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Designs on Critical Practice?

Terry E. Rosenberg

Abstract

This paper initially focuses on the way design and other creative disciplines are compromised and reduced in their practices in order that they may 'fit' within academe, with its axiological cast determined by the epistemologies of the sciences and humanities; a cast that has no place for the uncertainties of creative practice. It then explores the epistemological bases of design thinking and suggests that if design thinking is knowledge it is knowledge-in (as)- potential (potentia). This is a knowledge built with uncertainties - a pre-reflective knowing. It then moves to describe a critical thread that may be drawn through the stretch of design practice, including its uncertainties, and argues that this criticality is what the design community needs to appreciate and develop. It finally argues that academe needs to modify its validity criteria to accommodate critical practice rather than shape practice to fit with current validation models.

Full Paper

Introduction

With the move of art and design schools into an academic mainstream (in deference to Coldstream's recommendations), educators working in the sector were forced to engage with a problematic where onto-generative activities, creative practices, were required to be shaped to and laid in the (procrustean) bed of academic practice – with its epistemological exigencies. With a series of knots, worthy of King Gordius, they found ways of tying together theory and practice in order to lay their unruly practices in the ruled bed of academic practice.

Educators in art and design have looked at the way practice may be based on theory, informed by theory and generally engage theory in different ways. They marshalled various prepositional, adverbial and adjectival ties to help them condition the relationship. They have asked that practice be led by theory, based on theory and informed by theory. They have addressed research as a (or, is it 'the') process of theory formulation and have shaped up our practices so that they may consider the possibility of research through, into, for and about practice. And, in an attempt to slice through the Gordian knot, they have even advanced the idea of theory as practice (or, is it the other way round?). They (or is it we; since we are all implicated) have done this in order to legitimate what is essentially ontological, possibly even a pre-ontological disposition, in a court of epistemological practices.

The introduction of 'creative practices' into academe has caused a seismic shift in a number of traditional academic disciplines (epistemological practices), who are beginning to look at practice-led theory or indeed theory as (creative) practice. This inversion, or, reconfiguration of the theory/practice relationship, is made because the traditional academic disciplines are beginning to see how practice may move ahead of theory and open up views into as yet untheorized spaces.

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Although creative practice (design) may reference theory (and in many cases does) and lead theory, creative practice is not necessarily made better by being bound or woven through/into theoretical stricture. Practice related to theoretical formulations is often useful and often necessary in particular areas of practice - theory may indeed inform practice and in some instances may be a necessary part of a creative practice – ‘theory informed practice’ is not a term sufficient in its scope to encompass all of either the creative actions or the creative outcomes that should be promoted in academe.

Design needs to entertain and engage with an expanded notion of what informs and supports creative practice and indeed in an expanded notion of what the actual practice is and does. Criticality is, consequently, a more helpful term than “theory based-led-informed practice” – more able to describe the full range of thinking (in-action) that is used to motivate and develop practice. It is also a better descriptive qualification of the actual practice itself and what it effects.

This paper will move to delineate and describe this critical creative practice; a practice that moves critically in spaces between or beyond theory so as to speculate, provoke and create new questions, new understandings and, in some instances, new answers in a number of problematics.

Reneging on Uncertainty

In Coldstream’s deal, where art and design was given the nod and accepted into the academic fold, artists and designers were placed in a situation where, wittingly or unwittingly, they were made to renege on the flow of uncertainties and doubts that run through practice; and, which in many ways, give course to its particular lifeblood. They were, in certainty, forced to be like the academic subjects they were joining. They were brought, outsiders, into an established order where they were enjoined and brought to book in a court which wished certain account – to know and to know assuredly and in a particular manner. What is/was promoted in this court is knowledge formed through consistent and reliable (?) methodology, producing robust data, which when analysed yielding conclusions accepted and appreciated by an academic community (or is it academic communities) all involved in doing the same thing – all contributing to the Western Knowledge Project.

