

“Speculating for Gold”; Socio-Geographic Painting and the Artist as researcher working within Regeneration and Urban Renewal.’

Theme

Art & The Environment: Is it Art or is it Branding?

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Summary

Following the award of a Knowledge Transfer Fellowship from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, ‘Supporting arts and enterprise skills in communities through creative engagement with the local area’, researchers in the area of Contemporary Fine Art at the University of Salford have started to piece together evidence from practice over a number of years that addresses the role of art and creative practice as a branding gesture or expression of collective values in participation and engagement projects. At this stage of the research project, one of our core concerns is the nature and worth of the art element; to understand how we are reacting to our discipline field and to the set of principles and habits that prevail through its execution. We are aware of a dichotomy in creating target functions for artistic endeavour; that it may reduce the practice to a service level commitment, but at the same time our motive for undertaking the research is that our previous public commissions and research practices have evidenced that the output can consolidate collective thinking around a unifying and collective vision. We have based the entire research project around the thought that the arts intervention will provide a focus and identity based on its representational capabilities; the potential of art in capturing the essence of a place or a thought. This poses us with an early question; is it branding or is it landscape painting.

Referencing a number of projects undertaken over the past 10 years, this presentation grapples with a specific anxiety, born of experience from working with the arts in regeneration as a contest between creative intent, commodification and professional re-interpretation. Recently, artist/teachers at the University of Salford have been advising on a new Creative Community Engagement Strategy for the regeneration of one of the towns of post-industrial East Lancashire where multiple deprivation and problem of dereliction is becoming increasingly acute. The shared intention (public partners and University researchers) is to emphasise and embed inclusion practices in the decision making process, highlighting solutions and sustainable community cohesion; what has evolved, nevertheless, verges on public relations as opposed to creative process or art. As our practices with socio-geographic painting and, more recently socio-enterprise activism progress, we are acutely aware of a duality that reaches into the very sole of the cultural contract that allows for some to call themselves and behave as artists and others to act as audience or consumer. Instinctually, our current anxieties are based on an aversion to good behaviour, to the idea of a convergent and complimentary cultural practice that seeks harmony with allied traditions and concedes to the politics of social patronage that frame professionally led regeneration, urban planning and renewal. Conversely, the disruptive and divergent thinking associated with the non-aligned art agenda or creative ingredient in participative and inclusive action is increasingly acknowledged as a key investment in effective engagement practices; presumably leading to social good. We are left in position of antagonist, rather than protagonist, if we want to remain distant from the design intent or prescription of our endeavours; if we want to resist predictability and usefulness.

Background

Initially, a team of artists and designers working in and with the School of Art and Design at Salford began engaging with a specific derelict site, investigating its character over a three year period. The motive was to develop strategies for practical research, in advance of a design brief, to inform the reuse of the space, based on the inquisitive instincts of arts practitioners. The intended outcome of the activity was simply to accumulate an archive of documentation in response to specific sites that would provide both reflective interpretation and (factual) observation. The team selected redundant urban sites where the probability of dramatic physical change through urban renewal was high. Typically, at such locations, the condition of the landscape at the inception of the intervention process is one of abandonment where social histories and dialogues are obscured by both time and decay.

Since the earlier inceptions and starting points various teams, working under the banner of the University of Salford, have completed a variety of commissions, tests and research projects that all commence with a creative and inquisitive process of landscape character assessment or deconstructed landscape painting process. The central proposition for all of the work undertaken to date is the value of reflexivity in the artist's process of abstraction and the potential for a relationship with designers. We have been interested in empirical and kinaesthetic procedures of investigation and 'searching' as a preamble to the design or other professional and conclusive processes, in some cases, even new architecture. The starting point and context for the work is the process of urban renewal and regeneration. Repeatedly, in the post-industrial urban context, many of the residential and commercial environs of the North West of England have been going through a dramatic process of physical change in the landscape and, potentially have been losing some of their unique identity and some of the detail that relates to socially shared or individual memories and experiences. Clearly, any site under development is subject to surveillance by professionals; by engineers, by architects and often by consultants whose intentions are community engagement. There are other agencies and individuals that separately record, respond to and document urban spaces and places by other means. We are interested in the artist's behaviour in this context and in what those artist practices can offer as intelligent reflexivity and sensuous knowledge.

