



The Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is a one-year course in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for undergraduate degree holders that allows them to train to be a teacher. This programme can also include credits towards a master's degree.

(TDA 2011)

The PGCE Art and Design Secondary (aged 11–18) course at Goldsmiths University of London is underpinned and framed by the theories and practices of critical pedagogy (Freire 1970; hooks 1994; Shor 1992). This critical pedagogy is one of questioning and of praxis – practice underpinned by theory, theory underpinned by practice (Freire 1970) – and as teaching and learning is essentially an act of community the course also focuses on collaborative and socially engaged practices.

PGCE Art and Design students<sup>1</sup> are encouraged to challenge and question existing orthodoxies and, as Page et al. (2006) state, 'conceive learner and teacher identities in ways that transcend older, dormant, or traditional understandings that are embedded within current school art and design education practices' (154). This questioning is as important as the individual and collective answers, because as critical pedagogues Freire (1970), hooks (1994) and Shor (1992) maintain, questions are the foundation of all learning.

Therefore, it is only through these critical practices that we, as artist researcher teachers,<sup>2</sup> can strengthen our ways of knowing and create emancipatory learning environments where we can actively participate in the transformation of our world. This questioning culture also included the questioning of the purpose and relevance of writing for these artist researcher teacher practices. As such, this article is presented in the form of a dialogue.

This discussion, given here, was conducted on 24 June 2011 with Alfonso Areses Huertas (AA), Ben Frimet (BF), John Johnston (JJ), Naoise McGeer (NM) and Tara Page (TP).

JJ: Tara, takeover will you?

BF: Yeah, please do.

JJ: Oh please tell me you're not recording.

TP: No, I'm not recording.

JJ: What were you going to talk about?

NM: Are you recording?

TP: Yeah. But we're okay.

1. It is important to note that the students in the PGCE Art and Design course come from a wide variety of art and design backgrounds, including architecture, graphic design, fine art, illustration and crafts-based practices.

2. The concept of Artist researcher teacher acknowledges the overlapping and blurred identities and practices of the art and design practitioner, educator and researcher (Adams 2002, 2007; Hyde 2004a, 2004b, 2007; Thornton 2005; Galloway et al. 2006, Irwin and Springgay 2008; Irwin et al. 2009; Page et al. 2011; Page 2012); a socially engaged research process that is attentive to the in-between of art, research and pedagogy,

'where meanings reside in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space and time.' And where 'theory is understood as a critical exchange that is reflective, responsive and relational ... theory-as-practice-as-process-as complication' that 'is

- an embodied, living space of inquiry'. (Irwin and Springgay 2008: 106)
3. The event/exhibition was the 2010–2011 PGCE Art and Design students' responses to an enquiry: What is art and design pedagogy? This explored and questioned the students' developing pedagogies, practices and philosophies as artist researcher teachers. The exhibition/event was a combination of performance work, film-making, installation and text-based media.

Ok, remember the woman I told you about who was at the exhibition,<sup>3</sup> Julia Lockheart, and she said she was impressed with the exhibition and that she felt that we, us with you, are really pushing boundaries and it was very different to what she thought was happening in art and design education? Well, she is the editor of the *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* and she e-mailed John and me and asked us, invited us, to write an article on writing and creative practice and pedagogy. We had a bit of a discussion about it and we thought well this is an opportunity to disrupt the entire idea of what writing is and does in art and design pedagogy and the relevance of writing to us as artist researcher teachers.

But we also thought we could disrupt what is usually submitted to and in an academic journal as well. So, we wanted to talk to you about this idea and how we could do it together. Because the usual bog standard stuff is, as researchers we would have research questions, we would interview you asking these questions, then go away and transcribe the interviews, look for themes, underpin with theory and write the paper. But we want to upset that, and do it *with* you rather than about you; we would do it together.

BF: Yeah. Can you say more? Like how would that process work?

JJ: I write one word and you write the next.

BF: Like consequences, yeah.

TP: Well we don't know. We thought we could talk about it. Initially I thought we could have a discussion about a couple of questions and issues that we were talking about yesterday and then go from there.

JJ: Yeah.

TP: ... and then from that we weren't too sure, but maybe from this discussion we could, each of us, go away and maybe write about what we think and then bring that back and have another discussion about it.

BF: Sounds good.

TP: So maybe the paper, rather than an introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis, could be entirely different ... like 1000 words from each of us.

NM: I like.



SCHEME OF LEARNING				
Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON				
UNIT TITLE:	YEAR:	GROUP:	LENGTH:	TEACHER:
RATIONALE OF UNIT		DESCRIPTION OF UNIT		
CROSS CURRICULAR	LANGUAGE for LEARNING	LEARNING	PROGRAMME OF STUDY	
			1. Key Concepts 1.1. Creativity a b c 1.2. Communication a b 1.3. Cultural Understanding a b 1.4. Critical Thinking 2. Key Processes 2.1. Research and analysis a b c d e 2.2. Interpretation and analysis a b c d e 2.3. Planning and content a b c d e 2.4. Critical Interpretation a b c d e f g	
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lesson 3	Lesson 4
Key concepts				
Key processes				
Range and content				
Assessment opportunities				
ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION and FEEDBACK				
OUTCOMES				
UNITARY				
Page:				
Number:				
Teaching and Learning styles				
DIFFERENTIATION				
UNIT LEARNING				
RESOURCE STRATEGIES				

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Key concepts				
Key processes				
Range and content				

Figure 1: Exhibition work of Alfonso Areses Huertas

TP: So rather than it being us doing research about you we're doing it together, the entire Freire A *with* B again.

