Seeing as an achievement: opening the shutters on perception and critique in crafts based vocational education

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Illustrations

All photographs by Oliver Cameron-Swan except where noted & figures 24, 27, 35, 36, 37, 49, & 69 where the photographer is uncredited/unknown.

Abstract

This thesis is a study of lived experiences of the English education system, my own and those of students in an arts education college. It chronicles my experiences of becoming and being a skilled professional: a photographer, an artist, and then a teacher. It also presents narrative accounts of the lived experiences of my students as they learn to be and become skilled artists and craftworkers in the vocations and creative arts they come to pursue in the context of the arts college in which this research study is set.

The ways in which concepts of experience, knowledge, skill, craft, and practice are currently understood are explored, compared, and discussed in relation to how these concepts have been understood in more coherent ways in the past. The legitimacy of fabricated divides between practice and theory, insight and imagination, academic and vocational education, emotion and thought, thinking and doing are questioned and challenged.

This research draws upon the work of Richard Sennett (2008), in his writing regarding the nature of craft and stages and processes involved in the acquisition and development of different forms of knowledge, skills, traditions, and practices. It also builds upon the works of John Dewey (1902), in his writing about the nature of education and experience in relation to both the child and the curriculum, and Elliot Eisner (2002) on his discussion of embodied learning. For an older and more coherent philosophical discussion of the concept of practice and forms of knowledge, this thesis turns to the work of Aristotle (384-322 BC) and his discussion of *technè, poesis, phronesis,* and *praxis* to offer a critique of contemporary understanding of these concepts and to their consequences in action in education today.

Keywords: experience; craft; practice; vocational education; qualitative research.

Chapter 1: Problem & Context

Figure 1 Blacksmiths at work in the forge.

"By law, the worker is also a citizen and an individual. As such, he is not a means but an end; he must have the ability, not only to produce, but also to think; he is entitled to the culture which makes one an individual, that is to say, a free being."

Cited by Brucey 2008, p.37, in Méhaut, 2011, p.36

Introduction

Unravelling a Lived Experience of Education - A Voyage into Craft

This chapter opens with an ethnographic introduction to the context and focus of the research. I use the term ethnographic to describe research that is conducted in an immersive way, as described by Bhatti (2017, p.86). In this thesis, I am turning to my personal experience of working in an independent arts college as a photographic technical demonstrator supporting degree level students to develop their photography skills and practice. The thesis then moves on to present an account of autobiographical experience relating to learning how to become and learning how to be a photographer and teacher. I use the term autobiographical in the sense that I increasingly find myself reflecting on my own lived experiences. Through the work of Méhaut (2011), this thesis discusses the organising principles of at the

heart of the French vocational education and training (VET) system, *savoir* (to know), *savoir faire* (to know how to make) and *savoir être* (to know how to be…) and their relevance to the English system of VET.

In beginning this thesis, time and again, I find myself turning to my own educational experiences in relation to this research. I'm looking for connections. As this research is concerned with qualitative accounts of experience, I write in the present tense to try to convey the immediacy and vitality of lived experience. As some parts of this chapter present accounts of experience, they overlap with parts of Chapter 4 and therefore also need to be regarded as data. Hunt (1987, p.25) reminds us that the starting point in the process of research and change is personal and practical knowledge rather than theoretical knowledge. He challenges the division of labour between practice, theory, and research, and points to the importance of taking experience seriously by 'beginning with ourselves'. He illustrates his argument with practical examples from the discipline of psychology and reveals how, when those who theorise about a practice become removed from the sites and experiences of that practice, then it is the quality of theory and theorising in that field of that practice which suffer and, in some cases, the practice itself. That is why I begin this thesis with personal experience.

I came to understand this research as an ethnographic research project a couple of years into the program. Where my initial reading of the related theory of research and methodological approaches had been concerned with grappling with a personal standpoint in relation to constructivist versus positivist ontological positions regarding the form and nature of the social world and epistemological positions regarding how what is assumed in the social world can be known. My research study has grown organically, informed by what felt right at the time and what was achievable. Finding Bhatti's (2017, p.85-91) exploration of the history of ethnography, its approaches, and its expectations was something of a lightbulb moment. Here was an explicit description of what I was experiencing, research that was in turns, immersive, exploratory, and unpredictable. Add to this an element of autobiographical reflection, prompted by a turn in the direction of the study to consider the history of technical education in the UK and you have my reasons for undertaking this research and for conducting and presenting it in the ways that I have. In my teaching practice I often turn to accounts of my own experience to highlight a point or offer up to my students an insight into a situation or event. Again this is something that I feel comes naturally, is an integral part of our experience and activity as human beings. Finding a way to express this and link it to theories, ideas, and concepts in educational research has been a valuable learning experience in itself.

This research began the autumn of 2018, following the successful completion of an introductory MA short course in Advancing Pedagogy in Post Compulsory Education & Training on the SUNCETT program. The first year of the research was concerned with theoretical and ethical standpoints, and it would be 2019 before I started to gather data from research activities and participants. All our teaching and research activities were disrupted, as was everything else, by the impact of the covid-19 lockdowns in the UK. Further complications were added in the form of a round of redundancies at the college that serves as a site for this research in 2020, and an incremental move into teaching roles for me from 2021 onwards. Currently I teach photographic practice one day a week to degree level students and teach at a mental health charity for three.

Within this chapter I will set the scene for the location of this research, offering something of the flavour of the local geography and the history of the educational setting where the research takes place. I will turn to my own educational experience, both formal and informal, obtained within the school system and within industry as a practicing photographer and teacher. I will offer something in the way of an insight into the practice of photography, and the reasons that make this insight valuable to the participating

students. Although this chapter is titled Problem and Context, it is the context of the research which I turn to first.

Figure 2 A landscape view of part of the county. Please note lack of cows or cider.

Context of the Research: Location, location, location.

"…It's all cows and cider… isn't it?"