The ‘Project’ has a strict measure; boundaries are policed separating:

The true or the accepted from the not true or the unaccepted or the not yet accepted ...[establishing]... internally a territory of the Same and externally a territory of the Other.¹

Knowledge is valid if of the Same; other types of knowing, other cultures’ knowing, are all proscribed - not able to meet the exacting and exact standards of Western academe. The heart of the Western Knowledge Project is research. The purpose of research is to study the world (the Other), adequate the Other so that it may be understandable/assayable in the court of the Same ..and evolve theory through which one gains knowledge and control over the Other. Literally, put the Other in his, her or its place:

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The desire to explain (through research) is... a symptom of the desire to have a self (the researcher) that can control knowledge and a world that can be known (i.e. converted to the Same'.²

This research is validated (as new knowledge) through a warrant (gained through repeatable and thus verifiable method) that establishes that what is advanced is a-historically and a-geographically truthful – truthful beyond any context (not acknowledging that this itself is a value laden context – produced in a Western positivist/scientific tradition). In this pursuit of truth the 'thing to be known' is isolated from all other things - and contexts - in case it is contaminated by the uncertainties of everything else around it. What cannot be established as 'truthful' through declared, trusted and rigorous method is most often gainsaid in academe.

But, although, across the academic board, all fall under the shadow of the Project, the shadow cast is perhaps not as dark in some places as in others. The proceedings of the 'Court of the Same' are more relaxed in some quarters than others; and research is not always necessarily a prosecution which tries to establish 'the truth'. There are fields (I intentionally avoid the word 'discipline' as it issues from the Court of the Same) where academics mix and blend, from an extensive epistemological palette and where different voices begin to disassemble traditional academic knowledge constructs and produce projects of different knowledge cultures, separated or combined, academic or non-academic. There are fields in the sciences and social sciences (the humanities have always been more liberated, it seems) where the whole 'knowledge thing' becomes playful production rather than assiduous action focused on stripping the world bare to unveil the (fundamental) truth behind it. In other words the production of knowledge has taken a creative turn – creativity becoming essential to theory production. Validity criteria are more relaxed and knowledge production is softer edged and multiform in these fields.

The Problem of Creative Practice in an Academic Context

In surprising contrast the so-called 'creative practices' are looking to make their edges harder and more defined; bending and shaping practice so that it is more academic. 'Creative practices' present a different problematic, they are fundamentally different in nature to the practices of other academic fields - sciences and social sciences.

In her essay 'Cotton and Iron', filmmaker, critic, and theorist Trinh Minh-ha suggests that we think of creative practice as a journey that unsettles our way of knowing in order to open us up to the, at times unsettling, and unsettled ways of being in the world. She eloquently writes:

A creative event does not grasp, it does not take possession, it is an excursion. More often than not, it requires that one leaves the realms of the known, and takes oneself there where one does not expect, is not expected to be.³

The volition of creative practice, in her, and I hasten to add, my eyes, is not to grasp the world so as to know it, but rather to release from grasp, so as to allow flight so that we may make and/or experience the world differently. As Trinh Minh-ha says, it requires one to 'leave the realms of the known'. Practice is necessarily dealing with what is not-known; it leads one to engage with the world in some way – but, I am not sure this is in order to know it – certainly in regard to how academia currently validates knowledge.

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Trying to Make Practice Fit: Quixotic and Just a Little Desperate

Does it matter that practice is not knowledge?

Well, it seems it does. Academe continues to try and force practice – whole or in parts - into an epistemological mould. Or, alternatively, creative practitioners try and create academic ballast by loading practice with theoretical weight – in other words tying practice to knowledge forms in order to produce authority and imperium (what Deleuze would call *potestas*) so that the practice may be acceptable to academe.

Practice Equals Epistemology? Design Knowledge

Art and design academics, understandably and imaginatively, but somewhat quixotically, produce terms that suggest that practice may be 'brought to book' epistemologically (grasped). They have created terms like experiential, presentational and praxiological knowledge so as to confer on practice status as an epistemology. Or, they try and find within practice those elements which are knowable, extract them from the unruly unknowable bits and produce them for academia's axiological determination (based on securing knowledge).