The function of our activity is purely artistic exploration. In the instances cited here the subjects are sites rich in material qualities and echoes of history. The studies are intended to progress and build an archive of artists' responses up to a point when the sites are altered by future development; at this point we hope that our content is appropriate information. Further, we have suggested that there may be a role for artists in a relationship with the developers of the site. The traditions that frame the artist's response to physical and social landscapes are, potentially, a relatively new consideration in the development of future cities. In recent work we have moved away from site redevelopment scenarios and found a more suitable collaborative environment working with special interest communities, social enterprises and active communities who are more keenly focussed on social rather than environmental capital.

The potential Role or Function of Art Practice in Regeneration

It is in relation to this set of motives that the practice and processes of making and enquiry can accede to bastardisation and re-present themselves as reductive design thinking contributing to crude problem solving gestures. In taking up the role of artist as consultant we have felt the constraints of a strategic task or set of tasks and possibly understand the need for a resistant and pure discipline that still offers sensibility but not solutions. In recent years we have been asked to contribute to strategic development and policy formation with professional colleagues working within Housing Market Renewal. The emphasis is on creative methods; dynamic and responsive processes that will involve local people and, hopefully, maintain their interest beyond formal publicly funded projects and corporate investments. We have shared the belief that creative community engagement will give the regeneration of target communities and places sustainability and will help the current and new populations to own the future of the area. All of these are very real and admirable aspirations but they lack accuracy in reflecting the real potential of the artist as someone given to practice their creativity and independent reflection.

We have sought to produce collective benefits from creative engagement:

- contribute to the regeneration and even growth in a specific geography
- offer a positive image about an area, site or community
- interpret a 'space' in a creative way and contribute to the appreciation of a 'place'
- empower people to engage with 'places' and with change in the environment
- reflect well on the organisations and companies involved in making change happen
- make people pause, think, wonder, laugh or remember.

All of these are laudable ambitions but possibly miss the more important attributes given to artistic creation.

In our most recent experiences, working with multiple agencies and professionals to bring about managed change, we have shared an intention for a consultation rich, community responsive regeneration, over a protracted period, that will emphasise inclusive practice in the decision making process post Masterplanning. The central task of the regeneration is to establish a programme of physical redevelopment compatible with sustainable community cohesion and economic well-being for a particular area. In this context it may be typical for the design framework for an area to include a breadth of considerations:

- Housing Need
- Community Cohesion with shared vision
- Property Mix
- Open Space proposals
- Public Realm Improvements
- Community Uses
- Employment Opportunities
- Townscape and Heritage assessment
- Transport Improvement
- Design Principles and aspirations
- Planning opinion/support
- Site acquisition strategy and timetable
- Significant improvement of the overall quality of the built form

Creative Community Engagement (Social Art Intervention) is understood as essential to the aspiration of a shared vision and sustainable community cohesion around the changes scheduled for an area. Methods are typically, though not exclusively, tied to arts practices and contemporary arts in the public realm planning and development. Ambitious and elusive goals are becoming common place in the artists' brief and yet the core motive of the practitioner remains the process and discovery of new creativity and artistic output.

Space to place (and the deployment of art)

As described above, this transformational process embraces both a mapping exercise and a production process (maybe a quasi-production process). The purpose of engaging artists and similar creatives is to satisfy functions leading to attitudinal and cultural dialogues of subtle value. The use of the arts may incur more problems than it appears to satisfy, however, the central goal is to provide a stimulus or set of stimuli that promote reflective sensitivities as the shared ownership or approval of change in the environment must be felt as much as explained.