The above paraphrased quote was relayed to me from a university interviewer's comments on my home county. Although it is dismissive in an offhand way about the nature and character of my county, it does highlight some of the ways in which my local community can be stereotyped. It's also a little kinder than the "you must be knee deep in bullshit in your neck of the woods" comment voiced as an icebreaker to a conversation at a family wedding a couple of summers ago. We are not. And the comment did not break the ice, it thickened it. Self-effacing we may be, but we have our pride. As an insider or genuine practitioner, it's one thing to poke fun at something or somewhere you belong to, it is quite another to have your identity, the area, and the community in which you live put down in public by an outsider (Dunne, 2005, p.152). Besides, while my home county may occasionally be graced with the fragrance of fertiliser, it is not the default state of things. There is much more to my community and the lives and experiences of the human beings who live in it than can be captured in a hackneyed, questionable, and stereotypical cliché.

One of the positive outcomes of the Coronavirus lockdown in the spring of 2020 was a marked, if not total, reduction in the volume of road traffic in our part of the world. Government directives to exercise once a day coupled with a bout of good weather and the almost invisible Easter Break from college activities (our teaching and support duties having moved online, managed through Microsoft Teams, allowing us to work from home), we were able to support a renewed interest in cycling from our youngest son. Our cycle routes widened as his confidence grew, from small trips to one end of our village and back again, to longer meandering paths that crisscrossed the county's back roads, our direction up for debate at each junction and very dependent upon the group's enthusiasm for an uphill climb, an exhilarating descent, or a turn towards new and unexplored territory. We would pass soft verges and blossoming hedgerows, with cow parsley, buttercups, and ragged robin flowering against the red-green foliage. Sometimes we would cycle past a hidden patch of wild garlic, prompting discussion of lunch and dinner options, at other times we'd run alongside fields of bright yellow rapeseed, the scent heavy and all pervasive. I find myself coaching my son, cycling a few feet behind him, and offering advice and direction, mixed in with our wider discussions, as we wind our way around the softly rolling hills of the local countryside. I am reminded of

how important cycling was to me at his age, a chance for freedom, for independent movement. When I was sixteen, I spent a few weeks working on a building site. I had finished my GCSE's and found myself at a loose end before starting 'A' levels. I had started going to music festivals and any paid work was a welcome boost to my finances.

The work was in a neighbouring village, a scant three miles away, an easy bike ride for me. The road was mainly flat, with only a couple of small hills to interrupt the route. A few days into the job someone trimmed the hedges on part of the way. Rural hedge trimming is an intense process. I don't think that I have ever seen it done with anything smaller than a massive hedge cutter mounted on a tractor in our neck of the woods. The clippings go everywhere and are almost impossible to avoid. I was generally well prepared as a cyclist at this time, carrying a puncture repair kit with me when out on my bike as general good practice. At lunchtime I fixed the flat tire that I had picked up on the way to work. When I got home, I fixed another one. The following day I did the same. This pattern became the new normal for my working day, collecting punctures on the way to and from work, fixing them when I had the chance. I became adept at locating the site of the damage, stripping the inner tube, mending the holes, and setting the bike back to full working order. At no point in the following weeks did I consider changing my route to work. In retrospect I may even have considered that the time saved by using the quickest road was worth the aggravation of continual repairs. I shared this story with my eldest child as we cycled this same route the other day, thankfully puncture free.

My county is about as far inland from the sea as you can get in the United Kingdom, in the heart of the west midlands. My home city itself is only sixteen miles from the Welsh border, and the county is probably best known for the breed of cattle that shares its name, for being the home of a famous regiment (I know this because when I first moved there my back garden ended in a very tall wire mesh fence that was occasionally patrolled by armed soldiers with dogs. The road we lived in was closed one afternoon as a suspicious package had been left at the camp entrance. We were allowed to go home and advised to stay at the back of the house away from the windows as they were preparing to detonate the package with a remote vehicle, a bit like Number 5 from the film *Short Circuit* (1985). We ignored the advice of course and stayed at the front to see the action. It turned out to be what looked like a box of pamphlets, which was still very exciting when they blew it up). In terms of its connection to cider production, the shire is home to many cider producers and the county has a long history with the apple, in both production of and scientific research into the fruit. The county has more apple orchards than anywhere else in the UK and produces a fifth of all cider sold globally. It's not unusual to find apples trees dotted around the county, in public spaces like village greens and in private gardens. I have one at home that neatly separates my house and garden, the remnant of an orchard that stood here before the houses were built. The tree is grafted, producing eating apples on one side and cooking apples on the other.

The cathedral city is relatively small compared to others. Take a walk from the city centre and you can be in the rural countryside in under half an hour. Climb the cathedral tower's two hundred and eighteen steps and you'll be greeted with panoramic views that almost include the entirety of the city. Very little of our architecture rises above four floors and almost all of it is built in the vernacular style. Much of our housing is of timber framed construction, so many buildings across the county that, despite the Georgian fashion for adding brick facades, there is a black and white village trail for those interested in this style. Where modern architecture does appear it is remarkable as a distinct and sometimes controversial alternative to the standard style of the city, such as the modern theatre building (large glass panels, steel, and open spaces), the development of a small block of flats on stilts by the river, and the prefabricated student accommodation being developed by our arts college. The college is involved with the development of a new student accommodation block consisting of a modular building design housed in a

steel framework covered with a brick façade. This isn't to say that the county isn't innovative, but you are unlikely to find architectural designs of the scale that populate, and in some cases dominate, the London and Birmingham skylines. It also points to a curious facet of the county's cultural identity, that we tend to be modest or shy of broadcasting our successes. I encountered a similar geographically related attitude within my degree cohort. My degree level college drew students from the length and breadth of the country, and we occasionally broke into three groups to argue the points on the imaginary north-south divide. The three groups were mapped according to their area of origin, with both North and South claiming superiority for their region, while those of us from the Midlands were happy to opt out of this discussion, conceding that our part of the world wasn't all that great.

My home county has a peculiar reputation. Often seen as the poor relation to wealthier counties, the 'country mouse' to larger neighbouring counties (one of whom we were partnered with for over two decades), we have a resilient agricultural industry with long roots in craft. Our industrial revolution was agricultural, with strong traditions of beef and dairy production, links to the wool trade, and global recognition as a cider producer. According to DEFRA 95% of the land that makes up the county is designated as rural. In recent years there has been a growth in poultry and strawberry production. We have a history in tile and brick making, and a long association with farriery, something supported by a dedicated agricultural college. The county is not well served by motorways (we have a small stretch on the edge of the county), or dual carriageways, and it is not unusual to hear motorists complaining of being held up by agricultural traffic. The village I live in is bounded by two large potato producers, and it is common to see large farm machinery travelling along the main road. We always try to remember to turn the wing mirrors in on our cars when we park up in our village, to leave a little more room for farm traffic to manoeuvre, and to save on our garage bills. The pace of life here feels slower than other parts of the country.