BF: Yeah.

JJ: Freire. He has a lot to answer for.

BF: Well it'll be interesting to sort of take an angle on what we wrote for part B of our assignment. When we kind of interpreted the writing as a piece of artwork in itself. It might be interesting to write about that process as well, or to take that as a model for the way we work with this article perhaps.

JJ: I think there's a route into it; for example we were talking a wee bit about this yesterday. At that conference and the conversations that took place there, I was very interested in what Declan McDonagle was talking about in relation to these sorts of definitions of our practice. He talked about four dimensions of our practice and the first dimension was one which he sort of related to Francis Bacon's practice a little bit, where the artist doesn't really care about showing the work, they just want to lock themselves up in the studio and make the work for their own self-purpose. Then he went on to talk about the artist as the production maker, the maker of cultural artefacts; then it's for a gallery to show those to get their work out into the world. The gallery's the interface between the artist and the work. And the third one is the managing of socially engaged practice, where the artist is very much involved in the world and it is the world which informs the art practice. So it's a continuous sort of dialogue between the artist and those people, communities that they work with. And the fourth one was a combination of all three, and others, and more. And they talked about the political, in particular the politicians from Northern Ireland releasing a creative space where everybody would imagine a future which was shared, and they called that the cultural space. It wasn't a political space in the sense of ... with politics he says it couldn't have been achieved, but once they recognized that there was a cultural dimension that had to be addressed then all of a sudden all sorts of possibilities opened up for them to actually come to an agreement.

So, in the first dimension if words are important they're important to that individual artist, no one else. If writing's important it's important to them and no one else. And in the second dimension the writing is important, and we know all too well in contemporary practice it's almost the way of selling the work, because image is not enough, you've got to write the right bloody book to be able to justify the image. This

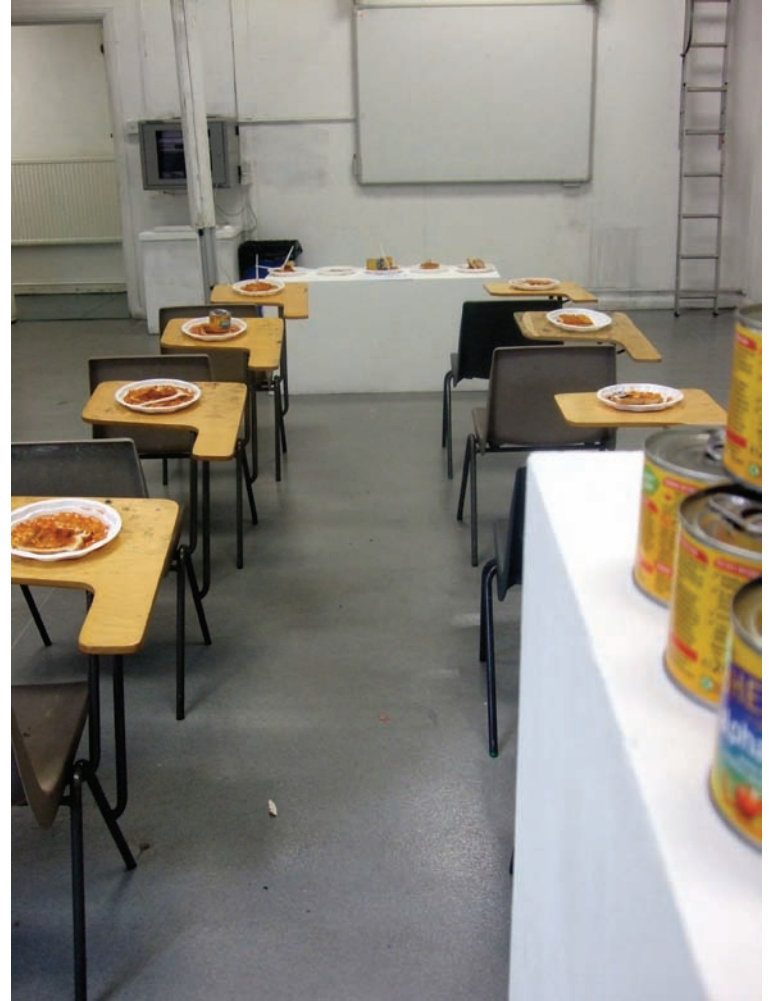


Figure 2: Exhibition work of Ben Frimet.

4. Name changed for confidentiality.

is because in that gallery space that's very important; it's about the power relationship between words and image. In the third dimension of socially engaged practice, words become more prevalent because there's so much of them ... and they're not necessarily written. And that's the thing – it is about a dialogical process between artists, community, community, artist, learner, teacher, teacher learner, whatever the case may be.

BF: Yeah.

JJ: So in terms of the question ... what is the purpose but also the relevance of writing to art and design pedagogy and being an artist researcher teacher?

BF: Yeah.

JJ: So has it a relevance? That's the thing.

TP: I have always felt in some way when writing for academic purposes I was channelling somebody else: Where was I in all of it, where was my voice? Within the structures of academic writing, or even if you've worked on an exhibition or worked in a classroom, where are you within that, and why the hell are we writing as well anyway? Is there a place and what is that place?