As part of the process of deploying the arts there is a necessity to engage the space from a number of perspectives so as to adequately dwell on the features of the space; to subjectivise the space through experience, but then to recognise and act upon the resultant impact of any subjectivised response. It is suggested that such a response follows a pattern:

- Individual subjectivity and private response (artists independent research).
- Intra-subjective perception (the sharing of perceptions through workshop processes, residency initiatives, correspondence projects).
- A form of collaborative perception (through the sharing of reactions or actions; either artist and designer collaborations or collaborations within localised communities).
- Recognition of an emergent sense of history (subjective, cultural and collective recognition of currency and shared identity in the recognisable heritage of place).
- Shared debate, normally actions or events, which effectively clarify the context for the whole process (these maybe concrete, permanent forms as well as 'live' actions).

The intended outcome is the transformation of **space** (defined as physical / material / socialised / geographic entity) into **place** (proposed and energised as a space that has been reconfigured and re-presented through a dynamic, subjectivised interactive process).

Ultimately, the priority is not for the production of art works, or even proposals for artworks that have the capacity to function as palliatives to identified and well-known problems associated with post-industrial urban spaces. Rather, the intention of this strategy is an attempt to share an agenda that highlights a sense of a creative space – both in material form and narrative process – that will influence thinking, making, design and community based initiative towards positive solutions. Any sense of arts production should, therefore, be re-

defined as a process that might remain as a set of speculative aspirations or possibilities, or might lead to a physical transformation or artefact.

In relation to such goals, the earliest possible brief for any artist intervention or interpretation of any site ought to be informed by the need to add to the character assessment of the area. Current thinking related to method recognises the breadth of questions surrounding the link between identity, the recognition of identity and a sense of belonging promoted by a physical environment. This all presumes that the artist, or those motivated and empowered by their own creative and critical ideals, wants to acquire the role and perform to expectation. For us, there has to be a suspicion that the experience of making has been subjugated or appropriated by political aspirations and capitalist paradigms enforcing social progress and the concept of advancement or improvement.

Current thinking in creative community engagement is that the arts, as a partnership mechanism, presents opportunities for diversifying correspondence and broadening liaison to ensure the best chance of; (a) impact (community influence on planning decisions), (b) sustainable initiatives, (c) shared ownership between all stakeholders. The most impressive case studies in those terms involve fairly fresh models of commissioning. The examples drawn on here typically employ creative practitioners as consultants at the earliest possible point of the community engagement process. It is then implicit that the timeline affecting individual projects is extended, relative to more traditional models of public art commissioning, and that where appropriate, initiatives are rolled together to create optimum mass and consistency in terms of contact with the community.

The Barton Hill Public Art Guide (David Cotterell, 2007) emphasises the importance of an inclusive role for the artist throughout the process of regeneration. The example presents evidence of an approach that grows into the cultures of the community and develops solutions in response to influences at local level. Cotterell was part of the development team and was fully aware of all aspects of the brief for Barton Hill. The outcome of his two year residency was a catalogue or archive of anecdotal, evidential and creative material that provided additional briefing matter for the architectural, engineering, environmental and public realm within the Barton Hill area.

Much of the Contemporary practice in the area of creative community engagement in the UK takes its lead from Situationist activities from the 1950's and from European funded research of the last 15 years. It remains the case that the most successful examples are those where there is time for the embedding of ideas and for a cultural and attitudinal shift within the affected communities and the development agencies in response to the results of liaison. Trustworthy engagement is best typified in examples where the creative consultant or artist is perceived as a member of the community. "I Don't Want To, But I Will" (Denis Wood, 1973) was a 'live' research project that uses cultural mapping. Woods accompanied a group of American teenage tourists on their first visits to London, Rome and Paris, Wood gathered—with some reluctance—their cognitive maps of the cities. He coined an effective technique for rendering psychogeographic displacement, recording an emotional response to space that differed dramatically with any form of authored or designed map:

"I gridded up a commercial map so that I could assign grid coordinates to every feature on each of the kids' maps. If their maps were structured like the commercial maps, the grids I would get by connecting the coordinates on the kids' maps would resemble the evenly spaced, right-angle grid I'd drawn over the commercial map. It was easy to see that the kids' maps not only didn't much resemble the commercial map, but that they varied widely among themselves. They also changed with experience...."

