

RESEARCH SEMINARS 2014-15

All are welcome to join us for TVAD Talks, held regularly on the second Wednesday of each month during term. We start at 12.45 with a sandwich lunch for a 1 pm research presentation and discussion after. The location for all sessions is 1A157 (except for 14 January, which is AA191). In addition, we have our Visiting Researcher joining us on Monday 24th and Tuesday 25th November this year, and again in spring 2015.

Wednesday October 8th 2014 – Nick Lovegrove, ‘Crisis Communication: A visual history of BP’s use of public relations after the Deepwater Horizon accident’

The project I will introduce is part of a larger body of work I created whilst conducting my MA in 2012. After extensive research, I produced a series of rhetorical pieces of design that explored how graphic design’s techniques of persuasion could be used to expose and critique the Public Relations industry. They attempted to explain the nature, history, practices and ethics of the industry to the public, drawing attention to the way organisations attempt to control and manipulate their public image.

One of these outcomes was a book that acts as a critical reaction to BP’s crisis management of the Deepwater Horizon accident. Using the firm’s own press releases, commissioned imagery and publicly available data I created a one-off publication that acts as a timeline charting the company’s response to the disaster.

After presenting the project at a conference at LCC in August, this method of visually documenting an event has resulted in a number of potential collaborations with academics from varying fields who usually rely on the written word to communicate their practice. This takes graphic design away from its usual commercial constraints, towards a wider role as a research tool.

<http://tvad-uh.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/nick-lovegrove-speaks-about-his-project.html>

Wednesday November 12th 2014 – Polly Palmer, ‘Out of Study Experiences’

Engaging students in a diverse culture of arts, technology and architecture, and asking them to consider where within it their work is placed, has become increasingly difficult for tutors and students alike as a result of perceptible changes in the student demographic. The Arts Council (2010) has identified key changes, not only in the youth demographic but also in the definition of high culture and its audience. This may lead us to question not only existing contextual studies teaching strategies and what might be an appropriate repertoire of learning and teaching techniques to encourage participation, but also the basic assumptions of what constitutes culture and the concomitantly appropriate curriculum. This presentation summarises a work in progress; an article that aims to communicate the reasons for this success and thereby provide a recipe for continued future benefits for students using this strategy.

I will examine the benefits of direct, planned, and facilitated engagement with contemporary design and arts culture for art and design students in higher education, using case studies of my work with 3D design students. The specific focus will be upon cultural visits, both local and further afield, and how these can advance knowledge, understanding and skills in studio and academic practice alike. Definitions of culture will be discussed, from vernacular culture to traditional high culture. The nature of students’ normal participation in cultural activities will be explored, and traditional and unorthodox views of the student demographic, including a rejection of all such classifications, will be evaluated, as will expected responses current in contextual studies.

This research presents a new model for student cultural participation and ways to encourage engagement. It shows presents strategies to draw students into reflective analysis of design and the built environment through ‘out-of-study’ experiences; taking cultural participation out of the lecture room and the library and into the street, site and venue.



Monday November 24th 2014, F390 Wright Building – TVAD Visiting Researcher 2014-15: Dr Javier Gimeno-Martínez, VU University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 'A graphic negotiation with the past, present and future. Political devolution and the symbols of the Belgian regions (1970–1998)'

Political devolution results in administrative institutions that are generally created anew. However, these new institutions try to conceal the brevity of their existence by reusing communal symbols from the past, such as flags or coats of arms. Even when these symbols might objectively carry certain polemical connotations, the weight of tradition can become an opportune tool for legitimating institutions, so that the past is somehow forced to conform to the present. Properly analysing this instrumentalization of historical iconography can pose quite a challenge for both historians and designers. Indeed, it is present-mindedness rather than historical perspective that drives these legitimating processes.

This talk analyses the negotiation of signs by the governmental bodies that resulted from Belgian federalization. Along with the conflict between past and present, the Belgian case addressed the future, too. Belgian political devolution evolved in parallel with the Maastricht Treaty (signed in 1992), through which regions attained prominent roles in Europe. Did the need to create competitive regions invalidate the suitability of ancient symbols for legitimizing public institutions? It does not seem to be the case. On the contrary, institutional emblems coupled the necessity for appearing established with the urge to project European regions as competitive entities.

