

Blog OCA-North study event Saturday 30th March 2019
Thinking Through Art: A Workshop. Tutor Emma Drye.

Although several group members had a professional history of qualitative and quantitative methods of research, the workshop expanded our research perspective as we were guided through the exercises and asked to consider what research means in respect to art (and our OCA coursework).

In groups, we read passages relating to research in art; an interview with Phyllida Barlow about her practice, a piece about the role of digital media in art and teaching art, and a passage of philosophical writing characterising “wonder” and explain how it fits into the creative process. We discussed the content and our opinions of the articles. Although some of the reading was quite heavy going, we were able to pick out the salient points and find quotations that resonated with our own experience, ideas or concerns or stimulated new thinking.

“I got a lot out of this exercise and it made me feel excited about my next course which is Understanding Visual Culture” E

Blogs and essays are only part of a wider portfolio demonstrating contextual study. This portfolio can also include videos, exhibitions and books. Emma also made the point that expressing an idea is not just done through writing about art, it is done through making art as well.

A highlight for us all was when we took a project idea/topic of our own and conducted a “free-writing” exercise. After 15 minutes we categorised our thoughts.

For some students many questions were raised, others found they were more focused on visual, material, process and ideas. Emma gave us individual feedback and together with hearing about others work we came away with new points of view and plenty of food for thought.

“It was enjoyable to participate in a multidisciplinary workshop that focused and stimulated my thinking in relation to research and critical thought. An excellent networking source.” L

“I gained a lot of contextual understanding relating to the perspectives and practices of other students. This is the one fundamental aspect of distance learning that is a challenge. The workshop certainly helps a great deal and in my case I would say it is crucial.” A

From Emma’s point of view

It was great to have a chance to try out this workshop. I wanted to foreground artistic practice and make sure students were clear that their research is undertaken to contextualise their making practice with the aim of building a sustainable and rewarding personal practice for themselves. We didn't get through all the material but I'm glad we started with the good bits - and it seemed to me to be really useful for everyone to listen to each other. Ultimately, we did a piece of collaborative research on the nature of research and then started to build a picture of each person’s own area of interest and

identify their key words and processes. The critical thinking bits that fell off the end of the day will have to be delivered later - although there was evidence of spirited criticality already in Halifax so perhaps not.