Though fairly distant as a case study, this example highlights the non-compliance of alternative mapping and, then, free thinking participant communities. Social maps will not give absolute evidence and are difficult to record in conventional ways. They do provide rich evidence of real experience and they do encourage the trust and active engagement of participants where they feel they have legitimate right to speak about their lives and attempt to influence their own environment. In this context then, the artist is not blending into a community but encouraging a set of individuals to join in with a habit or behavioural stance that may or may not compliment their own context. Our current thinking, as a result of experiences working as artists (whatever that means) in the context of urban regeneration and renewal processes is that we need to remain attached to the discipline specifics of our practice if we are to remain reliably empowered by our own sensitivities. Given this subtle amendment to the scenario under proposal it is, of course, possible for anyone to participate but also possible for engagement to be reactive and divergent, transgressing from the brief of the initiative or moving into new realms that may not resemble either art nor a planned, strategic or rational engagement.

There are, then, a number of questions that remain unresolved in instances where a co-ordinated interface

between art and socio-economic planning has been specifically designed:

- As partnerships develop with stakeholders who owns the creative voice as distinct from the medium?
- Where art is dependent on a conversion of stakeholders interests; is it possible to disaggregate motive from method; the creative instinct from the practical outcome?
- Creative enquiry and process can act as a social medium that provides both an affirmation of experiences and access to hidden discourses but can it transfer cultural identity?

Socio-Geographic Landscape Painting

Since 1999, a team of artists and researchers either working within or connected to the University of Salford have been involved with a series of experiments and commissions that have involved 'Colour Mapping' of specific environments. The process started as an observational and pseudo scientific analysis of landscape, working within the context of urban planning and regeneration, to inform the architectural process with a sense of character assessment, a local identity. Over a number of years the habits that have evolved from this collaboration have taken on the appearance of a landscape painting practice. The artists have become fascinated by environments and horizons that evidence obscured histories and traces of colours, weathered by natural process and human interaction. Their work represents a location, a time and an interaction with an environment, through ingredients that infuse the palette of the landscape, which they then edit to a limited key of colours. This commonly may involve lens based media; selecting colour at distance or on the horizon, then filtering the image to merge tones into an overall sense of colour, confused by distance and a lack of focus. By contrast it may be direct engagement with the materials of the environment, physically extracting pigment or dye from the component parts of the landscape to represent its colours.



Colonsay, Inner Hebrides. 2009.

The effect of colour mapping or colour studies of this type is to brand a particular landscape by limiting the number and range of colours used to describe its memory. From the outset of each experiment, the attitude or approach is one of discovery. It is important to establish speculation as part of the process and thereby capitalise on doubt in the recording of colour in the living environment; accuracy won't capture essence. Colour in the environment is unstable and every element will change with time; lux levels, light refraction, humidity, erosion, decay and human interventions. The thesis of the work is that colour is temporary and that many of the colours perceived within a living environment do not genuinely exist as physical pigments in that

place; this also means that some do. The logical conclusion of this type of thinking is to limit and refine the sources of colour and this has meant that the most recent work seeks to extract actual pigment from the landscape; to take material from the earth and the built environment and grind it into a fine dust to apply to a paint binder and canvas.

One of the initial landscapes for investigation in the early stages of this research thinking was the site of a proposed development for a beacon building within an enterprise park. In the event, the architecture has been significantly affected by the visual and arts based research material supplied to the design team and the architects. Whilst that outcome has been positive and beneficial in reference to the predicted and commissioned outcome of the work, this study is emphatic of the abstract activity as a 'pure' or functionless pursuit. The practical application of the research speculation is that material originated through open investigations, by artists, may provide an additional tool for the designer or design team. In this instance, at least, the concepts and content developed during the art research had a life beyond the commission and was easily transferred for other users and other audiences.



