

ART AND DESIGN TEACHING AND LEARNING: A CONFERENCE REPORT

Leoni Schmidt

Most of the contributions in this particular issue stem from an event held in April 2009 at the Dunedin School of Art and the Department of Design of Otago Polytechnic in New Zealand when *art works – mahi toi*, the 2009 biennial conference of the ANZAAE (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators), was delivered in order to support and enhance teaching and learning for art educators throughout the country, the Pacific Rim region and further afield. The conference programme addressed values and principles of visual arts and design education – from early childhood education to primary, through to secondary and tertiary and including arts and design education outside the classroom. Through its themes of multi-cultural pedagogies, innovative cross-disciplinary and collaborative practice and by situating art and design education in a broader socio-political context, *art works – mahi toi* was effective in exploring a range of learning opportunities to inspire art and design educators. Particular effort was made to develop a conference programme that would be relevant to educators working in the primary, secondary, tertiary and public gallery sectors through 'streaming' of the sectors on particular days. There was also a stream for bicultural issues and presentations on Pacific and Asian art education issues. As such, *art works – mahi toi* tackled topics of interest that to date have not been fully explored in an arts education conference. These particular areas included Asian issues in contemporary New Zealand art and art education, cultural sensitivities in teaching Māori art and the use of new and digital technologies in art and design education.

The conference also included a range of presentations on contemporary art and design practices and issues relevant to these and the teaching and learning ensuing from them. Exhibitions added value to the conference and floortalks by artists and designers made the material accessible to lecturers, teachers and students attending the events. Some contributions to this issue of *Scope* reflect the conference's inclusion of practice-based research and its focus on the ways in which artists' work can be presented alongside more formal conference presentations.

The range of contributions to this issue of *Scope* is an indication of the varied character of the *art works – mahi toi* conference programme. Contributions not directly connected with the conference suggest further dimensions of teaching and learning in the visual arts, design and adjacent disciplines.

Nathan Thompson's article brings graphic dimensions of sound into the mix of contributions. Alexandra Kennedy explores notions of the *dérive* and *détournement* in relation to contemporary painting. Francis Plagne reports on an experimental installation by Adam Douglass. Catharine Hodson writes about installation work which explores experiences of breast cancer and hospitalisation.

Peter Belton wonders about the sometimes awkward relationship between formal composition and iconographic analogy in the visual arts. Max Bellamy reports on his recent work straddling the boundaries between sculptural installation and electronic art. Marcus Williams explores the vagaries we encounter within teaching and learning experiences. Stephen Naylor reports on regional strategies for the survival and success of art schools. David Bell confronts the secondary school arts curriculum. Pamela Zeplin rethinks the artist-in-residency as a context for teaching and learning. Charles Robb argues for the 'open studio' without boundaries between disciplines as an

answer to pressures on art schools in our time. As was the case with many contributions, this led to much debate during the conference as the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic fiercely protects its discipline-based teaching and learning.

Still in this particular issue of *Scope*, Fiona Grieve and Monique Redmond situate examples of creative publication within contemporary art and design practice. Lesley Duxbury explores the open-ended nature of creative research and the kinds of community which can be engendered in this context. Pat HOFFIE's take on creativity places it firmly outside institutions and their potential for assimilating the efforts of creative practitioners. Student Janeen Greig's artist's pages includes a poem alongside an image of one of her tragi-comic 'self-portraits', suggesting that 'creativity' may be alive and well exactly because it can be protected and nurtured within institutional enclaves.

Primary education finds a place within this issue of *Scope*. Beverley Clark and Nicky de Latour explore the role of adults within the visual arts primary classroom. Conference keynote speaker Barbara Piscitelli writes about children, art and museums based on her extensive experience of children's projects in conjunction with museums. With a wider learning target group in mind, Helen Lloyd investigates the opportunities for critical thinking engendered by museum and gallery contexts. Estelle Alma Maré reminds us of our experiences of museum visits where, for example, the work of El Greco has been seen by many generations of artists who have quoted him in their work. Peter Stupples discusses his own experiences of curating exhibitions for public art galleries and presents examples from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, where his conference contribution concluded *art works – mahi toi*.

