

Hello ,

My name is Gianna Tasha Tomasso and

I am a practicing artist and writer on art and am a research postgraduate in Lsad/LIT. During my undergraduate studies within another institute of technology in the discipline of Sculpture, I quickly realised that there was an invisible disciplinary 'borderline demarkation between theory and practice and a more visible line between the varying disciplines which traditionally operate in visual art institutional structure, namely print sculpture, paint, ceramics, textiles etc. I also noticed that the position of art and design within the institutional structure of Institutes of technology seemed have even clearer border demarcations, in which little was known, shared or indeed seen as 'in common' with other disciplinary departments outside of art.

My knowledge culture is firmly within the domain of art, and my undergraduate interests were the polyphonic and autonomous nature of creative artistic production, along with practices which may be deemed political or social, with an interest of work which sits within the critical, seeking ways to negotiate the neoliberal premise which underpinned academic landscape within which I found myself. During this time I also noticed there was little attempt at integration across the institutional disciplines while the word creativity seemed to be spilling out of every strategy at all departmental and disciplinary levels.

My own interest in institutional critique art practice grew, seeking through research and practice an understanding of the contradictions that art education within such institution framework generates, leading me to some durational artworks compiling vacuous institutional strategies and producing cultural artefacts which sought to undermine the very notion of culture. I became interested in the artist As an organisation a supposed to the artists within in the organisation. Looking at varying insittuent practice which theoreticians such as Holmes and Rauning consider as being part of the critical practice which belongs to the third wave of insitutional critique.

With my back ground in mind i want Fast forward to my current research led practice within an IT which has various research clusters and which is attempting to expand research practice. My current interests seek to look to artists, creative practitioners and collectives who traverse disciplinary boundaries and who may describe themselves as transdisciplinary. I am also forming durational creative collaborations with research clusters in my own institution, and collaborative projects with undergraduate students from neighbouring institutions .

My research seeks to ascertain if it is possible to articulate and reproduce methodologies within these types of practice that may have wider pedagogical applications which may serve other disciplines and contribute to disciplinary integration at undergraduate level. Barabara Hawkins, in A transdisciplinary approach to postgraduate research education states that “transdisciplinary research training is by no means a significant activity within most doctoral programmes” and it is my argument that by fostering the transdisciplinary habits of mind which are already intrinsic in art and design education and practice , methodologies can be studied, and implemented at undergraduate level, using creative integration and forming a cross disciplinary cross institutional curriculum which includes the studying of and facilitation of the type of border-work integral to transdisciplinary knowledge production. Ofcourse this is aspirational, as is the very premise of transdisciplinary. I am however asking that the complex nature of transdisciplinarity in and of itself, and of its history since first posited in 1970 by Piaget to be taken as a given, that my own understanding of transdisciplinarity stems from both the Nicolescuan and the Zurich modes. My presumption is that these need not be elaborated upon within the time constraints of this presentation however this slide condenses the two modes.

I am offering a cursory look at 2 artists producing transdisciplinary work and the formation of an instituent organisation. Each of these examples I argue display what Jonathon Sime terms as border-work, namely a form of transdisciplinary that entails quote” making connections not only across boundaries between disciplines but also between scholarly enquiry and the sphere of tactic and experiential knowledges” This type of border-work I argue, is already intrinsic within

academic and instituent art practices and art education, and examples of which already exist within postgraduate research work undertaken in my current institution, LSAD. I also argue that the 7 transdisciplinary habits of mind cited by Mishra are already integral in art and design undergraduate programmes, positioning art and design students and educational practice within art and design at the forefront of transdisciplinary potentials.

The first example I wish to posit is an international organisational project, which sits very well within the premise of this conference. Founded by artist Ahmed Ogut in 2012, The Silent University is a 'solidarity based knowledge exchange platform by refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Led by a group of lecturers, consultants and research fellows.' An example of a problem led art practice which became an 'unauthorised but recognised' organisation/institution that seeks to re-activate the knowledges of asylum seekers who are unable to perform academic knowledge production and reproduction due to their immigration or legal status. The silent university formed in order to activate these knowledges by giving migrant or undocumented academics, whose knowledges may not be recognised outside their originating country, a platform from which to practice.

Calling itself a parasitic organisation in that it utilises the differing potentials of other institutions, namely art institutions such as Tensta Konsthall in Sweden, academic institutions such as Oxford university and multiple NGOs, while challenging the monolingual centralised and vertical structure more common at third or graduate level. Working together, the participants have developed lectures, discussions, events, resource archives and publications. The institution operates from a digital platform, and also operates in the physical world with lectures, workshops, exhibitions, seminars. It operates internationally in multiple locations including London Sweden, Amman Jordan Athens and Germany. The silent university performs a type of border-work, which allows it to operate both as an institution, with institutions, however not be held by locational, legal or disciplinary constrictions that authorised institutions may be compelled adhere to. Lectures are available online and include presentations of The history of food preparation through the visual arts, by Miguel Teixeira, The History of Kurdish Literature by Sherko Jahani and a A comparison

of Sharia laws and the Swedish political system by Fahima Alnablsi. The Silent university is transdisciplinary, carried out by a group, group being anything more than one, who come together to solve a problem and in doing that new knowledge is created and new thinking emerges of value to all the participants.