Salford 32 Reds, 2003.

The artists were commissioned to produce a collection of visual evidence in response to the following objectives in the brief: to influence the redevelopment of the site; to inform its renewal, to develop ideas for future cultural projects. The process resulted in a collection of 32 shades of red arrived at through an examination of the brickwork in the streets surrounding the development. The process of colour capture was treated through a variety of test systems that would, as a consequence of the system design itself, limit the tonal and spectral range of the resultant colour palette. The system adopted to develop the final collection of abstracted colours was designed to constrain subjective selection, potentially influenced by the reading of the landscape rather than a pure observation; a standard viewfinder and set of numbers set a group of rules that applied to a linear description of the landscape overlaid onto a topographic map. Once we had set the compositional framework, the adoption of rules provided the limits of the palette. These are traditional painting

approaches applied to a landscape investigation structured around a walk. This is, of course, an over simplification of the process of abstraction but, nevertheless, illustrates a means by which we could design decision making and discovery so as to correspond to the problematic of landscape character assessment within a tradition of observational landscape painting. The colours obtained from the study were reproduced into a one off range of domestic household emulsions. The piece of work initiated other investments of time and fresh input as well as becoming the central focus of the overall architectural design project; the palette was at first used to inform the colours and materials in the new Innovation Forum building.



Salford Innovation Hub (pre-opening) 2007.

In addition, the commissioners planned to manufacture the colours into a new Salford paint range, to be used as a key promotional tool for the project. Of greater relevance to our current research interests was the fact that the palette was further adopted by one of the local Schools and specifically a group of School pupils for use as a focus of an enterprise learning project largely based on the representational values of the colours. This was a single Enterprise cell, based within a local school, that expanded on the creative lead presented by the project to develop new education and learning opportunities. The young people converted what was, essentially, a landscape painting project into a brand concept for the area as a means of generating and communicating enterprise concepts based on environmental characteristics. In this instance there is a happy or fortunate coincidence. The analysis of the landscape via painterly obsession resulted in a colour cue and balanced palette that was readily recognised and then adopted by local interests, thereby contributing to other actions and reflective creative endeavours. As this tangent developed and the School pupils took control of the project, the group collective, or company, that included artists and designers elected the name REDGENERATION, a conflation of 'regeneration' and the dominant 'red' brick of the built environment. They went on to prototype Salford branded products such as colour change nail varnish, Salford shoe laces and REDGENERATION marketing tools. The concept has continued and has led us to the current research investment into arts and enterprise collaborations in the context of change processes and active community based campaigning.



REdGENERATION young people's project - poster presentation, 2006.

Our current Knowledge Transfer Fellowship project proposes the transfer of a framework and methodology of artistic and creative social intervention that empowers and supports engagement with communities of young people affected by change in their local environment. Knowledge Transfer, used in this context, enables community organisations and agents for social capacity building to hand the creative lead in socially inclusive arts projects to groups and individuals at the margins of consultation. From the experience of our initial research project, it is clear that the combination of arts and enterprise sustains the commitment of those included and provides metrics and benchmarks that the young people can control and own. The blend of creative agendas and enterprise goals gives opportunities for linking outputs to the specific environmental and social context.

This is a method of creative community engagement through the arts that seeks to release the potential for collective enterprise with young people enabling ownership and shared responsibility for community, and fostering fresh creativity and a diversity of approach in the exploration of social, physical and racial issues arising from economic disadvantage. The knowledge transfer process is targeting skills in terms of multi-agency project working, creative research methods, action learning and empowerment and applied social arts practices.

The summary output from the Fellowship is a toolkit and training pack for disseminating methods of inclusive and collaborative arts practice that lead to social enterprise. Finalising and testing new methods of creative and community engagement through action research provides the evidence to support the transfer of principles and practices in the deployment of the arts for social and environmental benefits to professionals and volunteers in public and third sector bodies.