Amongst all of this it is important to understand the size of the county and the movement of people within it. As a young man growing up in a small village in the north of the county, I was often seized by the desire to move away to something or somewhere bigger, a change I made in 1992 when I left home to start my Arts Foundation studies. I was determined at this point that I would never live in somewhere so small with so little going on again. I followed this by moving to a bigger town with a larger population for my arts degree, where very few seemed to know where my home county was. There was always a moment during the return journey, rattling across the country in a friend's classic VW Beetle, where we felt that we had arrived back in our part of the world. This feeling intensified the further I travelled, the county's green fields and red earth a very welcome sight whenever I was home between contracts from my job as a cruise ship photographer. As our local vicar recently put it, "there's glue in the mud". Now I find myself happily back in the same village I was determined not to live in.

My journey echoes that of many of our students. There is evidence, from data collected by our local council in 2018, that the county experiences a decrease in population around the late teens to early thirties, as many of our youth relocate to larger urban areas, either to work or to study. I can see that my boomerang trajectory is mirrored in the figures for our local population, as the county has below average figures for ages from late teen to late thirties with above average levels past forty-four.

There is also anecdotal evidence that the city draws from the surrounding rural areas and smaller towns nearby. A colleague who works at another local college notes that they draw their 'A' level intake mainly from towns and villages local to them, while many potential students' resident in town choose to attend colleges in the nearest larger cities instead. For these students, there is an attractive draw to somewhere a bit bigger than where they come from.

I hope that this section of the thesis gives you some small insight into the context in which this study is set, the people, the county, and its peculiarities. Now I turn to the county's educational provision in terms of its FE and HE offers. Here I also begin to bring the educational problem which lent impetus to this study into view.

A Tale of Three Colleges: What's the Educational Offer?

The main centre of Further Education (FE) is in the north of the city, where our three FE providers sit side by side, in a row, a Sixth Form College, a vocational College (formerly known as the Tech College), and a College of Arts. The vocational college has a satellite site out in the country, an agricultural college site offering animal care, rural crafts, and equestrian training. It is also home to the largest training forge in Europe, and the site where our Blacksmithing students do most of their practical work.

The College of Arts itself is spread over two sites, with the majority of FE provision retained next to the other colleges and the HE campus a fifteen-minute walk westwards. Beyond this, the city has a dedicated college for people with sight problems, one of only two dedicated colleges in Britain, as well as a recently launched Technology & Engineering degree provider.

An internal contextual statement about the College of Arts, describes the college thus:
"The last specialist arts college in the Midlands, one of three specialist arts colleges remaining in the UK. It is a dual sector college delivering Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) provision, offering creative arts courses from L2 through to L7."

This statement identifies several key facts:

1. The college can trace its history back to the 1880's, when it was known as the 'School of Art and Science'.
2. It has approximately 780 students, with around 360 of those enrolled on HE courses.
3. 37% of the students are Mature.
4. Crafts based courses account for over half the HE student population, as opposed to media related courses that tend to be more popular in urban settings.
5. Extensive technical workshops are a key part of the college.
6. 79% of students come from a vocational entry pathway.
7. Many of our younger students have come to the college looking to learn through the embodied approach found on practice-based courses.

That our students are choosing to study arts courses with a heavy practical element is evident in their hands-on approach to creating art works and, in some cases, their aversion to engaging with the academic side of their studies. It is not unusual for our students to express dismay at the prospect of written theoretical work. Some of those capable of producing practical course work worthy of a first, find the prospect of a dissertation so intimidating that they actively enquire about the possibility of completing the degree without doing the written work.

The college is described as having a "unique position as both College-based Higher Education (CBHE) and as a provider of creative vocational education" (Crowson, 2019, p.152).

Beginning with Myself and Steppingstones

The title of this section of the thesis is borrowed from the work of Hunt (1987, p.9), discussed above in the introduction to this chapter, where he argues that he quality of human experience is a neglected aspect of educational research.

Now you know something of the location for this research, please allow me to introduce myself, the educational problem in practice I encountered which gave impetus to this research, and the context in which it emerged. Let me also explain the communication devices I use in this thesis to present you with an account of my experiences of education and my voyage into my craft, first as a photographer and then as a teacher. At the point in this research where I realised that this thesis was beginning to take an autobiographical turn, I began to feel uneasy until I arrived at the understanding that many of us feel that way about disclosing how our experiences that have shaped our lives and our thinking, ideas, and beliefs. I gradually detected the origins of this defensiveness in an unwillingness to trust personal experience as a source of ideas and a focus for theory development and educational research. My resistance was further fuelled by a sense that somehow research based in studies of experience such as this was not rigorous or academic enough to warrant serious consideration by policy professionals, other researchers, and teachers. Dealing with this resistance has been difficult and remains a continuous struggle for me. I think I have made progress, otherwise I would not have been able to write this thesis, but I leave you to be the judge of that.

So much for internal resistance.

I am also aware that there are considerable external sources of resistance and scepticism towards this approach to educational research from branches of the research establishment which regard 'insider' educational research such as this as 'self-indulgent', 'woolly', and 'second-rate' in comparison to research in education conducted from the 'outside in'. The 'pull and push' of these internal and external sources of resistance and how I have tried to 'unpick' them are discussed in some detail in Chapter 3.

Researching lived experience, putting experience into words and other forms of language including image, has been a challenge for me throughout this research. Guided and encouraged by the works of Eisner (1993, p.5-11) and van Manen (1990, p.22), I have tried to move beyond the representation of educational research in the habitual form of text and number, to include images, sights, sounds, and stories of experience and research. To do this, I have turned to the methodology and methods of phenomenology, ethnography, creative practice, and art. These are discussed in some detail in Chapter 3. Following Hunt (1987), I borrow Progoff's (1975) concept of 'steppingstones' as a way of summarising highlights, critical incidents, and moments in my life without including unnecessary autobiographical detail. In this sense, this thesis is in part a study of what it means to be human as well as a study of what it means to become and to be a craftworker, an artist, and a teacher.