According to Kate Maguire in her paper Transdisciplinarity as Translation “Transdisciplinarity is about boundary or border crossing to arrive at knowledge co-creation and co-production, in order to do that it has to challenge existing hegemonies and avoid becoming one itself.”

The silent University operates with criticality at multiple levels, working in both the life world and the digital world, and operating within the sphere of art and academia, This is a prime example of an instituent practice, whereby the space of art can be utilised to form, challenge and perform the notion of the 'institution'. This multi layered ongoing instituent practice is one example of an artist operating with and through transdisciplinarity in order to achieve solutions to complex problems.

I hope to posit that there is a strong argument that far from being a soft subject, art and design practice leads the way in what Stokols terms “Transdisciplinary action research” and, as Neuhauser and Pohl stipulate in the paper Integrating transdisciplinarity concepts and methods into graduate education that ‘transdisciplinarity can address problems of the life world that are aspirational.’ It may be inferred that the aspirational nature of the silent university is that formal, authorised academic institutions allow cross cultural academics, regardless of their legal status, the opportunity to perform knowledge creation and dissemination without legal constraint due to the very real borders they may have crossed. T

The silent university is an example of an expansive transdisciplinary project which began with one artist and was problem based.

The second example is the work of artist and

scientist Brandon Ballengée (American, born 1974) who is a visual artist, biologist environmental educator. Ballengees research attempted to gauge the effect of both transdisciplinary art practices and participatory science programs towards increasing ecological knowledge. Ballengees research tracks transdisciplinarity in the fields of biology and art, looks towards biological research as art practice and produces transdisciplinary art works such as *The Occurrence of Deformities in Amphibians*, as pictured in the slide. In these works he asks whether the exhibition of such transdisciplinary art works effectively inform the audience about the worldwide plight of amphibians and larger ecological phenomena. His works seek to fuse art and biology in order to present his transdisciplinary participatory works that are open to the public realm. This problem based work, I suggest, can operate in the cultural field as well as the ecological field and scientific field, with neither having prominence over the other, a soft-hard partnership which serves multiple goals and seeks multiple outcomes, working in a participatory way with both academics and members of the public, Ballengees academic research has contributed much to the art/science integration and transdisciplinary border-work, and is an exemplar in academic practice of a transdisciplinary artist operating within academic institutions.

It is here I will outline my own instituent practice as a portion of my research. I have formed the unauthorised but recognised Centre of creative transdisciplinarity, (TCCT) In the formation of such an instituent practice I seek to on one hand operate within the institutional boundaries however still operate within the space of art practice, meaning certain freedoms which might otherwise suffer from institutional or disciplinary constraint. TCCT is an entity which can be described as an 'instituent' practice project in which the assertion of an institutional entity becomes the basis for art practice and provides a porous and flexible model which can foster creativity by offering reflective and deep collaborative learning while minimising traditional institutional constraints.

TCCT is working collaboratively with members on developing multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary interactions, understanding theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of TD and creating further spaces of exception within the institution which will allow for transdisciplinary thought and practice. This includes working with knowledge that disciplinary frameworks within

institutional education create points of inclusion and exclusion that promote hierarchical power relations which may inhibit genuine collaborative and student as partner (SaP) relationships. TCCT is currently working with architecture and design undergraduates, working collaboratively with an undergraduate programme in critical theory and also is undertaking a durational project with members of the travelling community to reframe horse ownership using artistic activism. All of these interactions are underpinned by transdisciplinary theory, as well as concerned with Mishra's 7 transdisciplinary habits of mind as pictured in the slide. These are :

The work of TCCT will be complete in late 2019 and will culminate in a series of inclusive seminars, exhibitions and performative curricula, both digital and in real world.

I hope in this presentation I have given a cursory argument that art and design, indeed 'creativity' is integral to and in tandem with transdisciplinarity, and that undergraduate art and design students could be key in practices within ITs that may open up the future for transdisciplinary research and development at all academic levels. Key components of transdisciplinarity cited as having to include :stakeholders' views; real world problem solving; change agency; knowledge production; new synthesis; exchange between disciplines and practices with the intention of achieving action that influences the disciplines and practices themselves; mapping and remapping; academic and non academic participation and social responsibility. " perhaps we can look at a 'creative transdisciplinarity' by way of artistic institution practice, and develop such unauthorised but recognised methodologies, as Sue Little McGregor points out in Transdisciplinary Pedagogy in Higher Education, that a "transdisciplinary model for higher education would transcend the artificial boundaries imposed by traditional academic organisational structures by teaching students to view problem solving as an enterprise comprising of many teams of people from diverse backgrounds"

I want to conclude this presentation with a slide showing the seven transdisciplinary habits of mind, as first posited by Mishra and re-affirmed by McGregor. These transdisciplinary habits of

mind are at the very core of creative thinking, and help in the addressing of complex or wicked societal problems, and facilitate the integration of knowledge from multiple knowledge systems or spheres. My own research looks towards practicing artists in order to map the processes involved in such habits of mind, with a view to developing methods to integrate such ways of thinking without regard for the discipline type, hard or soft, or institutional structure.

More can be found on my research at this site:

Thanks

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