Throughout, we aim to maintain a privilege of the arts practitioner to work with the unknown despite the context of outcome driven economic goals and regeneration metrics.

SPECULATING FOR GOLD

In response to the regeneration of Blackpool and the 'Golden Mile' (a declining tourist attraction that was once core to the economy of the town) our artists and researchers have constructed their own interpretation of the

brand colour, referred to in the cultural legacy given to the environment by its name. Their speculative experiment, was to discover gold as a colour in darkness (night) and replicate that colour in paint. The thesis was that genuine golden hues exist in the night landscape of Blackpool that are not discernable in daylight. The research experiment was to attempt to emulate those colours in a paint media that is only visible in direct sunlight; a futile exercise, the purpose of which was to embed alchemy in the public art process.



Paul Haywood & Diane Jones, 'Speculating for Gold', 2008.

The artists constructed their own interpretation of branded colour. They constructed a romantic view of a landscape painting tradition as one where the discovery of colour and the resolution of colour relationships with paint were the central dilemma driving endeavour in search of truthful representation. Having set these guidelines they reinterpreted the photographic evidence of colour in the landscape with a restricted palette of photochromic paints that might combine to replicate that colour. Recording via digital photography established a condition; that the process of painting in the studio must rely on memories of colour in the landscape as much as it relied on the photographic evidence from the experience. In deciding to paint within a studio environment with photochromic dyes the final piece of constructed speculation was defined. The dyes of the paint are invisible out of direct sunlight and, therefore, in the selection and mixing of colours, the artists had only the names of colours on their palette and guesswork to guide them. This was a ridiculously futile alchemic process that sought to define a research paradigm as a process of practice and apply it to the painting of a landscape. If it matters to an audience charged with, or professionally engaged in, the regeneration of Blackpool, then its central theme is the brand identity of the town and that relationship to sensuous experiences in the physical landscape. In contrast, as an artistic response to the Blackpool landscape, speculating for the colour gold in this way feels like the beginning of a painting process that can only complete when the painters tire of the rich problematics that come from the simple but satisfying goal of attempting to capture an experience of colour.

Throughout the making process and the process of exhibition; the installation of projections, photography or painting in a gallery setting is a process of translation. It involves taking a complex memory and reality of colour through a series of editorial processes, distilling the essence of colour. For us, the whole process is routed within the tradition of European landscape painting.

Most colour experiences and responses are abstractions influenced by prior experience and observations. However, colour is also a real, physical commodity that we can touch. Colour exists as light and as pigment; both ephemeral and concrete. To experience colour as a sensation and a theme it may be necessary to remove figurative or semiotic references; either completely or in part.

“By reducing imagery we intensify the power of paint (colour).” (Helen Baker-Alder, 2009)

Through a process of evolution, one of our current proposals or actions is to combine the endeavour of colour study and abstraction from specific landscapes with the enterprise culture that we have sought to work with in the participation processes relevant to the research study. What has resulted is an attempt to create paint or painting materials as commodities in their own right. We have moved to a position where we seek to convert the physical material into pigment to form the basis of a paint medium. From our data sourced on public commissioned projects in Salford, Aberdeen and Clermont Ferrand we are convinced by the relatively obvious observation that the trust experience of colour is its own material manifestation; touching and handling pigments and the mediums in which they are suspended brokers the closest link to our participating audience that we have managed to date.



Making pigment from Terra Cotta, Macerata, Italy, 2009.