As I organise my steppingstones it is worth noting that my initial proposal for a research project was very much a 'hard' data driven exercise. I had intended to look at the use of photographic facilities and equipment at my institute, in part hoping to see if it was possible to track improvements in practice through camera loans and studio bookings. With hindsight I can see the flaws in this approach, and that the data may have proved difficult to assess in terms of its meaningfulness and quantifiability. At the time it had felt like the right approach to take, that educational research and those commissioning and supporting said research like to see factual data sets. It was what was expected. I am grateful to my supervisor for steering me away from this direction of travel at my very first tutorial.

I also think it's worth noting here something of the shifting focus of this research project. What initially began as a small action research project aimed at improving the uptake of photographic practice within the degree level courses at a specialist art college has changed tack several times:

1. To look at the history of technical education,
2. The way we teach practical skills and encourage practice,
3. The perceived divide between theory and practice,
4. The perceived divide between academic study and vocational training,
5. To consider the use of space within the educational environment

At no point have any of these shifts felt forced or unnatural, rather they have emerged as growing areas of concern and interest as the research has progressed. As the initial question was refined and refocused, at the start of a one-year SUNCETT MA short course in 2017, to improve the research question and make the study achievable and accessible, so some elements have been side-lined as time was spent looking in other directions. As the research progressed elements that had faded into the background returned to the fore. None of the elements listed above feel out of place to me in this research, but some of them have taken longer to develop or to make their presence felt.

Secondly the nature of the research has changed in its approach and methodology. When I started out on this research journey, putting together a rough idea of a plan for an action research project over a lunchtime coffee with a friend, who happened to be the scholarship manager at the college I work at, I had initially thought that the research would be heavily data orientated in a statistical way. We could lean on the tracking we had in place for room usage and kit loans to generate what I now understand to be a hard positivist approach to data analysis, looking for shifts in the numbers as indicators for changes in student engagement or some such other concern.

I'm very pleased that I was steered away from this approach towards a narrative driven ethnographic study that used constructivist-interpretivist approaches to understanding the nature of the social world and how we can know it (Coe *et al.,* 2017).

I'm mindful here that the first half of this introductory chapter may appear as some form of sentiment project. That is not my intention in turning to look back at my own experiences of education.

I am also grateful for the encouragement I received to write about experience and to define myself in relation to my practice and on my own terms. It is part of the human condition to be many things all at once, defined in relation to our connections. We are friends, family, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, work colleagues, strangers passing in the street. We accrue descriptive titles, hierarchical and segregratory in their designations. When I started this research journey I had a background as a photographer and was working predominantly as a Photographic Technical Demonstrator. Through discussion over the course of my studies and research, informed in part by the need to introduce myself succinctly at conference, I took ownership of my descriptors and became Oliver Cameron-Swan, Photographer / Educator / Researcher. Now that I've introduced myself let's look at how I got to this point.

Figure 3 A scene from my running route.

Steppingstone: Seeing Something New in the Landscape

Running, Spring 2021 - Present Day

In the spring of 2021, just after Valentine's Day, I started running again. Current coronavirus lockdown restrictions allowed everyone some time outdoors to exercise, and I needed to make some efforts to get fit, lose weight, and stay active. Plus, I could take the dog with me, so we'd both benefit.

I won't describe my efforts as anything more than a shambling jog. An ankle injury from a couple of years prior made me cautious of getting things wrong, and I knew it would take a while before I was ready to run further or faster. At that moment I was happy if I could maintain a steady pace over the distance.

In an effort to make the most of this activity I ran both directions around each section of the route that I would otherwise pass in a single go. The glebe land behind our church, where you could occasionally hear woodpeckers at work, was the first part of this route, and got a return visit at the end. The fields at the far end by the stream get two looped runs in succession, first one way then the other.

Each time I ran a section in a different way I would see something new. Take a diversion across the middle of a field to avoid livestock or other walkers and the route is altered, the ground offering different possibilities and risks. Viewed from a new angle the path is changed and different. Changes to an existing structure add new opportunity and insight.

Physical movement has played a great part in my ability to understand and contend with an issue, problem, or puzzle. My renewed running practice opened a train of thought on my experience of education. I realised that I am happiest when I can find a personal route into an issue.

If I am to relate this learning experience to the concepts of the French VET system then it is only to identify myself at this point, between the spring and summer of 2021, as existing in a state of *savoir*. I was running alone, without direction or companionship. I was learning and my running was improving but it was a very thin practice.

I offer this here as an illustration of my personal route through my experiences of the education system in the UK.

In this chapter I offer an autobiographical account of my experience, as part of an ethnographic approach to this research. I then link my experiences to a wider view of the educational problem and issues I am researching in this thesis and the contexts in which they emerged. Issues and areas of concern are identified and discussed along the way and then summarised towards the end of this chapter.

Here is an account of my personal entry into my voyages in art, craft, and education to date through this experiment in practitioner-research.

Stepping Stone: Formal Education Nursery School, 1976 - 1979

I don't really remember very much from my time spent at nursery school. I understand that I attended the same nursery school as my wife although we don't really remember each other from way back then.

Various family members have a strong impression of me refusing to go if I wasn't allowed to wear a riding hat and this is entirely possible. Standout moments for me include a lesson in telephone etiquette with an old Bakelite rotary telephone sitting on a table in the middle of a room, the discovery that if I pushed my fingers far enough down my throat I could make myself sick and get my mum to come and collect me, and that if I sang the alternative words to 'An English Country Garden' that my older cousins taught me I could get in an awful lot of trouble.

Pre-school education is brief, a handful of years that are generally classed as non-compulsory education but are expected. The government offers part funding for nursery/preschool placements, in the region of a couple of days a week for children past two years of age. Certainly, if you aren't taking up the offer of these days then you can expect a conversation with your health visitor.

A few years ago a friend trained as an early year's educational specialist, coming into the program as part of a government drive to involve more degree level graduates in this area of teaching. The emphasis here was on learning through play, scaffolded and proximal learning, and playing to the educational needs of the children attending rather than running to a strict rota. She felt that the training for this qualification was very similar to studying for a PGCE but without the recognition of qualified teacher status at the end.

The emphasis on learning to read was another area of concern for her, with the governmental drive for children to be able to read by the time they start primary school at five a persistent target even though opinion is divided as to the ideal age to start learning to read, with some education systems deferring formal education until the child is seven years old (Hogenboom, 2022). Certainly, this was our experience when we were looking for an autism assessment and diagnosis for one of our children. Attend as many consultations as you like, all the medical professionals involved would not confirm this diagnosis until our child turned seven.