NM: Well I suppose that's the point. It's like all of the writing that we do has to adhere very closely to a particular set of academic guidelines. So, for example, for me the process of writing is the learning, not the writing, because I write in a way that means I spend five hours writing right at the end. So like I wrote my assignment just before I had to hand it in, but I'd done all of the learning. So the writing is a product to be assessed, but I had all of this learning and that is what is important; the actual writing product is actually almost meaningless and it's just so that I can ...

JJ: For someone else.

NM: Precisely. So if you think about ... I was thinking about this in terms of someone like Dan.<sup>4</sup> I get on very well with Dan and I think we share lots of ideologies and I think that there is no way that he's done less learning than I have. But maybe he's less able to adhere to the set of guidelines for writing in universities. It's not that it's writing that he can't do, it's writing in the form that means that he's assessable against assessment criteria. And actually this way of assessing, in so many ways, goes against our pedagogic and inclusive ideas about differentiation and different learning styles, and different forms of outcomes.



- JJ: I think what you are saying is very important. Because it is difficult, I mean there's us ... and we've talked about this as well. We have argued the case that in your assignments, where is the assessment of the visual? For a very long time it was not even considered and you are all mostly general practitioners. And now that that's changed and because of that change, something different has happened and it's not by accident. Something different has happened in the exhibition and something different has happened in the assessment of it. The grades have gone through the roof. And I think that what you are talking about could be really interrogated.
- NM: But then I think it's really dangerous as well at the same time to pose it against the visual because I would say as a performance artist a lot of the work that I've done has been from my writing and then a delivery of writing. So, I will perform like a lecture as it were. But that's my practice and that's a performance but they feed together.
- TP: So then the writing is deeply embedded within your practice.
- NM: Yeah, definitely.
- JJ: In what way ... I mean you're working through ideas, you're working through ... and then the writing is helping you shape those ideas. Or is it actual content?
- NM: No, because I would never show writing but I would always have gone through ...
- TP: But you perform writing.
- NM: I would perform writing, yeah.
- JJ: So it's shaping your scaffolding that ...
- NM: Yeah. Well I suppose I'm a bit of an academic artist and I research practice, research ideas and then formulate them and do that process as if you were going to write a paper, and then I use that as a kind of basis for a performance as well. So I think this idea, it's like the visual and writing crossover, there is a very strong relationship.
- TP: But sometimes there can also be a tension.
- JJ: Yeah.
- AA: I think when you write, and it's very much along recording ideas, you've got the curiosity of doing researching. But it is all about relationships and it is like a human kind of interaction where you really need to know about ideas and we need to go



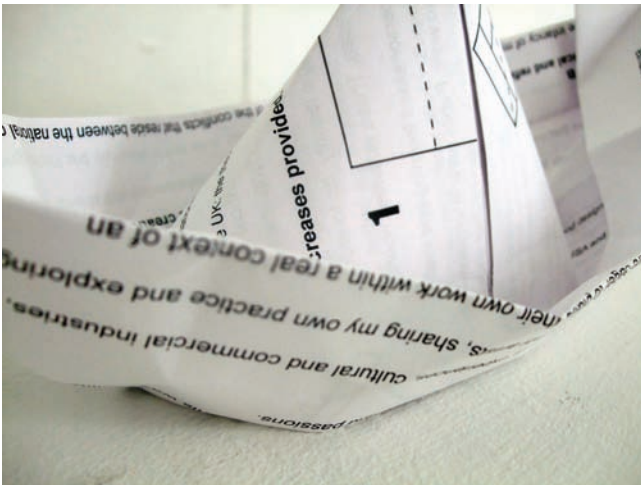


Figure 3: Exhibition work of Claire Cooper.

forward and learn like philosophy and things like that, and then you have a synthesis with producing something visual. So it's kind of really about taking it apart and then having the confidence to bring it all together and we do that; we are artists and we are writers just as we are researchers and teachers.

TP: So like in human relationships there are conflicts but there are also synergies.

AA: Yeah. They can really live together. In my art they can't be separated; they're quite in the same line but sometimes they go their separate ways and they ... I get really upset with my writing; many times I have said this is shit, or bullshit, yeah that's it. Sometimes you create a lot of bullshit; that's why sometimes you go away from what you wanted to do, which is enjoyable at the same time.

NM: But that's almost like saying reading and engaging with other people's writing maybe is the vehicle or your foundation of learning.

AA: Yeah, that's it.

NM: But then that's what I'm talking about with writing being something that is almost redundant unless it's being used to convey ideas to somebody else. But then having to put it in, so going back to the academic thing, putting in 11-point font, Arial, double space, Harvard referencing, there is no way that I've written anything that I see as being important at this stage to me.

TP: But don't you think it is important because you're situating yourself within a context, working out where you fit?