For instance, in design (which is the practice that this paper is particularly focussed on) there are those that advance design knowledge as a unique epistemology; one that is of a different kind altogether than the knowledge of the sciences and the humanities.

The design theorist Clive Dilnot advances that design:

As a mode of knowledge is not simply a form or technique or a mode of human action that could be contained within existing forms of knowledge (though it is also both of these things) but a different disposition towards Being than that reflected by other modes of knowledge.⁴

Dilnot proposes that 'design's mode of knowledge is a 'third knowledge'. This 'third knowledge' of his is built around the notion that design is in artifice ...that is that its 'subject matter is artifice'; and as artifice it is 'mediation between ourselves and the objective world'. The third knowledge, in his eyes, is therefore a knowledge:

Concerning how artifice may be formed and shaped in the interaction of things, persons and environments (the nature of the designing processes which shape artifice); and knowledge concerning the dialogical nature of the interactions surrounding artifice; that is of the impact of the understanding of interaction on the nature of interaction, and on the subjects, contexts and environments so impacted.⁵

He goes on to try and distinguish between first, second, and this third knowledge. Acknowledging that he may be accused of a glibness that comes with over-generalizing, he asserts that the sciences and humanities are essentially concerned with what is (the former numbers and the latter narrates the world) and are therefore essentially retrospective:

Dealing with the world already made and characterized by a fixed plane of facts, upon which they operate analytically rather than praxiologically.⁶

Knowledge-about and Knowledge-through

Dilnot writes that we need to consider both knowledge-about-design and also knowledge-through-design in order to appreciate design's space in academe. The knowledge-through-design, in what it stresses, it seems to me, is a reduced idea and value of practice. Knowledge-through-design, in that it stresses knowledge formation, requires those bits of practice that are not epistemological to be excised in order to advance those bits that are. Where does the speculative figure in this? I am also unconvinced that there is a distinction between knowledge-about and knowledge-through, ultimately; in the long view the distinction does not hold fast. Dilnot says that, in order to become knowledge, design practice - knowledge-through-design - needs translation - an exegesis - so as to move from mere practice to knowledge. This exegesis sends the praxiological back to analysis in my view. Knowledge-through-design is transformed into knowledge-about-design. Even if the explanation is concerned with what is at the heart of practice... an 'enactment into' (Dilnot's term) new form or, indeed, even if the translation becomes a critical evaluation of how this 'enactment into'... may have been done differently, practice is made adequate to its explanation; and in so doing it is pinned, labelled and fixed in a 'plane of facts' where it can be operated on analytically.

In other words, Dilnot is still trying to build intellectual substance by trying to 'grasp' design - its actions and effect in the world. In the pass, described above he is merely engaged in moving the praxiological towards analysis.

Design Praxis

As praxis design's difference from other forms (of creative practice) should be noted, it is constituted in its address to ordinariness and futures. Design is disposed to bring into being - not only as provocation or reflection on our world - but in order to make the world or a small measure of it differently. Design's true nature is of the world and not of the abstract spaces of knowledge formation, or even the more relaxed spaces of discourse.

Design practice is of the quotidian and its very ordinariness means it needs a strategic re-orientation to gain the extra-ordinary space of discourse (which is inherent in other creative practices). Also, it is of what is yet to be rather than of the now - designing cannot hang an epistemology on the certainty of the given - something already theresuch as a contemporary (or past) landscape/condition - for regard, comment or expression. Its object of attention (critical) is somehow deferred - lying in the future; and, possessed by the uncertainties of the future.

This deferred object is thus only engaged as a prospect - expectation, yield, and view:

Design is an expectation of what is yet to happen, it is actively engaged in a poiesis that yields a future, and it should have a view - a critical purchase - on, current and future practice - its spaces and objects. Design unquestionably produces a future, not only in as much as every creative act moves to an outcome that is only fulfilled in a future, but, also, the outcome itself is a product for and thus is part of what produces a future world. The future is an innovation, a thing other to what 'is' presently'.⁷

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The 'prospect' as is indicated offer us potencias (as opposed to potestas) – i.e. what is drawn as potential from knowledge: an informed speculation into futures'.