I move on from my experiences of nursery school now as these seem to be more of a precursor to the more formal educational events in my life which kick off with primary school. At this stage we are far away from anything that could be considered a technical education. Preschool and primary schooling could, in its early years provision, be considered as a socialising activity. In my opinion it leans in to *savoir être* more than anything else. We are learning how to behave among others, away from our immediate family and friends.

Primary School, 1979 - 1985

My first year or so in education was spent at our village primary school. I wasn't unhappy there, as far as I can recall, but I wasn't learning very well. My teachers were concerned that my reading and writing was well behind my peers and sought help and advice. I was diagnosed as dyslexic, something that many people at the time (some teachers included) dismissed as nonsense. I've discussed this with others who have had a similar experience, and found their dyslexia written off as laziness or stupidity. I got lucky.

I was moved on the advice of a GP, just after my 7th birthday, as a dayboy to a fee-paying boarding school in the Shropshire countryside. My classmates were not all from wealthy backgrounds, but money and access to status were a key part of many conversations. Expensive toys and holidays were big. I hated this as we weren't wealthy in those terms, but I made some good friends. More importantly I was taught to read by the headmaster, someone to whom I shall always be grateful.

Having a supportive headmaster wasn't the only difference I encountered between the two schools. Uniform was an important aspect of my new school where it had not been a requirement before. Shorts were the order of the day for younger pupils, and you didn't get to wear long trousers until you had been there for few years. Although the school was mixed the split was heavily in favour of the boys, with girls accounting for about 5-10% of the school population. Corporal punishment was still a part of the school's disciplinary practice, and although the cane was no longer used you could expect 'six of the best' with a cricket bat for misbehaving. Female pupils were excused the bat in favour of a slipper. School lunches were held in a couple of dining halls, and each table would have a student assigned as 'server' for the day. There was a tuck shop and stationary supply run by teachers, and a separate dining room where you would be expected to converse only in French. The school day was longer than the village primary school's, running until 5pm with a prep session that filled the gap after lessons finished in the afternoon. I found a new horror in the addition of Latin to my set of subjects, and a delight in the woodworking shop and art rooms.

The school itself fell into one of those odd in-between categories, a catholic prep school offering education for children from 5-13 years of age, a middle school teaching up until the start of the GCSE or O level years. I don't believe there are many schools today that still fit this pattern.

Looked at with the benefit of hindsight and some 30+ years of distance, this school's educational offer seems a curious mix of academic and practical subjects and lessons. Perhaps a better definition would be to consider this offer a broad range of study. This would certainly seem to be the most sensible offer for primary education across the board, but that doesn't hide the fact that I was getting a markedly different education to my previous village primary school peers.

I would expect that most of us are set off, right from the start, on one particular track through this education system. We are unlikely to change from one school system to another unless there is a pressing educational need or our family experiences a financial change for better or worse. There is no 'one size fits all' offer for primary schooling, or rather there is no single set template of what primary schooling should look like. There is a 'muddle' of available options from council-controlled, free, academy, faith, and grammar schools (Abell, 2018, p.136-171), alongside the option for home schooling. I wonder if this last one will be a popular choice in the wake of several months of remote learning that the coronavirus lockdowns have forced upon the UK.

I had a small taste of home learning in what would have been the last term that I had at my primary school. I had already passed my 11+ exam for my next school at this point, and this coupled with a drastic drop in income for my family, due to a change of business contracts, meant that I spent what should have been my last term at this school at home. There are two key things that my mother put in place for me over this missing summer term; the first being a research project on cement (her choice not mine, a fact that directly contributed to my somewhat lacklustre level of engagement with the project), the second being a series of confidence building tasks, such as solo train and bus journeys alongside other practical skills.

Secondary School, 1985 - 1990

Status and wealth were less of an issue at my next school, even though this was a high-profile fee-paying public school. I would have had to sit an entrance exam and do well enough to pass to attend, and there were several of us in my year being supported through bursaries. I don't remember anyone ever making a big deal of it, with the exception of our Craft Design Technology teacher, who in response to a slightly unruly turn within a class, pointed out that although corporal punishment was frowned upon and being phased out in line with state school policies, he was entirely within his rights to clip any misbehaving pupils round the ear, but only as long as their parents were paying the full fees. Those of us on assisted places and bursaries were off limits. I distinctly remember the following moment of quiet reflection as the class re-evaluated what they could or could not get away with in his lessons.

What I do remember is the general expectation within my school that you would carry on in education until you had completed a Bachelor's degree. In my year group (about 100 students) I can remember only one person who was determined to enter the workplace as soon as the GCSE exams were over. Further to this he knew he only needed a handful of good grades in key subjects and really didn't have any interest in the others, and that on-the-job training would form a significant part of his work. For everyone else the consensus seemed to be further study at 'A' level, either as part of the school's sixth form or at another college. I made a break for a different sixth form college, looking to escape the school uniforms and traditions.

My pathway through this process was heavily geared towards academic study, or rather despite the practical elements of our studies and activities, the expectation was that we would continue in academic study, moving from GCSE to 'A' level as if this were the only option available to us. Or so it felt to me at the time. My younger and far more sensible brother had a similar experience in terms of schooling but managed to identify an interest in mechanical engineering at some point and set his sights firmly on studying at the local Technical College.

The aspirational element of some of our studies at this school was built right into its structure. It ran a Combined Cadet Force (CCF) with what I remember as the expectation that were you to decide to pursue a military career you would be looking to enter at officer level. Our economics classes were built around the study of financial and geographical economics. There was no element of home economics within our curriculum, much to my mum's disappointment.

The aspirational elements of my schooling stand in contrast to a problem identified by a family friend who, as an entrepreneur and business owner, was rightly concerned with the political drive to encourage the acquisition and development of skill as a way to boost your employability. The question she asked was

‘why aren’t they interested in teaching my kids to be employers?’ So, are we educating different groups of people differently within our school system? And if so on what grounds?

Figure 4 Young Farmers, August Sander, 1914.