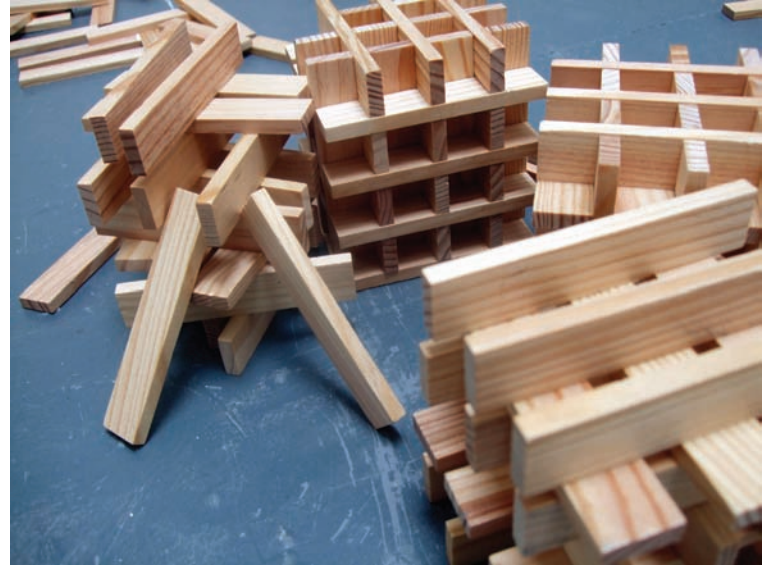
NM: I've not learnt anything from writing in this way. Because it's frustrating to not be able to convey what I actually wanted to because of the strict guidelines. I can't say actually what I think because you have to reference in this way; you have to back up your idea in that way.

TP: But you do convey what you are thinking. And in your writing I can see how you are positioning yourself and where you're fitting yourself within all of that.

AA: But I think *your* writing is different, like our own personal writing; it is your kind of writing and you love that writing because it's yours ... calm writing. Then when you have to articulate that into anything formatted that is already established it begins the conflict.

BF: Takes the kind of creative edge off.

- AA: And when you have to do it that way ... it's like you start hating your writing and loving your art practice.
- TP: But that writing can also push you into another learning space as well, because you're critically reflecting as well because you start to connect the dots through that process. When I actually see the words then the light bulbs start going off and I can see and start to feel the connections and where the next dot might be that pushes me into the next space. I can't really separate it; it is part of my processes and practices as an artist researcher teacher and also it is how I learn.
- AA: Yeah. I think writing is about establishing relationships – positive relationships with people in order to stimulate them to create their own practice. As a teacher it can be a process where you learn about the personalities in your class. So, you get them to write in order to know them and learn who they are.
- TP: But I find there's vulnerability in putting all you're talking about out there to the world as you are putting yourself out there, who you are.
- AA: Yeah. I think it's just because of that structure of ... and it's scary when you've got that kind of Harvard referencing and everything has to be academic. Even the academic words are scary; you just go oh my God.
- NM: Well they also told you ... I mean when that guy came in he told you oh, you're Spanish so you're going to want to write this way because that's how Spanish people write. But you can't. And you can't write in Spanish and you're dyslexic and you can't write it in the way that you would write it. So essentially academic writing discriminates against whole swathes of people.
- BF: Yeah. Even getting reading lists kind of suggests a direction to go, but that probably builds some of the fear that some people have suggested about this stuff and it has to reference that otherwise ... and these people know it inside out. But it's like there's this whole pressure of having to know everything ...
- NM: We have a little internal competition, to keep Freire out of our essays. So talking about Freireian ideas but never referencing him or putting his name in.
- JJ: I forgive you. Nothing wrong with not mentioning Freire. But funny about that ... I mean whenever I start to read the stuff the words really help you punch through or help you see the thing as a whole. I think everybody's different on that, but I think



*Figure 4: Exhibition work of Helene Rallo.*

I know whenever I'm putting things together I need images. Images speak to me and give me words, and they're a starting point for me. I need to see the thing before I can start to actually construct any sort of rhythm piece, or even a presentation.

BF: So an essay could just be, what, like John Berger's way of seeing kind of is, just images.

JJ: But I always see words ... I mean in my own practice ... But they are very specifically chosen words, and they'll be loaded. They're not neutral, there's no such thing ... but they're not *just* words. I see them as visual, but I see them also as something which triggers another stage of thought whenever it's compared to or juxtaposed against them; sometimes there's a tension between the word and the image and sometimes there's an understanding: it's to bring the image to another place or it's to bring the words to another place.

BF: It's kind of important to have a balance as a reflective artist teacher. Some things come to the fore and you say them, but other things it takes time for them to really sink in, and writing things down helps to build on your practices but just kind of in different levels and different stages. But also if you're going to write about something you're never sure if it's quite honest. Even if you talk about something. Because it's who's there, who's reading that, who's listening to me, what do I need or have to say?

TP: Who's judging me?

BF: Yeah. It's difficult.

NM: It's much less ambiguous.

JJ: So, Naoise, whenever you said that you have these ideas and you've got this sort of understanding and this new knowledge or combination of new and old knowledge, and then you just do the writing just to deliver product, do you write then as yourself or do you write in character?

NM: It's a very different ... it's like a harrowing process. I do not like writing. Having failed GCSE, re-sat it, failed A-level, resat it, having people just be like what is wrong with you? I don't know how to write. And then just having one person say this is how you do it. I had to learn, and I've got an internal structure that's like this is how you write something. It's got nothing to do with the words, it's none of that,

that stuff's fixed, but it's like this is how you write an essay. I know how to write an academic essay now which is why ... I know that's got nothing to do with me. It's how I can fit my words into that structure, which is why you probably say you can see me in my writing. But the writing bit is a battle, and so is the process to get there. People are always like I can't believe you've left the writing until the last moment. But I do not move from my chair. So I've done all of it; I've handwritten a plan that has got colour Post-its in the reading that I've read to the notes that reference that back, and then the writing is mindless. It's like ...

TP: Joining the dots.

NM: Yeah, it's joining the dots.

