

## Introducing conTEXT – student-led scholarly journal at Bristol School of Art

Lydia Wooldridge, Contextual studies tutor at Bristol School of Art (South Gloucestershire and Stroud College) Wooldridge has encouraged scholarship and scholarly practice through encouraging her students to start a journal. This Case Study watches their journey as they begin the editorial process for the first issue of context.



ConTEXT is a great idea; an active way to enable developing artists and designers to engage with the academic journal process and promote the kinds of skills they will need to thrive as creative professionals in the 21st Century. Scholarship in action, working across Boyer's dimensions to support engagement and learning.

It's also an inspired and meaningful way to bring Critical Theory closer to practice; again, supporting students to gain skills used by professional artists and designers as part of their everyday work, but moving beyond a lecture-driven model of 'contextual studies' which can easily be detached from reality or disconnected from creative practice rather than seen as an integral part of professional creative work.

Tellingly, this project is part of the curriculum for FDA students. What makes it different to standard Critical Studies delivery is that rather than having essays or visual responses to a brief locked away in a filing cabinet or online storehouse, students are given the chance to peer review, select, suggest edits and comment on each other's work. In this



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way, it is also cross-curricular; students working on 'top-up' BA courses are acting as peer mentors and technical leads. The mock-up below of a journal page was designed by final year student Lee Enever.

This type of project has potential beyond the art and design field of practice and could be used across a range of disciplines. The project has the potential to support transferable skills, enabling student to really engage with ideas of audience, take responsibility for editing and critiquing work and consider how they best sensitively review the work of their peers

In this way, the journal will go 'beyond' collaboration. It's arguably more demanding to sensitively peer review within a collaborative project than it is to work together on a creative project. Likewise, to ensure a professional end product, design standards as well as content must be adhered to. Critical decisions must be made and justified to stakeholders concerned in the enterprise.



At the meeting today, one key message was the sense that this is an iterative project - a 'live' project which will change and adapt. Initially scaffolded by Lydia Wooldridge, the journal will become entirely student-led in June. And, for those students who work with installations or

performance, it provides a further prompt to document their processes and articulate the rationale behind each project.



It also enables students to showcase work from outside of college. International exhibition reviews alongside critical audio-visual responses to exhibitions were among the work submitted at the session today. And, interestingly, the editorial student team were clear around the need for written articulation around visual responses; mirroring the practice-led research process and showing how this work might academic careers as well as professional journeys.

In terms of content, watch this space and I'll put up a live link once the journal is edited. But I do know this; the journal will be 32 pages long, will be in three parts, and isn't themed but presents a broad range of responses to critical theory from a range of perspectives.

In terms of scholarship, it's easy to see how this work gives students the chance to develop skills for life and work through their professional practice. In terms of the Scholarship of Integration, it brings tutors and students from different departments together to work on a shared project, and also supports a forward-facing applied (scholarship of application) aspect to what can be a lecture-driven subject area. Does it support the Scholarship of Discovery? We'll have to wait to find out once the journal releases its first edition, perhaps?



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