

Bronac Ferran, ACE

- ROLE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS AND CONTEXT FOR WORK
- DESIGNING STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS
FELLOWSHIPS AND PLACEMENTS
- CONCLUSION

Department responsible for:

- Work at the intersection between art and technology, art and science, art and industry, art and ecology – next generation of emergent practices
- Understand that collaboration and networking are key activities/challenges within context of contemporary innovation (technologically-driven?)

Nature of contemporary creativity

- By no means restricted to the ‘arts’ or to ‘artists’
- We are interested in overlap between different disciplines and in creating structures of support to enable exchange
- Asking where does value lie in the transaction between disciplines? Is it emergent within the relationship?

Different types of creativity?

- Levi-Strauss – difference between engineer and bricoleur
- Blake – immanent and distributed
- Do institutions and structures inhibit or enable ‘imaginative apprehension of unseen worlds?’
- Notion of ‘unbalancing balance’ – creating structures which allow flow and collaborative exchange – making structures appropriate?
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Issues of ownership and property

- Importance of building networks – sharing knowledge – open structures for exchange
- Not allowing institutions to assert singular Intellectual Property Rights over creative processes – finding appropriate structures of ownership (formal/informal) for collaborative and interdisciplinary projects

Programmes in the UK

- Art & Science Research fellowships programme
- Partnership between academic and cultural development and funding agencies
- £500,000 allocated – year-long fellowships placing artists into science labs within universities. 16 projects supported in first round. Second round decisions made.

Art In Industry Placement Programme

- Now under development – ‘blue sky’ placement opportunities
- Seek partnerships with commercial and other ‘industry’ type partners
- 26 awards, £10,000 each; nationally and internationally
- Two placements just launched with BBC Creative Archive initiative
(www.artscouncil.org.uk/creativearchive)

Design of Art and Science Programme

- Designed in 2001 in response to positive policy environment
- ACE highlighting importance of investing in individual artists
- Government reports stressed value of interdisciplinary exchange, across arts and humanities and science – notion of knowledge transfer bringing value

Imagination and Understanding

- Influential report from Council for Science and Technology in 2001 stated that ‘concept of a distinct frontier between science and the arts is anachronistic. Successful economies depends increasingly on creation, communication, understanding and use of ideas and images’.

Design of the Art and Science Programme

- Was designed to place artists more clearly ‘in the driving seat’
- Earlier funding initiatives had restricted R&D awards to very small levels so holding back the artist who was often not employed by any institution and felt under great pressure to deliver results

Asking the Artist....

- We commissioned a ‘viewpoint’ from Neal White to inform establishing the scheme:
- ‘There is a relationship that has seen power and funds in the hands of science, with artists often acting as a public relationship exercise within the field of more serious scientific enquiry’

Neal again...

- ‘the single most difficult element in starting a research led initiative is finding the right institution, the right department, the right person and the right field with which to engage’
- ‘whilst artists have ideas about their intended areas of research, it is very difficult for them to meet and obtain the personal interest of the other party to start the process alone’

SETTING UP THE SCHEME

- Appropriate partner
- Ensuring more rigorous research
- Allowing artists to go into science labs
- Allowing artists to interact with teams
- Offering £35000 to each Fellow
- Finding assessors from both disciplines
- Opening up programme to applicants from outside UK
- Judging panel with cross-disciplinary expertise willing to take risks

First round of awards

- Some established artists successful, including choreographer Wayne McGregor, worked with Cambridge's Dept of Experimental Psychology, led to a significant piece of work shown at Sadlers Wells. Though we don't ask for this kind of output, just some public value (could be publication)

Also: Jo Joelson worked with Radio and Space Plasma Physics group in Leicester, considered how technological developments affect how scientists and artists perceive and represent natural phenomena

Palle Dahlstedt (Sweden) worked with Computer Science in Liverpool on a 'computer-aided multi-agent music composition'.

See <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk> for full list of funded awards. Search under art and science.

- Many projects (meant to end) are ongoing or have led to further work together.

Second Round, similar diversity:

- William Latham, working with Goldsmiths College Dept of Computer:
- Applying new theories of shape deformation within the Mutator framework
- Mark Neville, working with Biomedical and Life Sciences in Glasgow:
- New Photographic Representations of Order, Chance and Sexual Attraction Exhibited by Birds and their Architecture

Learning from Process

- In itself a Research Programme
- Important to document and monitor outcomes
- Challenges of finding places to publish (Leonardo Special Supplement very welcome)
- Questions now about how to embed these opportunities for artists to work collaboratively with science and technology partners?
- Always ongoing set of questions: short-term opportunities, evolve

Developing the Art and Industry strand...

- More challenging in some ways – values?
- Not as easy to do in a structural way as a fragmented context and more volatile than academia: industry R&D labs notoriously vulnerable to shifts in commercial agenda
- Yet raises some excellent challenges including skills and knowledge transfer
- Key exemplars from past – EAT, APG.....

Expanding and broadening fields of intervention?

- Industry a very wide field for intervention
- Likely to set up placements in Brazil working with government digital hotspots there....on open source and technology recycling – access based projects
- Or...placement in China, linked to property development. What is the critical space for intervention in different contexts? Exploring different values – contexts – room for join-up?

Partnerships are critical

- Key theme for us is finding the right partnerships
- Gain resources for partnership
- So collaboration seen as of significant value
- Challenge also for institutions working together
- International Fellowships programme helps build links
- Working with Space Lab at Berkeley has been transformative
- Has paved the way for Art in Industry/Blue Sky initiative – learning from each step!!!

Need to consider circumstances

- The design is key
- Subject to ‘local’ circumstances
- No one size fits all BUT important to share information (borrow thoughts/ways of working)
- Ideally international network to ‘harbour’ good practice and storehouse for knowledge

Very pleased to speak at this
event

Looking forward to hearing more

...any questions

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