BF: Amazing. I mean if you go into any exhibition and the artist has produced some amazing work, what you view of the artwork may well be completely different from what the artist intended, which is fine because it creates a dialogue as well, but do you think the art needs to have some kind of validating kind of writing just to say have you intended to do that or ...?

NM: But I don't think that you can isolate art like it's one thing, like it's one kind of practice. There's a lot of work that happens and a massive part of it is writing and it's kind of academic and in some ways criticized as being elite because it's kind of about that referencing or art referencing academia. Writing plays a massive part and that is the intention. But art is different and there are many different forms of art, and some obviously purely kind of visual artists would say that no, you don't need writing, you don't need to establish it in the context, it kind of does it for itself. So that's where intention becomes more important.

BF: Yeah. I think it's important to open up a dialogue. It doesn't have to be written though. People can take your intentions and twist them into their intentions, so I think you need to lay down what you're trying to say in some shape or form otherwise your work could be totally jeopardized.

AA: I would say that ... yeah, for me writing is important but then I wouldn't say that for me it's always essential to do research; it is sometimes just the form to demonstrate that research. It's the same with the schemes of learning we write for our teaching; maybe you can write them in a specific structure, but maybe you can do it in a different way. But when you have the structure and the boxes already there and



established for you it is like there's nowhere to move. It's just stopping yourself and you're constraining something that you're not enjoying. Our philosophy as artist-educators is pretty much about giving and enabling people to be themselves. So, if we've got that tied to a template or structure it has to be in that form, and that can mean you can be stopping people from creating and maybe even stopping completely the creative process, which is essential.

TP: Because it becomes fragmented and through that fragmentation, separated. It becomes boxes to fill with stuff, rather than an overlapping, interwoven whole.

BF: And you don't have to be well read to have amazing ideas. Your ideas may well fit into some kind of huge historical philosophical kind of background but you may not know that; you may not need to know that to have your extremely complex ideas. But are you expected to know, to reference all these different points? You can know them implicitly I think.

AA: I don't think you have to reference all you know.

NM: You reference all the time as a practitioner. Everything you do is some kind of reference to something else that you've seen, even if you're referring to an experience you've had or something you want to communicate or something you've read or a combination. That's a form of referencing.

AA: But I guess it's not a reference any more; it's a kind of recording. So you're kind of looking back – that kind of documentation of your process. And I think it's a really personal thing. That's why I'm saying you don't need a formal structured thing to prove yourself.

JJ: It's when that becomes part of the world of ... it's whenever that's speaking out of that context it becomes part of the world. And in that sense you become vulnerable.

TP: Yeah. Because it is being judged, and as a result you feel you are being judged or measured.

NM: But I have to say of all of the writing that we've done on the PGCE, I have enjoyed writing my first-year teaching statement, and I wrote it in about half an hour at night because I didn't have to worry at all. It was about what I had to say I suppose, so I felt like I could communicate without that kind of fear, and I enjoyed it as a process of writing.



- JJ: I'm sort of gathering there's a question to be asked, a further question to be asked, and that is: Who are we writing for? And I think that's a really important one because if we're writing for interviews or if we're trying to get an interview or what-have-you we're being constructed by that criteria. If we're writing for academia we're being constructed by that and we're carrying away all that. Do we become a character when we're writing this interview stuff or these applications, or is there a little bit of you and we need to be true to that.
- NM: You know Adorno, that is all of his writing, when he was writing he purposely made it so that the kind of proletariat couldn't read it because he didn't want the ideas being kind of disseminated, and in lots of ways that's the whole idea of academic writing is that it's a secret, it's for a certain type of person ...
- TP: It's exclusive.
- JJ: So maybe that is something that we need to consider this summer because your writing in your sketchbook is for you, but when you write for others ...
- TP: The thing is ... do you have a sketchbook as well?
- BF: No. Never kept one.
- NM: No. Well, it depends how you see ... I've had notebooks, but I don't draw, I write notes.
- TP: I don't either. I mainly write in my notebooks because I can trigger my thinking. Like I said before, reflect on the words and make those links and connections; it is all bound together like a knot.
- AA: It's a kind of diary isn't it that you've got with you? Where you write ideas.
- NM: I find that much more confining though. I hated sketchbooks at school because there's that whole idea they have to look a certain way. I'd end up unbinding them and you'd throw half of it away because it's rubbish and you'd be like this looks good. So it was never a process, like they're supposed to be.
- JJ: But there's a certain honesty about them just being as they are. Words and things, which trigger you; hear something and just write it in. Maybe it's a picture or something.

- TP: But for me it's like in those notebooks, sketchbooks, whatever you call them, like you said, it is for me. I don't have to show it to anybody because it is not for anybody else.
- BF: Yeah, but why are you making those notes? Are you only making those notes because you want to remember to look into something of particular worth that will be for someone else? What are those notes about?
- TP: It makes you feel something or think something or takes you to that place or revisit that place so you get that sort of ... because I write ... and I only realized this again recently – that I write about what I'm seeing, what I'm feeling, what I'm hearing, what I'm smelling, that entire sort of body sensory experience is really, really important. Like Heaney's poetry where through language he communicates how places and landscapes make us human but we also make these landscapes human – that may affect the places where we live, but these places also affect us in deep and inescapable ways.
- JJ: And that's a very poetic use of language, and when you say that then you've got a book that takes you to those places it is because it coalesces language and memory. I wonder how other people read it because I'm Irish and the land is so much a part of your heritage and your romantic idea of what it means to be Irish. Heaney touches on those things. And he touches on them in an extremely analytical way. You can smell the earth. You can hear the shovel going into the turf and you know that woman down the road. It's that sort of beautiful use of language. Soulful pictures and experiences.
- NM: Yeah. Literature is a massive part of my practice. I come from a family of writers. But the thing is I like tricks, I like language tricks and things, but for me that's a completely separate ...
- BF: It's an art form but not necessarily an academic form.
- NM: But then you say that but the creative writing implores so many ... but that's what you say, like Seamus Heaney, how does he use language to ... or anyone, Keats, how does he trick you by playing on literary conventions, like employing half-rhymes or messing up a stanza or whatever, to using pathetic fallacy and all of that stuff, that's used to kind of employ and get emotion and things like that.
- TP: Manipulate.