Design's Desideratum

To some extent design has merely seen itself as adding material features back into the current (or near-future) landscape and has not acknowledged its return to illuminate existing and past worlds and their objects or more especially engage with future worlds critically. It hasn't really considered or addressed its critico-discursive reflex. This is the desideratum in design practice. This is what is causing the hysteria to configure definitions of design (practice) that fix an epistemological determination for practice, wholly or in its elements, or, if this is not possible, to tether it to theoretical anchors.

The distinction between knowledge formation (with its product of theory) and discourse needs to be made. The distinction in some way is between a volition to 'thought' and 'thinking' as volition. Referring back to Trinh Minh-ha this restates the idea of a divide that lies between those practices that wish to grasp and those that wish to release from grasp so as to allow flight. Theories act to settle and close account, i.e. to explain and provide structure for an understanding of the world and its practices and provide the (or is it 'a') case for responsible and practical action. Discourses, on the other hand, are not concluded accounts, they are in a process of becoming, and engage other becoming(s).

Discourses provide a net on which, through which and in which one can weave practice. They provide a ground for creative action and those creative acts themselves can in turn be discursive. Theories move to an absolute position whereas discourse maintains an incompleteness that creates a field in which to build criticality through practice. Theories obviously do figure in discursivity, back-grounding discourse/practice and acting as loci - reference or provocation - in an evolving field.

They are points of location in the wider spaces of discourse; for instance, situating the researcher/practitioner, marking out the field of practice and setting referential loci for the practice.

Critico-Discursivity

Design, rather than trying to frame itself as a practice that produces knowledge or as one that is secured to epistemological products (except by way of orientation), needs to appreciate the value of and promote a critico-discursivity that works to inform, run through and indeed be a part of what practice is produced through the practice.

Design practice should/is engage/d with 'changing the shape of the thinkable'⁸ both in order to make new forms – new artifices – but also to shape thinking so as to engage with past, present and future worlds, critically and differently. Design as a field of endeavour promotes and is engaged in practice where there is an attempt to actualise something other than what is already written in our history. Practice is therefore not led by theory nor does it necessarily aim to produce theory. Theory led practice produces what Derrida would refer to as 'a novelty of the same' inventing 'the possible from the possible'. What I suggest design should aim for in its practice is what Rajchman describes as 'an architecture of 'the impossible', the "altogether-other" of our invention,

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the surprise of what is not yet possible in the history of the spaces in which we find ourselves'.⁹

This critico-discursive practice moves in spaces in-between or beyond theory; design as a critico-discursive practice is a vinculum or thread (of criticality) that runs through the way we were, the way we are and the way we want to be.

Tentative Engagements – Knowledge?

Creative practice moves from what is known into what isn't known; not-yet-known or not-knowable. If academia is to accommodate practice it must accept the uncertain and the unknowable in practice – the non-epistemological dimension of practice. It needs to engage with the movement that is necessary in order to bring into being.

It seems obvious, but it needs to re-engage with the uncertainty and doubts that run in the arteries of design (creative) practice and draw these into academic practices – or is it rather draw academic practices towards these uncertainties - to build a richer practice both creative (poetically?) and critical (it is on this edge that I believe it becomes academic).

In drawing uncertainty into academic practice one can begin to see, in the tentative engagements of practice possibilities for a poetic criticality. Practice, with its uncertainties offers a way of 'engaging' the world poetically rather than 'knowingly' (scientifically or indeed in the epistemological models of the social sciences):

Poetry is to be understood here in the extended sense of a play of poiesis, a creative letting go of the drive for possession, of the calculus of means and ends. It allows the rose – in the words of the mystic Silesius – to exist without why. Poetics is the carnival of possibilities.¹⁰

Knowledge is transfigured from potestas - the 'authority of knowledge' - to potentias - the potentiality of knowledge(s) - in the poetic.

