



ALCHEMY EMBODIMENT TRANSMUTATIONS

School of Creative Arts Research Symposium

Friday 24th of September 2021

Arts Theatre, A Block, Toowoomba Campus, USQ.

8.25 am

Welcome by Dr Rebecca Scollen, Head of School of Creative Arts

Introduction by Assoc. Prof. Beata Batorowicz, Assoc. Head (Research)

8.30am

Traditional Research Paper Presentations:

Dr Darryl Chalk (20 mins + 10 mins Qs)

“‘Void of all Performance’: Conjuring at Play in Barnabe Barnes’ *The Devil’s Charter*”

How seriously should we take the conjuring scenes in *The Devil’s Charter*? Barely at all, if we believe most of the critical work on this play. Barnabe Barnes’ rancorously anti-Catholic tragedy, performed at James I’s court on Candlemas night in early 1607, features several scenes depicting the summoning of demons. Scholars have been largely dismissive of their authenticity. Barbara Howard Traister recently included this play in a survey of conjuring scenes, claiming it as evidence in a trajectory of decline in belief over the veracity of magical rites in the early seventeenth century. Traister labels the play’s conjurations mere playful, innocuous approximations of the real thing. This paper will argue that, quite to the contrary, Barnes’ representation of ritual demonic magic has been significantly underestimated. Extending the work of Andrew Sofer, and drawing on medieval grimoires, early modern conjuring manuals, and anti-Catholic literature, I will suggest that *The Devil’s Charter* conforms quite closely to actual magical practice even as it trades, for terrifying effect, on Protestant fears of Catholicism’s demonic capacities. The lengthy summoning of Act 4 Scene 1, in particular, provides an example of this play’s representation of the embodiment of magic in actions, rather than only in words, stopping just short of what might be necessary to transcend the merely performative and, as Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus* once purportedly did, bring ‘real’ devils to the stage.

9.00 am

Dr David Akenson (20 mins + 10 mins Qs)

Creativity and its Discontents

In the tertiary sector, creativity has seen its fortunes wain over the course of the last century. From Walter Benjamin and Rosalind Krauss, to Roland Barthes and Camilla Nelson, the idea of the artist as creator of original works, has come under sustained attack, to the point where it would seem unproductive to spend research time considering its place in contemporary pedagogy at the tertiary level. Just as art was divorced from nature through Hegel’s wrangling, and aesthetics was divorced from art through Danto’s conceptual slight-of-hand, so too has creativity been sectioned off from art practice. Creativity, too much associated with either Kantian naturalism or Marxist-inspired avant-gardism, was rejected tout court by any serious artist emerging from the tertiary sector over the last half century or so. Art is the product of culture – a readymade choice taken from the cultural lexicon. It is a given today, that the artist finds “inspiration” from what Barthes called ‘the innumerable centres of culture’ rather than nature as Immanuel Kant insisted. And while it’s undoubtedly

true that what might pass for inspiration today has its source, not in nature, but rather in prior cultural production, it is also true that at the tertiary level, creativity is seeing something of a resurgence. And yet, for all its popularity, the study of creativity is often undertaken in isolation from art practice, under the umbrella of philosophy, psychology or anthropology.

With this debate in mind, this paper will pursue the following question. Can we teach creativity, indeed creative art, in the studio, and if so, do we need to abandon the prohibition on originality in art practice – so much the bread and butter of academic discourse in recent decades – or can we return to the debate with, dare I say, a fresh perspective?

9.30 am

Dr Chris Carter (20 mins + 10 mins Qs)

Remediating Comics for Spiderman: Into the Spider-verse

Within the field of animation, 3D Computer Graphics (CG) has replaced 2D hand-drawn animation as the dominant form. However, despite offering an entirely new medium with new aesthetic possibilities, contemporary 3D CG animation typically remediates the dimensionality of stop-motion puppet animation and the movement style of 2D hand-drawn animation in a hybrid yet familiar form. As it did with the 2D medium, the Disney aesthetic has established dominance in the field. However, studios such as Sony Pictures Animation continue to explore a broader range of aesthetic possibilities in 3D CG animation through remediation of other forms. For example, Spider-man: Into the Spider-verse (2018) moved away from the dominant Disney/Pixar aesthetic toward a new hybrid form closely aligned to its comic book source material conventions. This paper analyses the design language of the finished film to develop a deeper understanding of this new animation aesthetic.