My secondary school had and enforced a somewhat rigid dress code (school tie and blazer) that transformed from an amorphous uniform to a tailored business suit when you transitioned to sixth form

study. For an insight into the importance of the suit we can turn to Berger's (1972, p.41) essay on August Sanders' photographic images depicting early 20th century rural farm workers dressed for formal occasions (fig 4). Berger identifies the suit as a marker, an actual white collar, that denotes the wearer as engaged in work other than manual labour. The suit is not designed for hard manual or blue-collar work. My sixth form college was attractive because it offered freedom from strict dress codes. My secondary school, by operating a formal sixth form dress code, aligns itself with industries that still operate within these symbolic dress codes. While we may expect professionals in many walks of life to be smartly dressed, I understand from my brother-in-law that even London office workers are eschewing the suit in favour of less constricting attire. And yet I enjoyed dressing formally when I worked on the cruise liners and made an effort to match the dress code for every wedding that I attended as a photographer. I still have a variety of outfits in my wardrobe for such occasions, although I rarely wear any of them for my role as Technical Demonstrator at the Art college.

What takeaways do I have from this experience? My memories of secondary school chime with the notion that the academic pathway in education and how it is perceived to have a higher status still prevails and that vocational training in the sense that practical skills-based education is seen a great thing…. but (and Coughlan points out there is always a but) … for other people's children (Coughlan, 2015). But what is the point of education if it doesn't equip you with the skills necessary for success or enable you to lead a fulfilled life? And, on what terms should success be measured?

'A' Level College, 1990 - 1992

For my 'A' levels I attended a local sixth form college. The reason for my decision to study there are as follows:

1. I wanted a change from where I had been to school.
2. I wanted to study in a more relaxed environment (no uniforms or strict dress code).
3. I had started socialising in that direction, and was developing friendships in the area as well as reconnecting with friends from my primary school.
4. There was already a college bus running that went through our village.

None of these reasons are or were based in the academic standing of the college. My decision to attend was based as much on knowing what I wanted as it was on my ignorance of what other options might have been open to me. What I did know is that I wanted to follow a creative career path, even if I had no idea how to go about it.

I spent two years studying there. Art & Design, Theatre Studies, and Media Studies (a favourite target of anyone wanting to 'take a poke' at 'useless' subjects), alongside an 'AS' in Photography. I had initially started with Biology in place of Theatre Studies, following the logic that I should include a science in my subject selection, but quickly found that the enjoyment and enthusiasm I had for this subject at secondary school did not track through to 'A' level. These courses eventually led to an application for an Arts Foundation course at a nearby College of Art. It was the norm at this time to attend a one-year Arts Foundation course in preparation for an arts degree. This was my first experience of the College of Arts and my first insight into what my home city had to offer in the way of Further Education. Also, up until this point I really wasn't aware that there was a dedicated Arts college nearby.

I was also becoming aware here that although I was being taught on some courses by experienced arts practitioners, I wasn't gaining any insight into their personal creative practice. Of my art teachers, I

remember seeing a single painting by my course leader. From my photography tutor, I remember nothing. We must have had some hands-on practical demonstrations from them, but these are too dim, distant, or vague as memories for me to recall much about them. I think quite often we were left to our own devices, pointed in the general right direction, and encouraged to get on with it.

One issue that worries me with 'A' level study is the uncertainty of study. I started my 'A 'levels with four subjects, an odd mix as discussed earlier. If you have a clear interest within one area, then you may find yourself wondering where you are headed. From a teacher's point of view, as I currently find myself employed one day a week at a local sixth form college teaching photography, I sometimes find it odd to consider that the course I teach on is only a fraction of their studies, and that for some photography or art will be the 'nice' subject that students are allowed to take as long as they keep up their studies in practical career building subjects or STEM areas.

Contrasted with the 'A' level equivalent that the art college offers, a two-year portfolio building course, where students are expected to develop their own creative identity, I wonder how our sixth form students cope with being pulled in several directions at once? Looking back on my experience I'm not sure I managed this juggling act very well.

'A' Level education seems to be a well-established option and the focus of most students' next steps if they are to remain in education. They carry with them the perceived panacea of being a good all-round qualification that will 'keep your options open' and still maintain a higher academic value than other options such as technical courses. Are they ultimately a feeder line for degree level study? I understand from discussions with creative 'A' level course teachers that the arts courses are often seen as the one the student can have for themselves to balance out the more 'serious' subjects.

Foundation Art, 1992 – 1993

I moved to my nearest city at the end of the summer in 1992, in time to start on the foundation course at the College of Art & Design. A step away from home, supposedly towards adult independence, although I was supported financially by my family at this point. A step into the nebulous world of arts education.

I moved into a shared house south of the river that backed onto an army camp. I shared a house with three others, a tourism and travel student who worked part time in a local off licence, her stonemason boyfriend, and her manager. I didn't know them before I moved in and we haven't stayed in touch since, but I enjoyed living with them for that year.

The Foundation course was something else. Here I found myself one of about a hundred students. We were mostly recent post 'A' level bodies with a few mature students thrown into the mix, all accommodated upstairs in one long room on the college's primary site. Everyone got their own desk space with a facing display board, and we found ourselves randomly assigned spaces in sets of four. This was my first proper experience of a creative studio culture, something that is very much still at the heart of the art college's educational offer today.

There are several notable things about this course that I feel are important. Aside from the fact that I met, and fell in love with, the person I would marry, here we were in a crowd of people all interested in the same thing: the creative arts. No more juggling a timetable to accommodate three or four varied 'A' level subjects, now we were expected to develop our own personal work and take advantage of having all or

most of the week to do so. As we progressed through the course's rotation system, we gained access to dedicated workshops staffed by technicians who had practical knowledge of their craft. Further to this we had a group of tutors who each came with their own specialism from the creative arts and craft industries: we were learning (hopefully) from people who had direct practical experience of the varied industries we were interested in, and the course attracted a broad range of interest from students who hoped or expected to be pointed in the right direction for the degree level study option that would suit them best.

In some ways this course was set to act as precursor to degree level arts study, an essential year of training in creative arts practice designed to break you out of the pattern of 'A' level education, encourage creative and critical thinking, and help you to find the pathway to follow next. A key element to this process is the introduction to a variety of workshop environments and the permission to explore (within reason and with guidance) the possibilities offered by each. We were encouraged to play, to test possibilities, to explore, and to see where our wandering might take us.