If this – potentia - is knowledge, it is knowledge for 'becoming' – knowledge catalysing the potential to produce again and differently; making other than what is already there (but again I emphasise knowledge even as potentia is not the full practice - creative practice is also about not knowing (as remarked on above)).

Intertwined in the notion of making the world or at least a part of it 'other' is the idea of producing for an 'Other'. This is central to design practice. But design engages with this responsibility for the intertwining of 'othering' (making other – poetics) and for an 'Other' (ethics) by evolving deontologies in a calculus that sits beyond practice. They are deontologies that emerge, divorced from the imaginative dynamic of practice. I suggest that these deontic programmes need to be contested in critical discourses that emerge through practice; critical discourses that emerge in an imaginary of practice (and practice's imagination) both poetic and critical. An imagination of this kind is described by Kearney:

[An imagination] responsive to the ethical dimension of things would be critical. But it would also be poetical ...the term [is used] ...In the broad sense of inventive making and creating carried by the word poiesis.

He goes on to say that:

The ethical imagination ...[if it is not]...to degenerate into censorious Puritanism or nostalgic lamentation ...must also give full expression to its poetical potential. The imagination no matter how ethical needs to play. Indeed one might even say that it needs play because it is ethical – to ensure it is ethical in a liberating way, in a way which animates and enlarges our response to the other rather than cloistering us off in a dour moralism of resentment and recrimination'.¹¹

A critical design practice would be/is both poetic and ethical. The critical merges with poesis in practice and not exclusively as a programme running in advance or after practice; attempting to formulate deontologies of practice.

Towards a Critical Practice

There are a number of ways to slice up critical practice so as to understand it. Although perhaps in practice it is not realistic to separate in such a way, for the sake of description one may locate three 'critical engagements' for practice. One may review the critical in practice as:

1. Critical engagement (stimulus): with the world and its discourses as active ground for practice.
2. Critical process: considering critical reflexes in practice and critical reflection in and on practice (à la Schön).
3. Critical re-engagement (reception): delivered in the critical programme of the practice (what it means and what it influences and how it is used/consumed).

One must appreciate that these slices overlap each other in practice.

Critical Engagement (stimulus): Creative Practices Landscape ('potentia')

In the first instance one needs to look at the way designers, as creative practitioners, engage – need to know - the world, in and for practice. This involves in the first instance a critical engagement with the situatedness of the practitioner and the situation of the practice and, then an engagement with the wider references and influences that the practitioner draws on – theories, discourses generally and praxis itself (creative and everyday). This becomes what a colleague of mine, Suhail Malik, calls the 'critically active resource'.

A creative practitioner will drop epistemolog(y)(ies) back into the world and fashion a landscape of what Serres and Latour call 'tentative knowledge' – as an active resource for practice. The epistemology is not dropped back to see if there is a fit between the account (epistemology) and the world but to prepare the 'excursion'. Latour describes this procedure in a discussion of actor network theory:

This solution becomes common sense once it is accepted that an account or an explication or a proof is always added to the world. Reflexivists as well as their pre-relativist enemies dream of abstracting knowledge from things in

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themselves. ANT [actor network theory] keeps adding things to the world and its selection principle is no longer whether there is a fit between account and reality – this dual illusion has been dissolved away – but whether one travels.¹²

The travel itinerary is determined to see how best to illuminate, and, in the case of design, to add material features back into the landscape –sensitive to meaning and effect.

Critical Process: Critical Reflection and Critical Speculation

In much of the literature on the critical in process, the process is described with particular emphasis given to a critical knowing for, in and of practice. The work of Schön particularly is much referred to in this regard. The critical in the work of Schön works in line with what is known, what is thought.

I grant that design practice, design thinking, is tethered to thought (reflection), but, it is also thinking into the unknown (as I have stated throughout this paper).