10.00 am – 10.20 am

Morning Tea

10.20 am

A/Prof. Janet McDonald and **Katrina Cutcliffe** (20 mins + 10 mins Qs)

Undergraduate Reflective Practice in a Theatre Discipline: A Formative, Emergent and Ambiguous Process

The Tertiary industry in Australia supports strategies that create robust graduates: entrepreneurship, reflective, critical and creative innovation are highly prized attributes that readily appear in a quick search of tertiary institutions' Graduate Attributes. Locally, these are designed to increase student/graduate agency over the time of their program and beyond into professional settings. The explicit naming of relevance, critical and creative thinking, and active participation through collaboration, listening and reflection articulate a support, if not a vindication, of the studio-based methods used in many creative arts programs. Empathy for human experience, and a practice that is designed to manifest and embody human stories is the bedrock of theatrical training.

For the purpose of this paper, the researchers focus on the notion of “reflection” as a superlative and preferable tool for measuring how students use their own emerging critical, creative, collaborative, innovative literacies. These skills are chiefly demonstrated through the relational aspects of the learning journey that emerge from the ensemble contexts required by actor-training methods. The emphasis on the relational journey manifested “face-to-face sharing” is a key driver for this research paper as the researchers aim to explore the “assessable-ness” of discovering and articulating a practice of reflection in learning in tertiary theatre-training at USQ. The researchers posit that reflection (particularly critical and reflexive aspects) is essential to not only the employability of graduates, but to crafting their empathy and listening skills, the relational practice of ensemble-building, and creative entrepreneurship

(Dewey, 1933/1910 in Moffat et al). Cohen Ambrose states that he was drawn to Dewey's assertion that the emphasis in education is to "create experiences that lead to more educative experiences" and that theatre training prioritises the "scaffolding of embodied experience so that each learning experience seamlessly flows into the next" (researchers' emphasis, 2019:80/81).

10.50 am

A/Prof. Pema Düddul

The Alchemy of Death — The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Texts have been central to the spread of Buddhism for almost its entire history. The shift from printed works to published works is a feature of the spread of Buddhism to the West. Prior to Buddhism's spread westwards, texts were printed copies that were produced by specialist organisations (usually religious) and intended for a specialist readership (most often monks and Buddhist scholars) In contrast, published works are available to a broad, non-specialist public. Non-fiction literature produced by commercial rather than religious organisations and aimed at a general readership has played a central role in the dissemination of Buddhist ideas in the West. This paper will explore this phenomenon using the publication of the *Bardo Thodol* (*The Tibetan Book of the Dead*) and related commentaries as an example. To date, there is no history of the published English language explications and commentaries on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. This paper is part of a larger research project that aims to provide a critical history of this significant text's dissemination and reception in the Western world. In terms of reception, the paper looks at the various ways the ideas in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* have been understood and the diverse uses to which they have been put – from informing a manual on psychedelic trips to inspiring films and award-winning novels.

11.20 am – 12.20 pm

Creative Arts Panel Session: A Snapshot of Creative Practice as Research by SoCA Staff **Mr Mark Scholtes; Dr Chris Carter, Dr Kate Cantrell and Dr Tarn McLean** & Red Door Gallery Tour.
(Symposium Creative Arts Exhibition Curated by Dr Tarn McLean).

12.20 pm – 1:00 pm

Lunch

1.00 pm – 1.30 pm

Dr Kate Cantrell - A Case Study: 'From Zero to Hero: Getting Started on a Research Paper'

1.30 pm – 2.45 pm

School Research Themes and Collaborative Writing Workshop
Facilitated by SoCA Research Committee.

This session will be relooking at SoCA research themes, exchanging article ideas and returning to collaborative writing groups as per earlier strategic planning.

2.45 pm – 3.00 pm

Break

3.00 pm – 4.30 pm

HDR Presentations (5-10 minutes each)

3.00 pm - 3.10 pm

Alyson Baker

The Challenge of Pink: Subverting the Current Breast Cancer Awareness Paradigm Through Visual and Oral Storytelling.

My art practice is multi-disciplinary based in visual and oral storytelling as a means of exploring ways in raising awareness of male breast cancer. My research specifically considers the public paradigm of breast cancer awareness and the effect it has on male patients so that I may offer strategies, through my arts practice, on how it may be

changed and improved. I engage in a diversity of modalities as this allows for a variety of multi-sensory experiences that interrogate my subject matter while exploring the male breast cancer experience. The creative outcomes explore different modalities and include photography, video, textile sculpture, performance and works on paper. The use of diverse materials and performative artworks reflect the tactility and embodiment of the disease, it has a physical manifestation on the bodies of breast cancer patients. By exhibiting a diversity of bodies with breast cancer, this is a strategic application that allows the viewer of the artworks to renegotiate their own understanding of the disease.