There was a peculiar element of snobbery within our cohort. We looked down on the Extended Diploma (ED) students, a year or so our junior, housed in portacabins over the road from the main college building. ED is a two-year creative arts course that operates in a very similar fashion to Foundation and carries the equivalent accreditation that you would receive for doing three 'A' level subjects. Critically the Extended Diploma offers a portfolio building course with no exams that is open to post-secondary students. I don't know why we thought we were better than them, aside from the fact that we had more qualifications under our belts. It seems ridiculous when I consider that students on this course were getting an early start in a practical arts education and that a successful two years on an ED course can allow you to bypass Foundation entirely. Had I known that this was an option I might have seriously considered it. The course offered access to the same workshops, technical staff, and processes, and shared several tutors with Foundation. It also, if I recall correctly, offered an insight into the practical side of the arts. I remember seeing an ED project arranged for critique on the corridor walls. Each piece had a precise and exhaustive costing attached to it, including figures allotted to time spent making and materials used. I don't recall ever having to account for the costs of projects at any point in my arts education. I do remember the cost of materials persisting as a mystery into my first contract as a ships' photographer. There was a crunch point when a colleague had fumbled and almost dropped a new roll of colour photographic paper while unpacking it through careless and carefree handling. He was reprimanded on the spot by our manager with the admonition (like any middle-aged dad) "do you know how much that costs?" He didn't, and of course neither did I, but had he dropped it and put a dent in the paper the whole roll would have been rendered useless. While this may seem a small inconvenience to some people, depending upon your ease of access to materials and supply chains, within the context of a cruise line and the vagaries of getting and maintaining stocks of material depending on your location on the globe, loss of usable paper and chemistry could be very deleterious to your commercial activities.

The thinking behind a Foundation arts course is to open creative possibilities for students, to introduce them to a variety of creative theories, workshop environments, and processes, and to prepare them for more specialised arts degree studies. As a further education course it is open to anyone over the age of 18. In its current incarnation at the Art College it offers a full year's foundation for post 'A' level students and a part time portfolio course for mature people. It may not be obvious from the outside, but the course offers a serious entry route into art and design practice delivered by active creative practitioners. I would hazard that for me it was the place where *savoir faire* and *être* started to align in an educational setting.

Degree Level studies 1993 - 1996

Although my year studying at Foundation level had been great fun, opening a wide range of practical creative possibilities for me, I had struggled to identify a clear direction of travel for my next steps. I had applied for a couple of fine art courses, without success, when my course leader pointed me in the direction of a new modular degree that was being introduced at an arts college on the other side of the country.

The course structure was to offer something like an extended foundation program, with students able to select modules from a wide range of disciplines. The first year offered a mix of introductory modules, covering subjects such as photography, craft practice, conceptual fine art, television production, graphic design and so on. There was a compulsory drawing module, and you had to choose at least one theory program.

The whole course was housed in a shiny new college building, wrought of glass and metal, and set a short distance from the docks. We were to be the initial first year intake for the degree, with only a handful of top-up third year students ahead of us.

While the promise of an extended foundation-like degree that could be tailored to suit your personal interests was strong, the practicalities of study maybe less so.

Sold as a broad and exciting creative platform, we found that there were a lot of things not really allowed within the college environment. The college lacked the physical space to house all its degree level students in the way that I had been used to previously. Available desk space was at a premium and not guaranteed. Most of us opted to work from home. The college was also not a messy environment. The college's heavy investment in new and shiny infrastructure meant that mess-making creative activities such as painting and sculpting were generally not welcome within the building. The contemporary crafts practice workshop was located in the neighbouring Tech college's workshops, and by the end of the first year the fine art modules had been completely moved out to an older, crumblier building on the other side of town.

Also missing from this picture was the open access to college workshops. My impression of this is that there was an ongoing argument between academic and technical staff as to who should be doing what, and that this often led to tutors pointing students in the direction of a particular workshop or process only to be turned away by the respective technicians. There are several explanations for this, from poor planning or a lack of proper etiquette on my part when asking for technical help, to the fallout that seems to have followed in the wake of the incorporation of FE colleges in the early 1990s (Hodgson, 2015, p.1-23). In any case it was a period of frustration for me as a student looking to make the most of my time at college.

On the positive side of things, I found a creative home within the college, particularly on the contemporary fine art module, heavily based in modern conceptual movements, supported by an emphasis on critical thinking. The focus was on modern art practices that did not involve the traditional approaches taken by painters and sculptors. Installations, interventions, performances, and collaborations were the order of the day. There was little physical evidence that would remain of any given artwork if you did not document it in some way, preferably through a combination of photography, video, and text. It was difficult, complicated, ephemeral, and sometimes seemingly designed to give you a headache. I loved it!

Our course leader went out of his way to introduce us not only to his creative practice but also to the work of visiting guest speakers, some of whom would teach on the course over the duration of a project or two. Alongside the lectures we received on modern art history, about famous artists and artistic movements, we were introduced to the creative career paths and work of those who had come to teach us. Insight was offered to us into how a tutor's career had developed, where things had gone well or gone wrong, what their penchants or pet peeves were. One of our tutors admitted to having a thing for plain paper wrapping and brown string, that he would like any artwork involving these items, but would give it zero marks at assessment if you couldn't justify its use properly beyond knowing that he would like it. More than this, we occasionally had the opportunity to be involved in the execution of an artwork, either in the role of audience member or as active participant. Importantly here discussion and critical thinking were key elements in the production of the artworks for this module. Sometimes you had to be open to other people's interpretation of your work, sometimes you had to stand your ground and defend your work. Dialogue and debate were important elements in the learning process.

Stepping Stone: Informal education

A couple of inches…… makes all the difference.

Figure 5 The Last Steel Workers, Shotton, David Hurn, 1977.

"This is what I do photographically. I love this sort of idea of getting… right inside a story so that you know the people that are involved… and you're an accepted part of what's going on and then it's simple, as I often say, you just stand in the right place and press the button at the right time, and it takes care of itself."