For Heidegger thinking, all thinking, is thinking into what withdraws into a speculative space. Heidegger suggests that one is caught in the draft of this speculative thinking and that one's being is fashioned through the orientation of this draft in which one is caught:

We are who we are by pointing in that direction – not like an incidental adjunct but as follows: this “being in the draft of” is in itself an essential and therefore constant pointing toward what withdraws. To say “being in the draft of” is to say “pointing toward what withdraw”.¹³

But thinking for him is also at the same time thinking towards what we are inclined to; and what we are inclined to is what ‘in turn inclines towards us by appealing to our essential being as what holds us there’. For Heidegger thinking is not only thinking into a draft into what hasn't yet been thought (speculation – prospect(ing)) but is also fashioned in thinking back, in poesy:

Poesy is the water that at times flows backwards to the source, toward thinking as a thinking back, a recollection.¹⁴

So what Heidegger hands us in terms of thinking are two actions: thinking back to what we know and what holds, and, forwards into a not yet known space. Into this doubling of thinking he writes making – organising and communicating as a way of bringing it together. He develops the idea of thinking as a handicraft (wroughting) and then moves this to a consideration of the craft of the hand:

The craft of the hand is richer than we commonly imagine. The hand does not only grasp and catch or push or pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes – and not just things: the hand extends itself and receives its own welcome in the hand of others. The hand holds. The hand carries. The hand designs and signs, presumably because man is a sign.¹⁵

The hand is used to point, to sign, to sign-ify. What is drawn by Heidegger in this pointing hand is a critical thread between what holds (what is) and what

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withdraws and draws us into the 'draft' of what is not yet known (what is not yet).¹⁶

This Heideggerian thinking is a haunting description of design. Following this idea of thinking as at the same time compulsion to the known and impulsion to the unknown we need to think of design as being developed through a critical process that is composed of critical reflection but in tandem with critical speculation.

Critical Re-engagement (reception): Illumination (discursivity)

Design (any creative practice) may work back into the landscape critically and creatively (poetically) to illuminate and refigure its material objects and spaces. This 'illumination' through a critico-discursive return is not the chiaroscuro lighting of Enlightenment epistemic practice, where the epistemic landscape was lit in a hard directional light (to shed light on), producing:

Clear and distinct knowledge, scientific unity, [and] the triumph of reason...by assuming 'a transparent space in which a single law reigned, that of light or the sun's power: nothing new under the sun.'¹⁷

In this en-lightened landscape descended from Enlightenment thinking, the landscape is set out through a 'tyranny of the given'; the topography is consistent, and nothing moves or alters, all is held still for an epistemological grasp.

But if we are engaged in onto-generative practice we need to appreciate the movement and changes in the landscape and engage with shifting ground and other features, and also shifting light. The landscape is 'in becoming'. Quoting Serres again, this is:

A fairly soft and filtered light that allows us better to see things in relief, through the effect of contrast produced by rays and shadows that melt together, that are mixed, nuanced ...This is the way we see ordinarily, really, daily – with our bodily eyes in concrete surroundings.¹⁸

The way practice returns as critico-discursive is again to enter the landscape and contribute lumens to the soft, filtered light in order to illuminate in movement a world in movement. The critical discourse '...unfolds by way of mediation, transformation and circulation'. The discourse itself is in movement.

The way the critico-discursive part of practice enlightens is through 'scintillation' – a term Serres uses – which illuminates the 'fragile synthesis' of the 'very tissue in which objects, things themselves are immersed – the all encompassing and diabolically complex network of inter-information'.¹⁹

Academics, design practitioners and theorists, all, need to appreciate this programme in design; a programme where through practice design evolves its critico-discursive dimension. And, most importantly, they also need to explore and evolve contexts for its – critical practices' – reception, academic and otherwise. The need for this space for the critico-discursive potential of design practice is not yet appreciated and needs to be acknowledged in the expectations and determination of academe and indeed in the design community in general.