E: u1114540@umail.usq.edu.au; Alyson.Baker@usq.edu.au; aly-baker@hotmail.com
(Zoom)

3.10 pm - 3.20 pm

Izzie Duffield

Last Legion: Creating Strong Female Characters in Irish Myth and Folklore Re-imaginings

There have been multiple literary re-imaginings of Celtic folk stories and fairy-tales throughout the years, but few re-imaginings of the great Irish Mythic Cycles. From faeries and dragons to Tristan and Isolde and Arthur and his knights, all have been contemporised. However, re-imagining the Irish Mythic Cycles has rarely if ever been done. Such re-imaginings for a Young Adult audience are non-existent. This context raises the question: how to re-imagine and “write back” to the great Irish Mythic Cycles not just for a Young Adult audience, but through the lens of feminist speculative fiction? This PhD project aims to do precisely this. This project comprises two components – a practice-led research component and an exegesis. The practice-led research component will be an original Young Adult speculative fiction novel of approximately 80,000 words. This novel’s characterisation and plot will take inspiration from two of the Irish Mythic Cycles. In terms of characterisation, the novel will draw on the sidhe – later thought of as fae – of the Mythological Cycle, and the heroes of the Ulster Cycle, in particular the hero Cù Chulainn. The exegesis will provide critical context for the novel, including discussion of critical feminist theories, speculative fiction, ambivalent protagonists, and the Irish Mythic Cycles used to inspire the characters and plot. The purpose of this project is to determine how to write a Young Adult speculative fiction novel that pleasingly re-imagines Irish Myth and that includes characters that are both a feminist reimagining of the mythic Irish heroes as well as embodying the ambivalent protagonist traits of the mythic sidhe. The project will also reflect on and document the practice-led research and creative writing processes. In short, this project aims to “write back” to the traditional construction of the feminine and the protagonist in Irish mythic cycles.

E: izzie.duffield@usq.edu.au (Zoom)

3.20 - 3.30 pm

Johanna Guerin

Reconsidering Site in Contemporary Art

Historically, site-specific art has been understood as a form of practice that challenges the notion of autonomy or the separation of the object from the site in which it is located, emphasising instead the interdependence of object and site. More current observations identify ‘placelessness’ (Kwon) of the artist and an ‘elsewhere’ (Meyer) within contemporary site-specific art, established under the duress of capitalism with the ‘restless dynamic of modernity... grasping the experience of displacement and rupture’ (Papastergiadis). Inextricably linked to the everyday, site-specific art has experienced change, from the historical to the contemporary interpretation of what

constitutes site-specific art, to this current sense of elsewhere, placelessness, rupture and displacement within artistic discourse, reflective of society as a whole.

To avoid diminishing the original intent of site-specific art, do we change the understanding of site-specific art, allowing for these new relationships between place, artist and space, risking a fall to capitalism? The purpose of this thesis is to embrace those shifts and changes, to go *with* new considerations of the relationship of artist with site as a means to preserving the integrity of site-specific art. The term I introduce to the debate is 'site-relevant'. I employ this term to describe installations that acknowledge the importance of site to the artist's conceptual intentions, but suggest the work is not required to remain in a specific, architectural site to maintain its conceptual intention. This will allow a more critical engagement with the relevance of the site to not only the artist's outcomes, but also to the artist's intent.

E: Johanna.Guerin@usq.edu.au

3.30 pm – 3.40 pm

Yianni Maggacis

The Strangely Familiar: Contemporary Art as Visual Conundrum

This exegesis provides a theoretical discourse for artworks that create a visual conflict between the familiar and the strange. Underscoring this thesis are the publications from Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek on the gaze. Establishing his theoretical premise on Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical model of vision, Žižek deploys this model to instigate new readings on visual art. Observed through what French literary critic Roland Barthes terms as the "Studium," these artworks appear to the viewer as familiar, ordinary, and easily recognisable. However, this apparently familiar, surface-level image is disrupted by the discovery of an incongruous detail of supplementary meaning. This 'supplementary' element in effect denatures the artworks' seemingly familiar surfaces, which prompts the viewer to "look awry" and observe the work as strange. In a reinvention of the anamorphic image, these artworks, like a Möbius strip, have one surface, yet two sides, with each vantage denaturing its counter-part. This forces, as Žižek argues, the viewer to take on a parallax view: the work becomes familiar *or* strange – it cannot be both simultaneously. Using the aforementioned theory, this paper examines 20th century artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Giorgio de Chirico, as well as 21st century artists including David Lynch, Michael Borremans, Gregory Crewdson, Thomas Demand, and Jeff Wall as a way to contextualise my own studio research.