As a physical experience, the sensation and reading of colour is affected by; its structure, context, illumination and relative density and weight. We are using the notion of Structure in terms of composition, pigmentation, substrates, texture and surface of the coloured medium; the material presence of colour in objects and forms and its physical, scientific properties. These are the elements that we are currently exploring and that we seek to exploit. The term context is used to refer to the ambient influences, juxtapositions, light source, time of day and other relational information where colour is influenced by its surroundings. The illumination of the colour is, of course, influenced by light, but also the colours own luminosity and by ambient reflected light, atmospheric conditions and humidity, lustre. These are temporary influences that mean the conditions for viewing colour will change. In referencing the density or weight of the colour we are referring to its tonal quality, the pigment saturation, illusory weight, relational depth and translucency. In many ways this is subjective information dependent on the experience of the viewer and their sensibilities. Manipulation of these facets and attributes of colour requires a degree of specialist knowledge and a depth or relevant experience, of practice. We are working with art media as a tool for engagement but we are aware of the discipline and what it offers to the maker as well as the audience. Sources of Colour, in the context of a

particular landscape, relate the identity and heritage of a place; this is particularly acute in urban contexts where the landscape is constructed and reformed through synthetic and manufactured processes. However, on the whole, most of the urban landscapes we have experienced have been influenced by the Social and Ecological heritage that are specific to them. These would be; the natural heritage; local vegetation, earth colours, and climate. The ancient heritage taken from both human and natural history and embedded over time; recent heritage and that which is within living memory and still subject to change, decay and ageing; and living heritage, that which is now or in process and mostly influenced by human intervention.

Within each reference or source, the impact of the material environment dominates most of our sensory memory and knowledge relevant to a place. The specific view of a landscape painting tradition as being one where the discovery of colour and the resolution of colour relationships with paint are the central dilemma driving an endeavour in search of truthful representation. We are now at the point where the representation of a place can, ultimately, be realised by turning the earth and its materials into pigment, directly. Given that not all materials will convert to pigment there is a performative gesture contained within this method; it won't necessarily work and so one significant value of the action is the process of trying. However, this current endeavour has cemented a very obvious point of reference for our research; that the haptic experience of things draws the participant, audience or observer ever closer to their essence. One crucial observation of relevance here is that the capture intellectual articulation and rationality in the sensuous domain of the making and material enquiry is one of the key motivators for those dedicated to art practice and can be shared with others making use of art specialism for other goals and benefits. Researchers in Nanoscale Science Education have shown that haptics is superior to vision in helping a learner (for example) to detect properties of texture (roughness/smoothness, hardness/softness, wetness/dryness, stickiness and slipperiness) as well as microspatial properties of pattern, compliance, elasticity, viscosity and temperature (S. Lederman, 1983; Zangaladze, et al., 1999). Therefore, one potential target, from our research, may be to locate and celebrate intuitive responses within the spectrum of knowledge and cogent reflection that people rely on to excite a deeper engagement from all sides of the collaboration and maintain the priorities that we, as artists, value and to which we seek to adhere.

Referencing the transition between thought and evidence, haptic response and kinaesthetic reaction are common manifestations of creativity that are tacitly recognised within the artists range of vocabulary and practical habits. Herbert Read suggested that sculpture requires the involvement of a specifically plastic sensibility (more complex than the specifically visual sensibility). That agility, of cerebral to dextrous rationalisation, is typically experienced as an intuited facility, yet it appropriately describes a process of reification; moving, for example, sensation to concept and providing an example of how transposition across modalities of reading and experience, creates representation. These are the freedoms normally associated with art production and with landscape painting and it is probably fair to say that these subtleties given to the practice of making will need to persevere however might be manipulated to derive function and social benefit.

As artists and researchers working through our themes for understanding and transferring models of practice that position the arts within regeneration and social inclusion processes we are concerned that the specific qualities of art as a making process are preserved. We are concerned with a direct engagement with images and objects, informed by our received and embedded knowledge of visual constructs that rely on the elemental properties of the artefact and that which might be described as instinctive sensitivities towards balance, harmony, perception and repulsion.

“Don't think, look”

Wittgenstein

One aspect of our research is intended to rehearse, reiterate and test aspects of analysis based on the observation of formal content and structure and democratise those processes or their outcome to excite other possibilities and different engagements.

“We need to rescue the question of subjectivity from banal biography, from therapeutic narrative (in search of 'role models' and 'self-esteem') and from predefined positions ('speaking as a'), and rediscover the innocence of not knowing what we might yet become.”

John Rajchman, 2005