In Conclusion: Resisting Procrustes

In a similar way to Procrustes,²⁰ design continuously offers up the corpus of its activity and its objects to the particular geometrical bed of academia's (current) validating framework (of and for academic research). The 'one size fits all' bed of Procrustes is echoed in the criteria for research formulated by academia; manifest in the standards of those institutions to which it gives account and who control the account of its activities (in England, HEFCE, RAE, AHRC and others). I acknowledge that academics, including those engaged in creative practice, establish and are involved in these institutions and are therefore responsible not only to, but also, for them, so theoretically are able to form and change them. But, they do not and, ironically, to some extent, feel they cannot. The academic design community is deferential; bound in a calculus of habits so deeply encysted in the way they define and do things so as to seem natural. These encysted habits, regularities (Foucault), mask the ideologies that shape them ('myths' in Roland Barthes' semiotics). These invisible ideologies (myths) - set the determining shape and size of the procrustean bed; marking out the boundaries that include or exclude the corpus or bits of it that are offered up to it.

I contend that in an academic milieu the problem of the acceptance of creative actions (practice) and outcomes is figured the wrong way round. Those working in academia in areas of creative practice regularly ask how they may make what they do fit a cruel procrustean bed. Academia has failed to place under review the way it validates creative practices as research, or indeed as academic activity at all. Rather, than review validity criteria, academia forces academics in creative disciplines to try to configure what they do to fit rather limiting frames that validate what is considered and accepted as academic. These academics can, and currently do, work around and with practice stretching it and cutting it in order that it may fit the procrustean bed; but in so doing they risk losing (have lost) the life-blood of the practice and its objects. In particular they are forced to bracket and remainder any thinking that is fuelled by doubt and uncertainty; experimental and speculative thinking, the very essences of creative practice, are set to one side in this offering up to validation.

There is clearly a need for 'new imaginaries of validity'²¹ that not only reconstruct 'validity' or 'truth' as many sided, multiply perspectival, as shifting and complex',²² accommodating 'other' epistemologies ('other' cultures of knowledge) but ones that are also expansive enough to celebrate the experimental and the uncertain; valuing and validating that which is not necessarily epistemological.

These 'new imaginaries of validity' need to be evolved with regard for the 'logic of sense'²³ of creative practice/thinking; a logic that stands in opposition to the notion of 'sentential truths' - of certainties - which currently tightly hold the activities of academia. Instead of validity criteria that need and warrant 'certainties' and 'truths' academia needs to evolve criteria where the provisional, hypothetical and speculative are considered and valued aesthetically; validating that which is not yet graspable (not yet theorized) or ultimately ungraspable (not theorisable).

I believe that Bachelard's idea of validating work according to its resonance, reverberation and repercussion²⁴ may mark a starting point for evolving these new validity criteria.

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Resonance: causing reinforcement or prolongation of sound... critical reflection (intrinsic validity) (deconstruction).

Reverberation: to have a respondent effect on – return or re-echoing in the world... critical reception (extrinsic validity) (semiosis - reception).

Repercussion: to impinge on an advancing body ...critical effect (systemic validity) (concomitance). It may also be worth considering other praxis sensitive ideas of validity including catalytic and constructive validity. Lather's transgressive validity²⁵ criteria - voluptuous, ironic, rhizomatic and paralogic - may also provide criteria that are sensitive to the 'logic of sense' of creative practice and its objects.

Lather's transgressive validity: ironic, paralogic, rhizomatic and voluptuous create loci through which one may:

- value multiple representations
- encourage critical reflection (deconstruction)
- abolish the need for an appeal to an Authority outside the work
- encourage resistance to linearity, closure and resolution
- license complexity
- resist the arrogation of the 'Other' to the 'Same'
- value combinatory thinking, (multiple and fecund)

In summation, I believe it behoves academia to evolve validity criteria adequate to creative practice (and not adequate practice to validity criteria, as one does currently); it is imperative that the academic community (particularly that of design) re-consider its measures of academic worth so as to make space for the fullness of its practices. It is important for academia and for the creative practices to evolve a space (actual and metaphorical) where critical practice may have course and be held in regard by academia. This is not before time.