- NM: Manipulate, exactly. But that's a lead as well; you're playing with conventions.
- JJ: Yeah, but again, it is about who it's talking to. Because it paints pictures for me and it brings those smells that you talk about very much to life, so it's multi-sensory. But I don't know whether it would do that if I didn't know that place.
- TP: I like how he puts words together.
- BF: Yeah, I wonder whether part of your understanding comes from your knowledge of words as well. I don't know how accessible all of these things would be to people that, say, have never picked up a book, during their childhood. Where do you get these things from? I mean is it the syntax of words that ties these ideas together or is it just specific words that hinge on that understanding. Do you have to be well versed?
- NM: Yeah, you're right actually, you do almost have to learn to access things. You have to learn what is being used.
- TP: How do you learn it?
- BF: Don't know if I have.
- NM: It's a feeling. There are very specific things that are being used. Reading a lot, that helps you access things. Having people who kind of know and being taught and learning.
- TP: So within this academic context, you got the reading list – do you read anything on it or do you just find your way?
- AA: Yeah, I did read them, but then I think I was bored of reading them, all this information in a small amount of time. Because when you get immersed in that kind of reading and your practices you can get into a bubble that is not really real. When someone is describing something you pull yourself into that situation, even if it's not in a poetic kind of way. You get into that situation even more.
- NM: But actually in terms of thinking about writing it is an important part of what we do on the PGCE, but reading academic writing is not easy. But kind of knowing that you have to do something, you have to produce something, makes you do focused reading, and from doing the assignments I have learnt so much from having to read those things. But I wouldn't have read them unless we'd been given that reading list.



Figure 5: Exhibition work of Naoise McGeer.

JJ: Academic writing isn't easy; you're looking at this and saying that ... I've said about Freire but also other people who write about really important things in terms of how the world is shaped, and sometimes you can't access it, and you're wondering well what's the point in writing this? Who are you writing it for? Is there some sort of reason for that? I mean is it exercising our brain in some way to make it open to other things, or is it just an elitist use of language?

NM: I think it is. It's purely elitist.

BF: Yeah.

JJ: I read a great article a few months ago that was difficult to access. The writer writes about a feminist perspective on postcolonialism, and she did a big lecture in New York at a conference near Harlem. There was a group of women from Harlem, community groups of Harlem, in the audience and they were introduced to her and she was really interested in their stories and what they were doing so she spent two days with them in the place and apparently, they really connected and they developed this amazing relationship. So, this writer really connected with these people and between then they really developed an understanding of each other. So, if this writer is really like this why the hell does she dress up her writing in this manner? And, again, it goes back to who are we writing for? Who is she writing for?

BF: I wonder if there's a kind of process of fear working there, whereby if you're meant to explain your understanding of a text, if you kind of show that you're vulnerable and you're actually I don't know what you're talking about, would that ever happen? Because if you're amongst the intelligentsia do you admit to being vulnerable and not knowing or do you just say yeah, totally, I thought exactly the same, and here's some other people who have long words that you won't understand, so touché, and no one loses do they? We save face.

NM: It is a craft. It's almost a craft though isn't it? It's not easy to write like that, so there is a learned way of kind of communicating what it is that you're saying as well, and once you've bitten through the process of that academy and you've carried on, that's how you've learnt to do it, that's how you show that you're a big player if you can get it all out like that.

BF: I have to really get the books out and really focus. It's a real laborious task. Horrible. Really, I hate it, just having to cram in knowledge and I've got books everywhere

and it's all like I can't believe I've started this process, I can't really go back, I have to read more and I have to remember all this stuff and compartmentalize it, and it's a complete mess for me, but it takes ages. I can't do it last minute. I have to go back and refine it a million times, edit, strip it down, put some more in. It doesn't come easily.

JJ: But Alfonso, when you write in your sketchbook, which is when we started the conversation that was your initial point of reference, writing in your sketchbook, your writing, to clarify, am I right in saying you're writing to clarify and develop ideas for another purpose?

AA: I always go on an initial quest with my research but then I always write something, then I get lost and then I have to go back, and I find my way again. I think the big problem here is the idea of social integrity. I think there are academic people, people who work in the academy, and that all academic writing is coming from that. Because when you're not an academic person and you have an opinion and a certain kind of serious conversation but because you're not academic, you're not going to be listened to the same way. It is all about categorizing people, like the way it happens in schools where you separate your kids all the time.

TP: When you say academic writing what do you mean? How would you define academic writing?

