

Practice/Research

Debates and Dialogues

The social construction of „research“

- Many different traditions of enquiry
- Dominated in the West by a particular version of „scientific rationality“
- Social science attempts to bring a disciplined approach to the study of society
- But postmodernism critiques objectivity, rationality and „high“ culture as profoundly ideological – as **constructs**
- For example: researching in/through popular music or media studies, or participatory arts, is a **complex hybrid** making use of **multiple perspectives**
- **Disciplinary boundaries under challenge; but a need to justify/defend the approaches/methods used**

MashingUp: research/practice

- Conversational forms of learning
- Working between universities and other research/practice communities
- Network spaces: spaces which enable interchange
- Reflective practice: practitioners/professionals analysing and reflecting on their own situations/dilemmas
- co-construction of knowledge – we have technologies which enable more individualised learning interests

...Using Youtube as piano tutor



Distributed, networked forms of learning and researching?

Tech etc



Blogs, web etc



More individualised, self-managed learning environments? Communication tools?

High stakes research

- Who gets to produce knowledge?
- What forms of knowledge are recognised, valued...
....and funded (Lyotard: mercantilization)
- In universities, push towards instrumentalism and performativity – justification in terms of „impact“ and economic applicability
- At same time, multiplying fields of study/methods/approaches/radical interdisciplinarity
- This has impact on professional identities
- The entrepreneurial subject – professional identities in education/business/commerce/the arts: policy/practice
discourses construct subjectivities

Practice/Research

- **Practice-as-research** (the mode of enquiry is also the form – i.e. dancer enquiring into the world physically, through choreography/artist as image-making)
- **Practice-led research** (in which the research includes/is driven by practical enquiry)
- **Practice-based research** – research into or through practice
- Is it sometimes better to do “parallel” research rather than go into the hall of mirrors of self-reflection on practice? I.e. research analogous fields, not just a kind of narcissistic view of self – research should be enriching, not narrowing

Researching art...

- Art as a form of knowledge (knowledge **in and through** art-making)
- Knowledge **about** art

(borrowed from Phil Tagg www.tagg.org, who in turn borrowed it from Herbert Read: knowledge *about* art, knowledge *in/through* art, knowledge *for* art)

Ways of „knowing“

- Academic discourse privileges language
- But artistic communication encompasses more than language – music, art, dance, performance, image-making etc. Otherwise why wouldn't we just write it?
- Writing, speaking and acting are different – academia often privileges writing and more „fixed“, apparently less fluid ways of knowing
- Academic research requires argumentation and „proof“ – can practice provide this?

„Theory“ and „practice“

- **Theory** – *theorein* (Greek) – to see – contemplate – essentially to think about
- **Practica** – to do, practice (*complex word*)
- **Praxis** – the interplay between theory and practice – reflection in action

Underpinning every practice there are sets of theories – an implied ways of seeing the world – worldviews, standpoints, set of values and learned behaviours – research unpacks this.

Raymond Williams: from medium to social practice: making work in the arts and media, (we can reify the products as ‘objects’ AND think about them as a social practice).

Interweaving theory and practice

- Practice is embodied, intuitive, discursive, improvisatory – but isn't theory too?
- Highly skilled disciplinary knowledge requires 'soft' intuition as well as teleological thinking
- Chance and accident can play a useful role
Narrative and autobiography as a starting point for thinking about evolution of practice
- Sophisticated research cultures blend the formal and informal in reflective communities of practice

different approaches?

A methodological menu

- **Reflective practice** –(Schon)
- **Action research**
- **Embodied practice** – e.g. knowledge about/learned skills in performance, communication in dance/acting/music etc
- **Participatory methods** – documenting, storytelling, narrating, mapping, gathering information,
- **Collaborativeresearch** – with artists and arts organisations beyond the university
- **Applied, critical theory** – mobilising theory to illuminate, analyse and understand practice
- **Is design research** a useful analogy? Practical and applied problem solving – the designer as the new hero of the performative academy, because the work is „useful“?
- **Researching practice** – learning and showing how to do things better, more skilfully - in applied ways
- **Reflexivity** (Bourdieu) — research is itself a form of practice with its own internal logics – “objectification of the process of objectification”

Knowledge

In traditional research/schooling – “acquiring knowledge is largely separated from the situations in which, through knowing in action, knowledge is constructed and used” (Gordon Wells)

(Friere – „banking“ theory of education)



Implications...

- So how do universities enable this? More reflexive? Dialogical? Multiple spaces and relationships? Resources needed for this?
- What is the role of the practitioner-academic in this knowledge ecology?
- How should we work differently?