Notes

1 Scheurich J.J. *Research in the Postmodern*, London: The Falmer Press, 1997, p.85.

2 Scheurich J.J. *ibid.*, p.85.

3 Minh-Ha Trinh T. 'Cotton and Iron' in Ferguson R., M. Gever, T. Minh-Ha and C. West (eds.) *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art / M.I.T. Press, 1990, p.327-336.

4 Dilnot C. *The Science of Uncertainty: the Potential Contribution of Design to Knowledge*, Doctoral Education Conference, Ohio 1998: unpaginated.

5 Dilnot C. *ibid.*

6 Dilnot C. *ibid.*

7 From Rosenberg, T. 'The Reservoir: Towards a Poetic Model of Research in Design' in *Working Papers in Art and Design* 1, 2000. Available from: <http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes/research/papers/wpades/vol1/rosenberg2.html> (08/06/07).

8 Rajchman J. *The Deleuze Connections*, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2000.

9 Rajchman J. *ibid.*

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10 Kearney R. *The Wake of Imagination*, London: Routledge, 2001, p.368. *Reflections on Creativity: Exploring the Role of Theory in Creative Practices* Duncan of Jordanstone College, 2007, ISBN 1 899 837 56 6 11

11 Kearney R. *ibid.*, p.366. *Reflections on Creativity: Exploring the Role of Theory in Creative Practices* Duncan of Jordanstone College, 2007, ISBN 1 899 837 56 6 12

12 Latour, B. in Bingham N. and N. Thrift, 'Some New Instructions for Travellers: The Geography of Bruno Latour and Michel Serres' in Crang M. & N. Thrift (eds.) *Thinking Space* London: Routledge, 2000, p.291.

13 Heidegger M. 'What Calls for Thinking' in Krell, D.F. (ed.) *Basic Writings*, London: Routledge, 1993, p.369-391.

14 Heidegger M. *ibid.*, p.369-391.

15 Heidegger M. *ibid.*, p.369-391.

16 I have described this in 'The Reservoir' (see note 7) as two forces – centripetal and centrifugal. I quote from the paper: 'The centripetal force pulls inwards trying to make coherent and urges to make compossible with a body of knowledge (ground); drawing connections to established research practice and established knowledge. It works in constant reference to what adheres or to what is ordained within boundaries of an established doxy. The program of the centripetal is to make fast, secure and stabilize. Its tendency is to ground or establish a grounding for design'; and, 'The centrifugal force pulls away from the ground, its movement is counter to the process of grounding. It pulls into open water. Centrifugally driven practice/research explores possibilities beyond, and creates deviations from programs to normalize. Its aims are to expand and develop opportunities. It relies on the substantiations of the centripetal, but it moves in the opposite direction and in this movement it rattles the movement to substantiate. The impulse is not towards certainty but to escape from it. It pulls out in different directions.'

17 Bingham N. and N. Thrift *op. cit.*, p.292.

18 Bingham N. and N. Thrift *ibid.*, p.292.

19 Bingham N. and N. Thrift *ibid.*, p.292. 20 Procrustes (meaning "he who stretches"), was arguably the most interesting of Theseus' challenges on the rites of passage to hero. Procrustes owned a house by the side of the road where he offered hospitality - a pleasant meal and a night's rest in his very special bed - to passing strangers. Procrustes held that the bed had the unique property that its length exactly matched whomsoever lay down upon it. What Procrustes always failed to mention to his guests was the way in which this "one-size-fits-all" was achieved. As soon as the guest lay down Procrustes went to work upon him, stretching him on the rack if he was too short for the bed and chopping him up to fit if too long.

21 Scheurich J.J. *op. cit.* p.85.

22 Scheurich J.J. *ibid.*, p.85.

23 Deleuze in Rajchman, J. *op. cit.*, p.50-53.

24 Lechte J. *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers*, London: Routledge 1994, p.6.

25 Lather P. *op. cit.* p.36-61.