Other teaching and learning environments unfold for the reader in this issue of *Scope*. Victoria Bell and Lee Houlihan present artists' pages from a student exhibition during the conference in the Blue Oyster, a contemporary art space in Dunedin. Much debate ensued from the inclusion of other material in the same exhibition entitled *Instructional Models* at the Blue Oyster and led to public consideration of the appropriate or inappropriate inclusion of materials relevant to Māori history in public contexts.

Rachel Gilles's article reports on the format of the student blog as a context for teaching and learning, thereby connecting this issue of *Scope* with a concurrent issue of *Scope: Teaching and Learning* (see www.thescope.org) in which four earlier contributions to *art works – mahi toi* are now included as articles focusing on new technologies in the classroom environment.

Another cluster of contributions focuses on learning and teaching challenges. Jane Venis takes a positive view in her article on ways in which learners with low self-esteem can be motivated in the studio environment. Tania Allan Ross reports on her conference workshop which addressed the designing of multi-sensory learning environments for students who are challenged by sensory experiences. Max Oettli and Margo Barton report on group-based learning in the context of a photography and fashion combination of disciplines.

Ethics and its specific issues are highlighted where Mark Jackson writes about the ethics of design and when Qassim Saad considers designing for development. Jannie Visser contributes a narrative of being, growing and becoming across cultural landscapes, subtitled 'art and art education encounters with self and others'.

This issue of *Scope* includes two short review articles on traditional practices in Turkey. Dilek Alkan Salur presents exquisite examples of Ottoman costumes depicted on 18th-Century Kutahya ceramics. Nilgun Salur makes us aware of how the traditional Turkish art of Kat I printmaking are being deployed in contemporary Turkish classrooms, thereby being saved from extinction.

Scope 2009 concludes with Steve Lovett's article on the connections between printmaking and digital media in the twenty-first century. His contribution follows on from a workshop presented to conference delegates attending *art works – mahi toi*. This was part of a wider programme of workshops which – along with the twelve concurrent exhibitions – gave this particular ANZAAE conference a strong practice-based dimension. Neil Emmerson's *The*

Glass Closet refers to one of the exhibitions and acts as a bookend together with Nathan Thompson's first item in this issue: both presenting the reader with a strong cross-disciplinary approach to practice, one of the strong dialogic components of *art works – mahi toi*.

The full title of this issue of *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics* includes at its end (*Art & Design*). The inclusion of *Design* acknowledges the teamwork between the Dunedin School of Art and the Department of Design at Otago Polytechnic in New Zealand. It also invites further and future synergies between art and design in New Zealand and further afield. Titles of subsequent issues of *Scope* will reflect such synergies or alternatively may reflect synergies with other disciplines.

In conclusion to this editorial, Otago Polytechnic is acknowledged and thanked for its generous support of *art works – mahi toi* in 2009. Other sponsors made the conference possible (see www.anzaae2009.org.nz), but without the underwriting support of Otago Polytechnic the conference and this issue of *Scope* would not have been possible in the first instance. On behalf of the ANZAAE, the Editorial Team of *Scope* and all contributors who benefit from the conference and this publication, I thank Otago Polytechnic for its research vision and its generous support in line with this vision.

Lastly, but not least, the contributions of Kai Tahu in context of the Memorandum of Understanding between local Kai Tahu rūnaka and Otago Polytechnic are acknowledged. The guidance and presence of Kai Tahu representatives under the auspices of Otago Polytechnic Kaitohutohu Dr Khyla Russell made *art works – mahi toi* a unique experience for everybody involved with the conference and this subsequent issue of *Scope*.

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