Open knowledge ecologies?

Lyotard: Postmodern Science as the Search for Instabilities

Publishing – new ecologies, new economies, but also old rivalries and status games

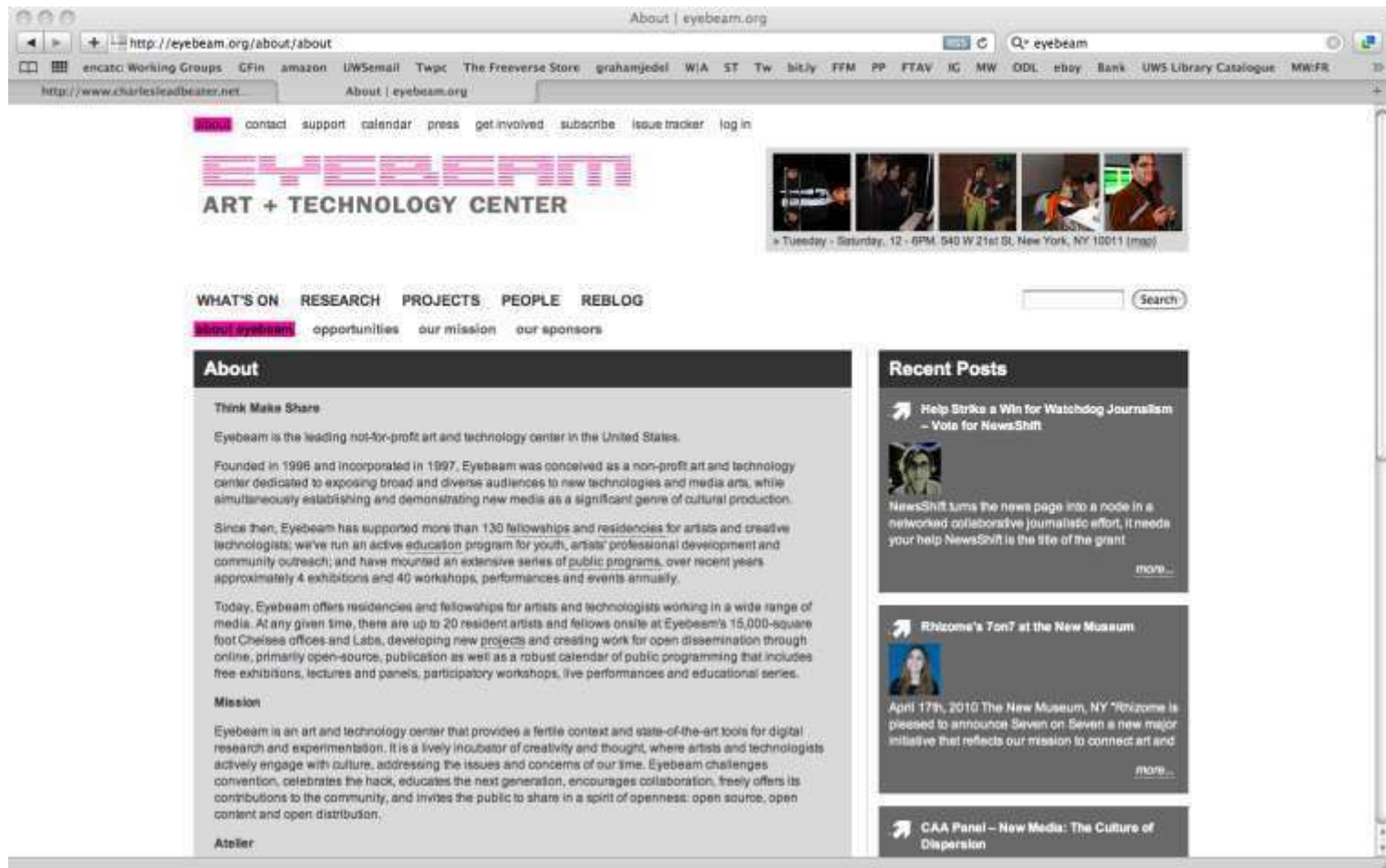
Ownership vs free culture/open source...IP issues etc



Contradictions, glitches, fissures, not just
seamless network culture: power struggles;
institutions are difficult



Universities don't have a monopoly on innovation or research...far from it...!



Creativity and 'research'

The point is to generate the new

- Research processes –
discovery, invention, synthesis, analysis
- Arriving at a method in and through the process –
not just grounded theory
- More creative cultures in institutions require
more creative approaches to time, space and
resources..and the will to make collaborations
work properly

“If we knew what we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?”

(Albert Einstein)

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