

CRITgroup Collaborative Project

At the inaugural meeting in November 2011 the possibility of a collaborative project was raised. After our first year of Creating, Reflecting, Investigating and Talking, we initiated our first collaboration.

We are interested in investigating the perceived differences between 'art' and 'craft', as this has been a feature of our conversations in several meetings. How does the apparent need to 'label' oneself as a particular kind of practitioner (a 'photographer', a 'craft worker', etc.) affect individual practices and how do those descriptions of discipline relate to differing methods of producing work? To get started, we are running three 'mini projects', which we will use in order to pin down and agree a clear research question that will then inform the next working stages of the project. The idea of these is that by introducing particular boundaries or criteria we will flush out key aspects of our respective practices which will better equip us in our collaborative investigations.

The first of these, Creative Whispers has now reached a conclusion and the outcomes were displayed both online and at a day of further collaborative exercises at MadLab in Manchester.

Full details of proposed collaborative starting points:

- **Creative Whispers** (December 2012 – May 2013)
Each collaborator produced 'a thing' (this may have been a physical object or just an idea recorded in a written/sketched fashion) which they felt somehow represented their practice. These were brought along to the first meeting (December 2012), pooled and then picked out at random. The tasks was then to take that new outcome away, respond to it in some way (may be to physically add to or develop an object, produce an outcome based on an idea, etc.) and bring it back the following month. These developed outcomes were then passed on to a new collaborator and the process was repeated until May. We then discussed and reviewed the outcomes in order to research the characteristics of practice and the effect of labelling work as the product of a particular discipline, though we will also undoubtedly had some interesting pieces in their own right.
- **Crafting by Committee** (Planned for October – December 2013)
Each collaborator will produce a brief project proposal, situated within their current practice. The rest of the group will then act as a panel who will, upon hearing the proposal, specify particular criteria for how the project must progress. The practitioner must then follow these instructions precisely and return to the panel in a future meeting with the outcome. We can then use these pieces to reflect upon how decision making within different practices can impact upon outcomes but also be an intrinsic part of the creative process. Again, these will be research pieces, starting points for potential development and pieces of work in their own right.
- **Artists Anonymous** (Date TBA)
Proposed as a potential performance/audience participation piece at an event or opening in which we display work, this would again be part artwork, part research. Individuals in the group would be required to wear name tags which identify a creative discipline to which they ascribe themselves. In a parody of a 'self-help' session, they would be asked to introduce themselves to the group by specifying the particular practice which they feel they operate within and will then be 'interrogated' to justify or substantiate this claim. Though this will be facilitated by CRITgroup attendees, it's hoped to involve a wider range of individuals who might be somewhat unsuspecting and bring a whole new perspective to the conversation. This would probably be filmed and transcribed for further analysis.

Upon completion of these projects (as well as throughout), collaborators will meet for a review sessions in which we will reflect upon the outcomes of each and discuss ways to move the project forward. This will include the formulation of a 'research question' which defines our area of investigation with more clarity.