

Volume 1 Editorial

Sarah Healy, Kelly McConville and Toby Wilkins

Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne

On a stiflingly hot January afternoon in Melbourne we, the guest editors of this edition of JACE, met with Series Editors Dr Kathryn Coleman and Dr Richard Sallis to plot our call for papers for this special edition. It was at the end of a long day for us all at the University of Melbourne, with Kelly and Toby having just finished an intensive week delivering dramatic workshops exploring active pedagogies with teachers, while Sarah was busy adjusting to her new role of managing the Innovative Learning Environments and Teacher Change project (ILETC). Our studio practices and planning had offered an important reflective outlet in the days before this meeting. Our work had drawn all three of us away from the continuing realities of the bushfires ravaging our country, and our collectively growing concerns for a mysterious virus, yet to be named, that was on the verge of changing everything. In such disquiet, it is both telling and significant that the concept of studio remained at the forefront of our focus as we drew up our call for papers.

In our collective experience we saw studio as being intrinsically linked to our own artistic and educational practices, recognising the power to create and develop socio-cultural, digital and material links, and the further complexities and juxtapositions within each of these facets. In the development of our call for papers, we asked potential authors to consider what artistic and creative education requires or expects of a studio practice, with a hope that responses might trouble the notions of studio and investigate its nature beyond that of a merely physical site. Importantly, we hoped to gain insight from responses of how studio practice might be re-housed (or de-housed), what the implications of these suggestions might be and indeed, what disequilibria we may encounter as a result.

The responses we received went far beyond what we hoped our initial provocation might realise. A curation of twelve articles from varied arts and educational disciplines, paradigms, backgrounds, experiences and approaches all contribute to the complex discourse that is this special edition of JACE 2020. Thematically, authors speak to the impacts in and of studio. Of place, site, space, and somewhat unexpectedly: of time. They have given us pause to consider where space remains necessary in studio and critically, where it might be reimagined for the benefit of arts and educational practice both at the time of writing and as we move forward into a post-Covid 'new-normal'.

To risk generalising, studios as sites of living, breathing creative and artistic practice and education - the four-walled, flexibly designed, lit-just-so variety - have preoccupied most of us at various points in our careers as practitioners and/or teachers/artists/researchers have always been masters of 'making do' when it comes to space, whether it be shifting a Drama class to a cricket shed to allow for the noise of our year 9 class or stacking tables and putting fabric over windows to achieve the desired lighting to undertake our visual art practice - none of this is new. In the strangeness of 2020, such matters have become even more relevant and pressing as we adapt our work for the virtual space. We have all, at one stage or another, found ourselves removed or restricted from our beloved physical spaces. Some of us may

have been able to return to them, while others live with the question of if/when/how we will be able to resume some semblance of our previous normality. We may dream of being able to run, skip and dance our way back into the bosom of our studios, and yet there is a sense that there is a permanence to the shift that has taken place in our work.

In this first volume, we invite you the reader to consider the varied notions of studio, space, and site as a multiplicity. We start with an article that features an international collaboration between two New Zealand and a Canadian researcher (Snook, Buck and Martin). Empirical material from this research supports the idea that “through arts integration, teachers and their students may become socially empowered.” This leads into the second article, also an international study concerned with creative education, but this time located in the Asia-Pacific region. The authors (Harris et al.) explore creativity ‘in’ studio practice through a socio-cultural lens, emphasising the value of intercultural approaches to studio practice for improving understandings of creativity *and* culture.

The next paper, ‘Their stories: Our stories’ (Fewster et al.) continues along a similar vein, exploring how studio practice – even the *humble* choir – can act as a site for expression of social issues and formation of community. The multi-origin approach, involving young people writing lyrics and music to articulate key moments of identity formation, makes this article relevant and applicable to a wide audience. This article pairs well with the next, entitled ‘Insight into site’ (Cook). It explores connected learning and collaboration across digital platforms through connectivism in the context of the dance studio. This provokes the author/dance educator “to (re)think space conceptually and consider how it may become more integral to the choreographic practice”.

We next turn our attention to the photographic studio with the fifth and final article for Volume 1, ‘Beyond the shutter's circle’ (Shopa). This paper *a/r/tographically* explores how photographic studio practice conveys, represents, and encodes time – shifting the author's practice from being about objects to focussing on photographic process.

These months of ‘business as highly unusual’, have necessitated the use of fresh skills, new tools, and creative approaches to creativity. We have had to because the alternative - stopping the work - is not an option. The new skills, the mastering of previously unheard-of technologies, the strategic approaches to generating and sharing works: these have opened access to so much. Whether as live performances devised and delivered via Zoom (Zoom Theatre), digital tours of regional and international galleries (National Gallery of Victoria), virtual conferences or online delivery of classes previously considered impossible to teach in any way other than face-to-face - these have unveiled access to so much and so many. While not something to replace an ‘IRL’* experience with, these adaptations have provided new ways of seeing, engaging and doing. Some are problematic and should be problematised, but it cannot be ignored that, in many instances, such creative solutions to the need to continue our work in these most challenging circumstances have brought possibility and promise. This collective, global experience has given us a new lens - one could argue many new lenses - to view how, when, where and with whom we can create. In some instances, there are new possibilities for *what* we can create.

This reflection has influenced our curation of the current journal edition. Whilst the focus on questioning the notion of the studio arose pre-COVID, as did the papers that were contributed, our selection and subsequent ordering of them took place in Melbourne during its strict lockdown. We have, in our selection of articles and placement of them, endeavoured to position articles alongside one another that allows one to provide a different lens through which to read the next. Embracing what can be learned by considering the work of the practitioner through the lens of the educator, or the artist through that of the researcher, holds the potential for us to see things afresh and anew. Without wanting to sound trite or Pollyanna*, 2020 has forced us to hone this skill, so we figured we might as well use it.

This highly unusual year has been tinged with many moments of sadness and perhaps no such moment has affected the team at JACE more than the passing of a previous editor, our colleague Dr Christine Sinclair. Christine, who was only in her early 60s, lost her long battle with cancer at the beginning of the year.



Dr Christine Sinclair, with Associate Professor Neryl Jeanneret.

In 2016 when Chris was diagnosed Sue Arney suggested MGSE staff contribute squares to make a blanket for her. People knitted, crocheted, quilted & screen printed, and Emma Rickards turned the blanket into a graphic. This inspired us to keep creating, & to donate, & Nick Archer our studio technician created the box to catch our efforts.

Recognised as one of Australia's leading drama educators, Christine was also the Head of Drama education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Having been a previous editor of Drama Australia's National Journal (NJ), Christine moved her attention to JACE and helped Dr Wesley Imms and the then JACE team to institute some of the practices that have continued with JACE to this present day. Chris's influence and legacy are woven through this edition and, will no doubt be evident in many editions to come. As an editor, Chris's feedback to authors was always constructive and educative, and throughout her work her encouragement and support for others was well-known. We miss her smile, love of education and care for her colleagues. We have had her in her head and hearts as we have developed this volume of JACE with Rich and Kate.

Rest in power, Chris.

**IRL = 'in real life' in internet-speak*

**Pollyanna: an excessively cheerful, and overly optimistic persona.*