associate Degree qualifications.

Idea generation is a skill to its own, and within the VE environment skills are taught to a level of finished output. More emphasis needs to be directed towards the play, the experimental and the testing, the hands-on making. Having the opportunity to do this, in the real world, not augmented by digital visualization, gives the learner the skills to be able to generate ideas and take the idea through a process that rigorously tests and explores without the aid of digital support, and supports the notion that perhaps the idea is never finished, but revisited over and over again.

*Exploring the surface, mark making at the Idea Generation Processes Workshop
(UAL: University of the Arts, London, UK)*



Recommendation 2

Academic learning design environment: A framework of scholarship

It is recommended that to inform teaching practice in the area of creative Associate Degree programs, a resource of tools and support material is developed for the teachers at Associate Degree level, who come from the VE environment. This would assist teachers to better understand the new landscape, the approach to thinking and engagement in this space, and to gently shift the current teaching practice that exists in the VE environment of Creative Practice programs, to engage with critical, independent practice, and the process and ideas generation space. The VE model of teaching is very much a hand-on process, and therefore that culture and richness can be retained, overlaid with practice of reflection and independent critical appraisal. The resource could take the form of an online community, a community of practice, that over time and with wider contribution could form a valuable and rich 'live' resource, with an ability to be added to and built upon.

A program of scholarship for VE teachers is vital to allow the experience of independent critical thinking and practice. Encouraging and providing the framework for teachers to pursue a scholarship project, to expand their own thinking practice to then feed back into their academic work.

Recommendation 3

Digital environments / blended output: A look at new ways of design practice

An online module that supports a practical classroom based project. Therefore, the idea that most class content is hands on but is augmented by a digital resource. As part of addressing contemporary ways of design practice, the digital engagement cannot be discounted, but requires a level of integration to retain the practical hand-on component in the practice of a designer outside of the academic environment.

6. Knowledge Transfer, Application and Dissemination

After returning from the Fellowship, Everingham was able to disseminate her knowledge through a series of industry groups, and through using the knowledge to develop workshops both in Australia and overseas.

Industry Groups

- » iDEC Network Committee (a network of representatives of Vocational Education Interior Design and Decoration providers in Australia)
- » Learning and Teaching Committee, School of Architecture and Design RMIT

Since returning from the Fellowship, several workshops and teaching programs have been developed to test and explore further the findings of the Fellowship.

Workshops

1. Associate Degree 16 week teaching program with a blended learning approach to the teaching material.
2. Short Courses Portfolio development program.
3. Foundation Workshop in Art and Design, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China.

From the experience of developing and running the workshops, the next body of work is to develop the following;

1. A dissemination of the initial findings of the research to be developed by the fellow as a digital / online resource that could go out to and be available to the wider Design community through the help of the DIA networks, the IDD Network group and RMIT.
2. A resource for teachers at Associate Degree level, who come from the VE environment. To be developed by the Fellow as a teaching framework and guide to go some way to understand how to bridge the gap from TAFE to AD level teaching, thinking, engagement and development of content. The resource could take the form of an online community, that over time and with wider contribution could form a valuable and rich current resource, with an ability to be added to and built upon.
3. An online module that supports a practical classroom based project. To be developed to support a Diploma level course from the state based training package.



Textile Cabinet made by Simone de Waart of Material Sense, at the Library TextielLab , Tilburg, NL

7. Acknowledgements

Nancy Everingham of RMIT would like to personally thank the following individuals and organisations who gave kindly their time and their knowledge to recommend, support and direct her throughout the Fellowship program.

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- » Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions
- » Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses
- » Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

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- » Jennifer Conroy, Sculptural Ceramics, Melbourne, Australia
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- » Julia van Zanten, Installation Designer, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- » Andrea Lucena-Orr, Colour Planning & Communications Manager, Dulux Group Melbourne, Australia

8. Abbreviations, Acronyms and Definitions

Abbreviations/Acronyms

- VE** Vocational Education
- HE** Higher Education
- DIA** Design Institute of Australia
- IDD** Network Group - A group of Interior Design and Decoration TAFE providers

Definitions

Design Process

“Intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/ or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication, as a guide to belief and action.”

Scriven M & Paul R “Critical Thinking” (presentation at the 8th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking & Education Reform).

Ideas Generation

The process of creating, developing, and communicating ideas which are abstract, concrete, or visual. The process includes the process of constructing through the idea, developing the concept, and bringing the concept to reality.

Learning how to learn

Developing a toolkit or framework to support the learning process.

Craft

An activity that involves making something in a skillful way by using your hands.

Industry Practice

Current practice by commercial business of any particular trade or discipline.

Digital Technologies

Technologies that use or are characterised by computer technology, and employ the use of science in solving problems.

Digital Generation

Creative work that is created visualised and generated by digital technologies.

Blended Learning

Environments of learning that involve both digital technology or online environments, and face to face scenarios.

Blended Output

Production of creative visual work through the use of, and blend of, digital technologies, digital generation and hand skills such as rendering or drawing.

Small changes

A conscious series of deviations to a process to explore or expand the thread or process.

Catalogue of ideas

A library or collection of reference material to generate or store fragments of ideas or that spark creativity.

Toolkit

A personal set of resources, abilities, or skills.

Framework

A basic structure underlying a system, concept, or text

Sub degree

A sub degree is classified through the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) at Level 6 and can be either an Associate Degree or an Advanced Diploma, and sits at a level under a Bachelor degree program, and a level above the Diploma programs. The purpose of the sub degree is defined as follows:

“The Associate Degree qualifies individuals who apply underpinning technical and theoretical knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake paraprofessional work and as a pathway for further learning.”

The Associate Degree at RMIT seeks to provide:

“The extended learning time and delivery by staff with vocational qualifications and experience, plus the focus on applied learning and assessment with an emphasis on vocational skill development, clearly distinguishes the associate degree from the first two years of a degree program.”





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