E: u1096107@umail.usq.edu.au

3.40 pm – 3.50 pm

Loi Magill

These Maps May Not Be Accurate: A Visual Response To Topographical Locations

Part of my Master of Creative Arts submission was the creation of maps on vellum which was a material totally new to me, and only discovered through historical research into ancient maps. I discovered its value as an art support and I felt that its properties were rather under-explored. This led me to investigating other materials that may be used in the creation of abstract maps in a contemporary way. My interest then for this DCA research is to produce topographical and/or three-dimensional maps to answer in new and unique ways where my related studio research is positioned within historical and contemporary fields. The works submitted are presented as abstract maps depicting changes over time thus revealing ways of introducing information conceptually with abstract ideas and metaphors that are revealed in an artistic way.

E: u1109859@umail.usq.edu.au; loimagil42@gmail.com; loimagil42@outlook.com
(Zoom)

3.50 pm - 4.00 pm

Samara Rowling

Open Textbook Publishing Programs at Australian Universities

Studies show university students struggle to afford textbooks, which can lead them to go hungry or withdraw altogether. Universities are combating this problem by using open textbooks to increase participation and improve student outcomes. Little research has been conducted on open textbook publishing at Australian universities. Most existing research focuses on the international context, where differences in funding and legislation affect not only how, but the extent to which publishing work is undertaken. This editing and publishing doctoral research project is the first national study of open textbook publishing activities and experiences at Australian universities and will advance understanding of emerging trends in library and university publishing in Australia. Adopting a mixed methods approach, I will collect quantitative and qualitative data about open textbook publishing practices and experiences at Australian universities. Using statistical and thematic analysis, I will identify and explore facilitators and barriers that contribute to the success or failure of open textbook publishing projects. I will use these results to make evidence-based recommendations for how Australian universities can build sustainable open textbook publishing programs that provide more students with access to zero-cost course materials.

E: samara.rowling@usq.edu.au (Zoom)

4.00 – 4.10 pm

Sharnai Shead

Impact of Author-Driven Fiction Genre on Online Platform Decisions

The author platform is an essential key to the publishing puzzle, linking the author to the reader intimately. Unlike in traditionally published fiction or non-fiction, the self-published fiction author must navigate this world alone, making decisions based on many factors. One factor, the genre choice of the author, is immensely significant, as the challenges facing individual genres may vary substantially. This presentation outlines the research project investigating these factors to identify relevant considerations and experiences for authors in fiction spaces. The thesis aims to address the overarching question, “How does genre affect the choice of author platform of self-published fiction authors?”. The research draws on a pragmatic research philosophy, relying on mixed methodology. The research design is multifaceted, drawing on three stages consisting of a large-scale survey, in-depth interviews, and comparative case studies. The three-stage process draws together quantitative and qualitative data while also building theory from ethnographic research. The presentation will clarify the project’s progress and expected outcomes. Ultimately, the project’s findings will provide insight for both authors and publishers, creating greater understanding for decision making in book marketing and publishing while also building academic scholarship in this field.

E: sharnai.james-mcgovern@usq.edu.au (Zoom)

4.10 – 4.20 pm

Travis K Svensson

Best Practices in Bisexual Representation On-Screen

This project seeks to articulate a set of best practices in the positive representation of bisexuals on screen in film, television and media. While there is extensive literature with regards to problematic bisexual representations on screen, a set of best practices has

thus far been poorly articulated. There are two primary creative artifacts to be examined in this research project, an original screenplay and the original narrative film based on said screenplay. For this project, the practice-based research leans heavily on creator and creative team driven reflective practice, autoethnography, narrative inquiry and grounded theory methodologies. Ethnographic and ethnomethodologic perspectives will be used to explore existing artifacts drawn from the bisexual canon of film, television and media as a form of practice-led research that informs the auteur process of the creative artifact (film to be made). A written reflective journal by the writer/director (auteur) will begin with the creative writing process of the initial screenplay and continue through the post-production phase of the filmmaking process. An audio recorded journal will be generated for all pre-production, production and post-production meetings of the creative team for this film. Three focus groups will be formed. The first will be made up of peer filmmakers, the second composed of bisexual identified members of the local LGBTQ community and third to be composed of potential general audience members ages 18 to 65 years. The outcomes from this research will articulate a set of best practices for screenwriters and filmmakers working with positive bisexual characters and storylines.

E: U1135629@umail.usq.edu.au; Travis.Svensson@usq.edu.au (Zoom)

4.20 pm – 4.30 pm Final Questions/Reflections

4.30 pm Symposium Summary and Thanks to All Participants