Wednesday December 10th 2014 – Dr Barbara Brownie, ‘Shoes Without Feet: The presence of absence in empty-shoe memorials’

Personal artefacts left behind by the victims of conflict and tragedy become part of the material culture of war. The piles of clothes and shoes that were left behind at Auschwitz and Dachau, give us a sense of the thousands of victims who once owned them. Holocaust museums in particular display shoes among other primary artefacts as “tangible proof in the face of debate about, and even denial of, what transpired [during the holocaust]” (Williams, 2007, p. 25). Shoe memorials exhibit what philosopher Patrick Fuery (cited in Bille et al. 2010, p. 5) describes as “secondary absence”, that is, not absence itself, but absence that is “defined by its connection to presence”. Memorialists are directly concerned with expressing absence through presence. Shoes are presented as witnesses to past events, and are sometimes the only surviving evidence of the existence of the people who once wore them.

Though they are designed with the intention of referencing the past, shoe memorials often say more about the contemporary communities that construct them than they say about the memorialised victims. Particularly in recent temporary shoe memorials, for which shoes are repurposed (often donated by members of the bereaved community), victims are remembered as through the eyes of the living. There is an artificiality to these memorials that reflects a desire for familiarity rather than authenticity. Repurposed for use in a memorial, shoes are transformed into sacred objects. Once archived, the memorial artefacts are more effective as a record of public grief than of the tragedy itself.

This TVAD discussion will present examples of holocaust shoe memorials at Auschwitz and on the river Danube in Budapest, in which shoes are presented to document the suffering of victims, in contrast to vernacular and temporary memorials of the past two decades, for which shoes are selected to represent the grief of those left behind. I will address how shoes transform parks and streets into “traumascapes” or, in some cases, into data visualisations which precisely quantify loss.



Wednesday January 14th 2015 – Prof Michael Biggs, speaking about the evaluation of research

Wednesday February 11th 2015 – DOUBLE BILL

Matthias Hillner, ‘From virtual typography to intellectual property rights (IPR), and from research through practice to research into practice’

This presentation will describe a journey from professional graphic design practice in the field of motion typography to design research and theory building. Building on Sir Christopher Frayling’s differentiation between ‘research into practice’, ‘research through practice’ and ‘research for practice’, the presentation will discuss possibilities to connect research with practice in the field of art and design. These different paradigms will be discussed in conjunction with my journey through MA studies, MPhil studies, and PhD studies. These three stages are strongly linked to my professional art and design studio practice in the field of time-based typography. Two projects will be highlighted as practice-based connection points between stages of research: Virtual Typography and the so-called ‘SafeView’ project. The former is a consultancy-based business in the field of motion graphics, the latter a proprietary initiative to innovate the ATM interface. The talk aims to provide inspiration on how the connection between research and practice can be utilized for the purpose of fund raising and for entrepreneurial endeavours. Including two disparate subject areas such as motion typography on the one hand and IPR on the other, may seem confusing. The talk will, however, show how such unrelated topics may connect with each other through research.

The journey from professional reflective design practice to theory building in the area of IPR, will comprise my successful funding bid with NESTA in 2005, my ‘not so successful funding bid’ with Design London in 2009, and my successes obtaining funding within and outside the University of Hertfordshire in 2010. Last, but not least, the talk will provide a succinct outline of my current research into how designer-entrepreneurs utilize IPR in order to obtain financial support for their design initiatives. This will include references to interviewing techniques and qualitative research analysis.



Kevin Dowd, 'Exploring practice-based methods in graphic design research'

The discipline of graphic design is growing to accommodate novel ways of gathering data and generating findings, expanding beyond the established foundation of borrowed rhetoric that has informed current research methodologies. However, there are few examples of methodologies tailored specifically to the skills of the graphic designer as researcher, and fewer still with practice at their core. This talk explores examples of practice-based research in graphic design, highlighting a need to develop methods for design research practitioners. This is examined further through my own study, which proposes a novel system of practice-based methods in graphic design research.

Wednesday March 11th 2015 – Dr Ivan Phillips, speaking about his forthcoming book *Once Upon A Time Lord: The Myths and Stories of Doctor Who*.

In this session I will be talking about the book that I am currently writing (or supposed to be writing!) for I.B.Tauris, *Once Upon A Time Lord: The Myths and Stories of Doctor Who*, due for publication in 2016.