AA: I would say academic writing is something that has to be in a certain form, has to be done in a certain way, it has to be referenced, it has to be based ... it's not like there is personal freedom for you, because you always have to reference your opinion to other people, so you lose your opinion and it becomes not your opinion any more.

TP: Or you can't have an opinion unless somebody else has said it before.

AA: Yeah. It's kind of proving you as well. It's quite tough, really tough to prove your thoughts, the crazy thoughts that you have in art and design education, and so you are looking for someone to support you.

JJ: But one of the reasons for that is because if I see ... for want of a better word, weakness, but if you see vulnerability in someone in their understanding of a particular concept and a particular idea, or even particular practices, including their own, it's whenever they go into streams of just self-indulgence ...

TP: I don't think necessarily self-indulgence. Navel-gazing or just pure description.

- JJ: Narrative ... And I think that that needs ... I'm going to bring this back to the art practice, to be punctuated by critical analysis of what's gone before. If someone writing is telling the story and they haven't at any point, in that story, stopped and punctuated it with some sort of other voice. Then I think there are issues, and it isn't because of academic formats, or structures or anything like that. It's because I think the really important thing that we do is we stop ourselves and critically analyse what it is we're saying and what we're doing, and the voices of others can help us do that.
- TP: But it's interesting that instead of writing you talk about voices. Because, sometimes, there is a tension in what someone has written and then how they talk about it. I think that's maybe another issue, regardless of what it's for, who it's for, whose voice it is.
- BF: But I suppose it's collaboration because you're going to reference whatever you do, so it's always going to be a collection of voices.
- JJ: In a way it's responding to what's going on, enabling these sorts of conversations to take place. And really asking the tough questions and about being prepared for whatever comes back.
- AA: It would be interesting to put in a twist to the process of academic writing. I'm not against academic writing because I like to read those types of books. But it would be nice to say to students all you have to do is have a dialogue with maybe two or three writers linking your artists and pedagogic practices. We're talking – you're talking to me and I'm talking to you rather than I'm telling this because this is what I am meant to do and this is what that guy said.
- TP: But why can't we do that then?
- AA: Yeah, I don't know why, but I think that the tricky thing is the process of academic writing because you get obsessed with the references, the words that you have to write, and the structure that you have to keep working to and it's not creative.
- TP: Why don't we disrupt that and we write ... the five of us write a conversation, a dialogue.
- AA: It would be nice for it to be in a conversational format, like it's me, then it's you: an interaction, a relationship. Rather than having separate sections from each of us.
- JJ: I like that.
- NM: I think the point is as well, what's quite funny is that we have all along the way been referencing this, and it's fine to casually reference in conversation, and that's a really



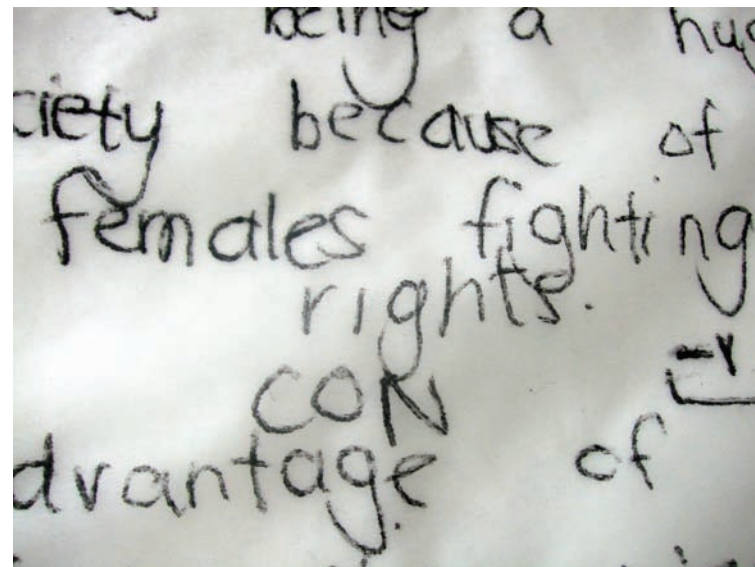
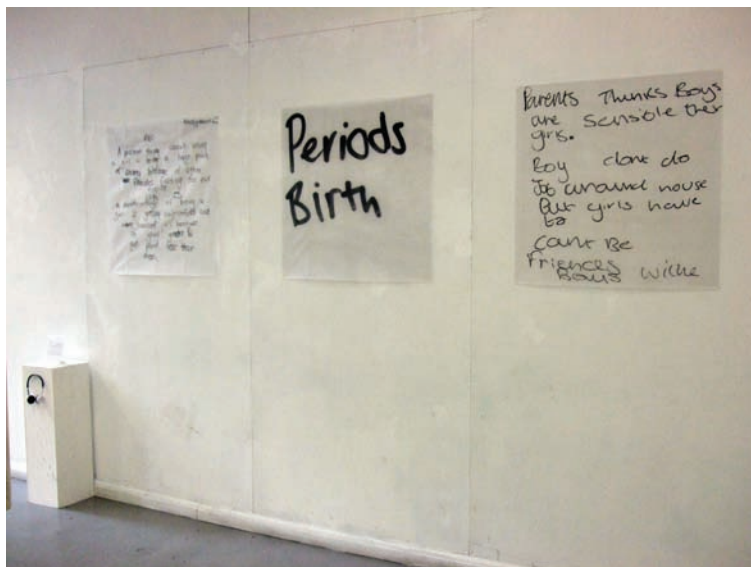


Figure 6: Exhibition work of Nina Priester.

normal way to talk about your learning and stuff, but as soon as it comes to that kind of writing. Like for me it's almost dishonest. I'd say to you the whole way through writing those assignments I was just like, this is just bollocks, there's no point in me writing; there's no point. But what would have been a much more honest thing is if I'd given you my books, the journals that I'd written, and the notes that go with that: Here you go, that's proof that I've learnt and that I understood what I learnt.

