

# Mind the Gap! A national workshop

## FRIDAY, 17 APRIL 2015 National College of Art and Design

### Emergent Themes in evaluating the practice based PhD in the creative arts

### Notes for Final Plenary and Summary by Organising Committee 17.30pm [Harry Clarke Lecture Theatre]

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#### Notes for Final Plenary and Summary by Organising Committee

17.30pm [Harry Clarke Lecture Theatre]

Final Plenary and summarizing by Organising Committee Panel: website and social media plans (Prof Des Bell NCAD, Prof Karen Fleming UU, Prof Rod Stoneman NUIG)

**Cross-disciplinary**  
**Trans disciplinary**  
**Post disciplinary**

### **Practice Research**

Practice based....  
Practice led....  
...with practice

Not all **Interdisciplinary** is through **collaboration** but that seems to come through strongly today ....I had prepared some definitions in advance:

### Intro

Des mentioned in his intro today, this is not new - we have been engaged in PhD with practice since at least 1980s

Are we **confident** in our disciplinary expertise?

Do we have a shared understanding of the **Dimensions of Research**? What constitutes an art and design **research environment**?

**Provocation 1** : Collaboration has a basis in discipline.

What is distinctive of an artist researcher?

We face the challenge that the concept of **polymath is alive** in well in science. Even in the contemporary **culture population, fluency with visual media** has been alluded to throughout the day-; the perception is increasingly that of everyone (individuals) are arbiters of choice, taste, and aesthetics. Everyone is enabled to have input to art e.g. customised design (digital cake decorating, t-shirt printing, Nike trainers), and have an opinion on it, in a way that doesn't apply to nuclear fission or Nano medicine.

When we work with another discipline, I'm thinking of medicine because that was my case study today, , we do not expect to become a medic or a radiographer or a midwife. We do access their system of thinking, rigour and evidence imperative, maybe acquiring few novel techniques.

What do they take from us? In cross-disciplinary research the visual or dimensional artefacts are often the artist's contribution or output, and would be unlikely without artist's contribution.

**Provocation 2** (to researchers) What would other disciplines recognise as our disciplinary contribution? In many examples today the question of rigour was often solved by looking at other fields. Is the lab the 'practice' of science? Why do we need a special treatment?

**Interdisciplinary** and **Cross disciplinary** overlapping definitions

# interdisciplinary

/ɪntəˈdɪsɪplɪn(ə)ri, ˌɪntədɪsɪˈplɪn(ə)ri/

*adjective*

relating to more than one branch of knowledge.  
"an interdisciplinary research programme"

# cross-disciplinary

*adjective*

adjective: **crossdisciplinary**

relating to or representing more than one branch of knowledge; interdisciplinary.  
"a strong cross-disciplinary approach to research"

"Interdisciplinary research is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice."

What is a student's experience of across disciplinary PhD? The supervisors may be from two disparate disciplines and enjoy a stimulating dialogue, the outcome may transcend a discipline – but how is this manifest in the student's experience. Outside of a cohort, can they become cross disciplinary?

## Trans disciplinary

**Transdisciplinary** Research is **defined** as research efforts conducted by investigators from different disciplines working jointly to create new conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and translational innovations that integrate and move beyond discipline-specific approaches to address a common problem.

[Definitions | Harvard Transdisciplinary Research in ...](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/trec/about-us/definitions/)  
[www.hsph.harvard.edu/trec/about-us/definitions/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/trec/about-us/definitions/)

**Post disciplinary** emerges in humanities literature approximately 2009. The American usage of post disciplinary is closer to our understanding of transdisciplinary

Julie A. Buckler (2004) Towards a New Model of General Education at Harvard

The term "**postdisciplinarity**" evokes an intellectual universe in which we inhabit the ruins of outmoded disciplinary structures, mediating between our nostalgia for this lost unity and our excitement at the intellectual freedom its demise can offer us. Is the era of postdisciplinarity upon us now? Finally, "transdisciplinarity" refers to the highest level of integrated study, that which proposes the unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary perspectives and points toward our potential to think in terms of frameworks, concepts, techniques, and vocabulary that we have not yet imagined. It must be acknowledged, however, that the very notion of "transdisciplinarity" may strike many of us as chimerical, sinisterly monolithic, or as a ruse for smuggling back in old dreams of objectivity and universal knowledge. Are we then right back

where we started, or does our investigation of disciplines and the nature of knowledge maintain our historical perspective?"

Marcus mentioned Sarah Pink's influential work (both in her practice in her books 2001, 2014, 2014) on visual research methodologies.

"This innovative book examines and introduces cutting edge visual methods in social research.

It explores the development of visual methodology as a field of interdisciplinary and post-disciplinary practice spanning scholarly and applied concerns.

Positioned at the innovative edge of theory and practice in contemporary visual research, Pink's engaging book goes beyond the methods, ideas and fields of practice outlined in existing texts and handbooks.

Seems to me, Social sciences have occupied this research terrain more clearly than artist-researchers. (Sarah Pink, Carole Gray etc exceptions)

**Provocation 3** What is considered interdisciplinary today might be considered disciplinary tomorrow.

### Observations from today:

- Not all **Interdisciplinary** is through **collaboration** but that seems to come through strongly in what we mean here today.
- Fascinating philosophical discourse about the nature of knowledge and an argument for why universities should have a more interdisciplinary curriculum.  
<https://beacon.wharton.upenn.edu/remurphy/2009/07/new-words-post-disciplinary-an/>
- The RAE and REF provide a framework to assess UK education that Ireland does not (yet) have. At Ulster and QUB we can submit with non-text outcome types.
- PhD students here today have expressed grappling with the philosophical framework for their thesis, and the political stance.
- Much pilfering from social sciences, anthropology.
- *I would observe that it is interesting that these are currently described in the media as subjects somewhat endangered in the UK higher education*
- We have (sometimes) matured past art as a service/consultancy into collaboration. Art's contribution to science extends beyond interpretation, communication and new audiences.

**Finally-** Marcus mentioned that the images in his earlier books received little critical attention or citation and we enjoyed Alastair's film investigating into events rather than text in linguistic anthropology and other references throughout the day. Marcus alluded to how images over time develop a life, evolve, understanding and interpretation changes both in the published outcome and in other contexts e.g. the subject, the maker. We are familiar with this as artists (particularly of certain age with a bodies of past work), as collectors, as curators and as researchers. To conclude with use another topical term – the potential for interdisciplinary **impact** arising from practice (visual, aural records) may be distinct from the text

## References

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[https://www.nsf.gov/od/ija/additional\\_resources/interdisciplinary\\_research/definition.jsp](https://www.nsf.gov/od/ija/additional_resources/interdisciplinary_research/definition.jsp)