Towards the end of the 2010 series finale, 'The Big Bang', as he reboots the Universe and waits to fade forever from existence, the Doctor talks to the sleeping child Amelia Pond about the adventures they will now never share, the lives he will never have lived: 'We're all stories in the end,' he says. 'Just make it a good one.' Although the contributions of the current show runner, Steven Moffat, have not met with universal approval among either fans or casual viewers, his scriptwriting here, as elsewhere, shows a sharp awareness of the centrality of storytelling to the enduring success of the *Doctor Who* phenomenon. It is no coincidence that fans of *Doctor Who* tend to talk in terms of 'stories': the first story they remember, their favourite story, the 'lost' story that they most wish could be found, the most under- or over-rated stories, and so on.

The merging of this storytelling element with features from traditional mythologies has been reflected in the analyses of many critics in the years since John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado's pioneering study *Doctor Who: The Unfolding Text* (1983), most notably Matt Hills in his *Triumph of a Time Lord* (2010). My own book, however, is proposed as the first full-length monograph to focus entirely on *Doctor Who* as an accumulated and richly interwoven, often contradictory, body of myths. The need for such an analysis was indicated over a decade ago by David Rafer:

The Doctor himself is a carrier and purveyor of his own myth but also encounters images and patterns drawn from ancient world mythology. The way that the Doctor confronts and feeds into myth reveals something of the enduring nature and appeal of mythic narratives and symbols and is a contributory factor in the mysticism of the character (In Butler, p. 123).

Acknowledging the status of *Doctor Who* as a substantial myth in its own right – Miles Booy has referred to it as 'a significant national narrative' (2012: 166) – this also promotes an exploration of the many ways in which it has become a locus of translation for existing mythologies, ancient and modern. Central to my study is a recognition that *Doctor Who* – 'a voracious gobbler of ideas' (Newman, 2005: 70) – has always taken its raw material from elsewhere, reimagining elements of classical mythology as well as

drawing upon the established 'mythic' traditions of literature, cinema, television and other media. By examining the diverse stories which *Doctor Who* has generated across the last half-century, my aim is to demonstrate not only its singular ability to carry fantastical narratives into everyday life but also, perhaps, the continuing need for such narratives in the modern world.

The joy of this project is that it enables me to merge a lifelong fan obsession with my academic research interests and the kind of subject matter that I have long discussed with my students. The story has only just begun, but I look forward to sharing it with some of you...

References:

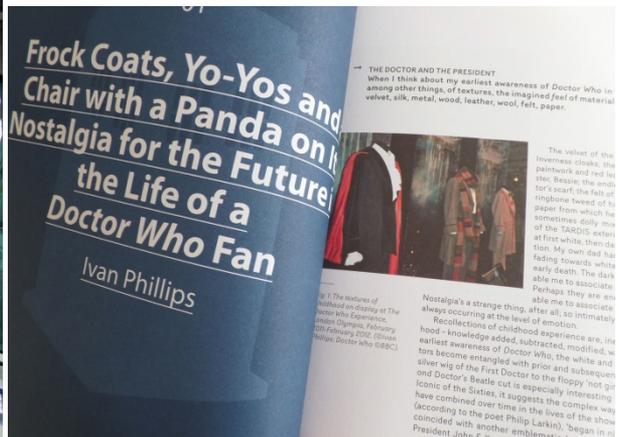
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Wednesday May 13th 2015 – Jodi Nelson, Impact of Interactive Storytelling: What challenges are involved in demonstrating new forms of documentary filmmaking as an agent for social change?

My new research proposes how the changing paradigm shifts in digital technology and (supposed) democratization of the filmmaking process allows filmmakers to connect to a global niche audience with more immediacy. Through interactive, immersive and connected storytelling practices, filmmakers are connecting to global audiences and creating opportunities for interface, engagement, UX (user exchange) and audience reception through online activism, due to the nature of new technological interfaces specifically within interactive documentary storytelling.

My practice-led research will produce an interactive, web documentary with multiple narrative structures (interactive, participatory, narrative, webdoc) and thematically address the subject of activists working in the Brazilian Amazon.

The practice will produce a case study and repository of research outputs for impact, which will investigate the following questions:

- What access and resources are available for filmmakers working in this space?
- What challenges are presented to filmmakers working within new technological forms that fall outside traditional filmmaking practices?
- What challenges lie ahead for co-collaborators and online audiences in the interactive and online space?
- In what ways can filmmakers working within this space, incite change action and make an impact on its subjects and audiences socially, culturally, economically and politically?

Key areas of interest: Interactive, immersion and connected storytelling, Documentary, Creative, co-collaboration, co-opt practices, Open source applications (Authoring Tools), Notions of Auteurism and Authorship in Participatory Spaces, Interface and engagement/UX/Audience reception, Mobile and Web Distribution/Dissemination, Data and Research impact



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