JJ: But then that brings in the question: What is it for?

NM: Well that was for you – it is a vehicle for expressing learning.

JJ: To assess your learning or to express your learning?

NM: No, well that's the thing for me and the purpose that ... well, it turned out the outcome for me was that I had done learning as a result of having to produce this piece of writing. That learning would exist without me doing the writing. But actually the purpose of academic writing in its kind of ... for academics and readers of academic writing is that it's about displaying learning and then an evolving and other people adding to that and responding to it. But there is no dialogue that progresses those ideas and educational ideals.

AA: I'm just thinking through this idea of the conversation; we could meet for lunch in a non-academic place and of course it has to be recorded. Then that can be transcribed, like a script for a movie. So, it is five people having lunch and talking and it could be something else, something more.

TP: Relationships and connections, art with pedagogy with research, writing as practice, us with each other.

NM: The best piece of writing I've read this year is when there was a Year Eight girl in my class called Alice and I had no idea how problematic language was for her, and we were like why are art and design lessons important? And she wrote down something that seriously was almost illegible, I like art lessons because there's no pressure, spelt ridiculously, for reading and writing because I'm dyslexic, but all spelt completely wrong ... and it's just like well even if at the most basic level that's what we're achieving for some kids in school that's good enough for me.

JJ: I think something has happened here as well. I'd like to continue with one word, just one word, the way I do with my art, and that word is 'purpose'. So, I'd like to take

that to lunch and the conversation. So you can do research if you want and bring it to the conversation, as you do with your practice, and maybe that's what we do. We reflect on our practices and think of that.

TP: And also reflect on this conversation.

BF: Yeah, sounds good.

NM: That's what I was saying: research is like experience as well and everything we do is ... So I don't mean sit down and read loads of academic writing.

TP: No. The research can be critically reflecting on this conversation or if you want to, writing, drawing and collecting. Whatever you feel is relevant for you and your practices.

BF: Are we doing weekday or weekend?

JJ: Weekday – Wednesday?

TP: Where do you want to go?

JJ: Somewhere where we'll hear each other, can have a nice lunch and as Alfonso said non-academic.

AA: I know a place, the Wapping Project: nice food, good wine and I'll ask for a quiet place.

TP: So in a sense through this conversation, talking about writing and our practices as artist-researcher-teachers, we're moving into a new learning space, literally.

BF: Yeah, we are. I like it, it sounds good.

NM: Good.

TP: Thank you.

JJ: Yeah, it was really good. We'll get together next week.

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### Contributor details

Ben Frimet is an artist and educator who graduated from Goldsmiths, University of London, Secondary PGCE in Art & Design in 2011. Since then he has taught Art & Design to all key stages, volunteered on workshops in primary schools with Animate Arts, written for AD magazine and continued to develop his practice as an artist and educator. He is concerned with inclusion in diversity and explores these themes by looking at the human condition and societal paradigms. His aim is to help people challenge the 'norm' and make informed deviations from it to enable them to become active participants in positive change.

E-mail: [bfrimet@gmail.com](mailto:bfrimet@gmail.com)

John Johnston is the head of the PGCE Art and Design course at Goldsmiths, University of London – he is also the co-director of the research Centre for Arts and Learning. He is an established visual artist & educator recognized at national and international level. He is interested in the 'motivated functions of art' and how through a socially engaged practice artists/teachers can re-conceptualize their art and its place in society. John has developed a relational pedagogy that promotes a critical and dialectical practice which aims to promote new understandings of the political constructs that inform and shape our world.

Contact: Goldsmiths University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, UK.

E-mail: [j.johnston@gold.ac.uk](mailto:j.johnston@gold.ac.uk)

Naoise McGeer is a teacher of Art and design, Graphics and Textiles at the Hertfordshire and Essex high school and Science College. As well as teaching Naoise is a practicing artist often working collaboratively, most recently with Alfonso Huertes Areses, exhibiting performance at Five Years Gallery in a group show, 'This is not a school'. Naoise doesn't perceive her roles of teacher and artist as separate but rather as practices, which inform each other.

E-mail: [naoisemcgeer@gmail.com](mailto:naoisemcgeer@gmail.com)

Tara Page is a lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London where she is the programme leader for the MA Artist Teachers and Contemporary Practices and contributes to the Secondary Postgraduate Certificate of Education in Art and Design. Previous to this she worked in primary, secondary and higher education in Canada and Australia and continues to be involved in socially engaged arts practice as an artist teacher researcher. Tara was the co-editor of the International Journal of Art & Design Education for five years and currently serves on The Publications Board for the NSEAD. Tara's research interests include: contemporary art and design practices and pedagogy; subjectivities and the phenomenological theories of space and place and embodied methodologies. Her recent works include Teaching Through Contemporary Art (2008, with Adams, Worwood, Atkinson, Dash & Herne); and Statement field (2009) [Digital film].

Contact: Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW, UK.

E-mail: [t.page@gold.ac.uk](mailto:t.page@gold.ac.uk)

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