(*David Hurn: A Life in Pictures*, 2017)

I always rather liked the sense of this idea, of being in the right place at the right time, even before I understood it to be a quote from the renowned Magnum photographer David Hurn. I first heard it paraphrased by a friend. It was the early 2000's, and we were both in the throes of setting up social photography businesses, venturing into the worlds of wedding and portrait photography. We were looking at getting the best possible results from the cameras we were using at the time, testing lighting ideas, camera settings, and workflow options, and often leaning on our friends, family, and each other to model for photographs. "It's all about where you stand and when you press the button". This phrase resonated with me and stuck, although I was never sure if the follow up comment "an inch makes all the difference" was meant to be risqué or an unintentional faux pas. It wasn't until a couple of years ago, when I had the chance to see '*David Hurn: A life in Pictures*' (2017), that I found the source of this quote.

Hurn's comment is disarming. To the casual observer it could be seen as reductive, an oversimplification of what is and has always been a complicated practice. Photography is a complex process. It's worth bearing in mind that Hurn is speaking, with the benefit of hindsight, about what many would consider to be a stellar career. Hurn is a celebrated documentary photographer, with a career that has spanned decades. He was the key driving force behind the Newport school of documentary photography, and without him as an instructor the person who introduced me to photography might have taken a very different career path. As with any skill, craft, or trade it can look easy to an external viewer when demonstrated by a master. It is quite another thing to try to turn your hand to the activity yourself, as many of us find out when we try something new for the first time. With extensive practice comes deeper insight into what a skill requires, or rather what is required of a practitioner on the journey to becoming a master of a craft.

From the discipline of philosophy, Aristotle (384-322) recognises that when a practitioner 'knows' what they are doing, the technical concerns relating to the 'the making' of something (in this case photographic image making) can be set aside. A good tool does not get in the way of the craftworker. Here, for me, is a key part of the wisdom held within Hurn's quote.

Degree level students engaged in the creative arts are expected to build a photographic portfolio/resource of documentary images as an integral part of their initial and continuing professional development. This thesis investigates what this process entails and how portfolios of practice can be created in partnership with participating students. These portfolios of creative images and resources serve a number of purposes in supporting the development of their vocational and professional practice. Firstly, it encourages the 'development of an eye for' (Aristotle, 384-322 BC) as well as understandings of what we mean by 'good work', (Sennett 2008, p.241-267) and the exercise of good judgement in their field of practice. Secondly, it acts as a means of capturing the range, level, and developing nature of practice in that field. Finally, it operates as a way of illustrating the unique way in which practice is realised, modified, and advanced in that craft.

From the craft of documentary storytelling photography there is a tradition of creating images that offer insight into a situation. Key images to record include those that show places (fig.6), faces (fig.7), relationships (fig.8), activity (fig.8), and details (fig.9). There is an additional option for recording creative craft work here, offered by the use of photographic studio lighting to present the work in an environment free from distraction (fig.10).

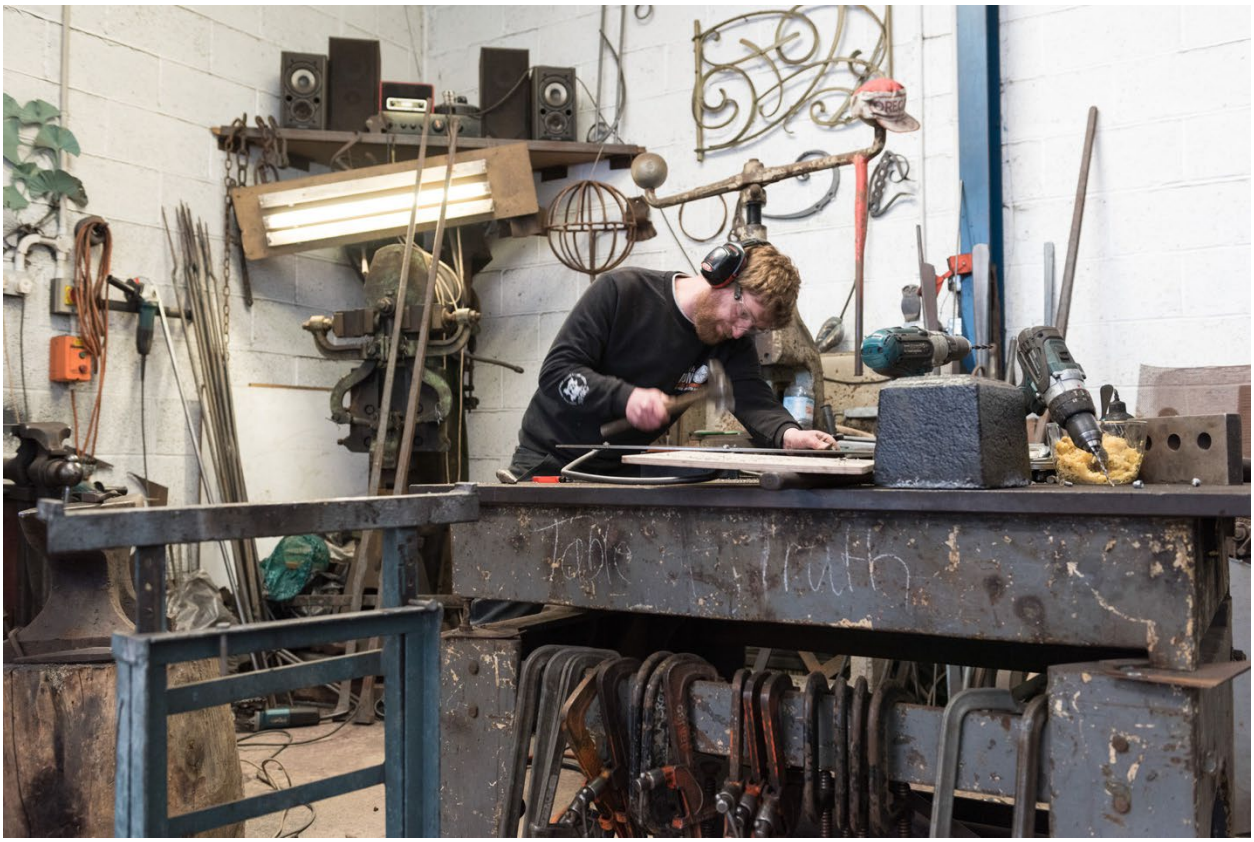


Figure 6 The craftsman in his workshop.

Figure 7 A portrait of the blacksmith.

Figure 8 Smiths at work as hammer and striker.

Figure 9 A close up detail of the smithed work.

Figure 10 A smithed barbeque burner recorded using a photography studio setup.

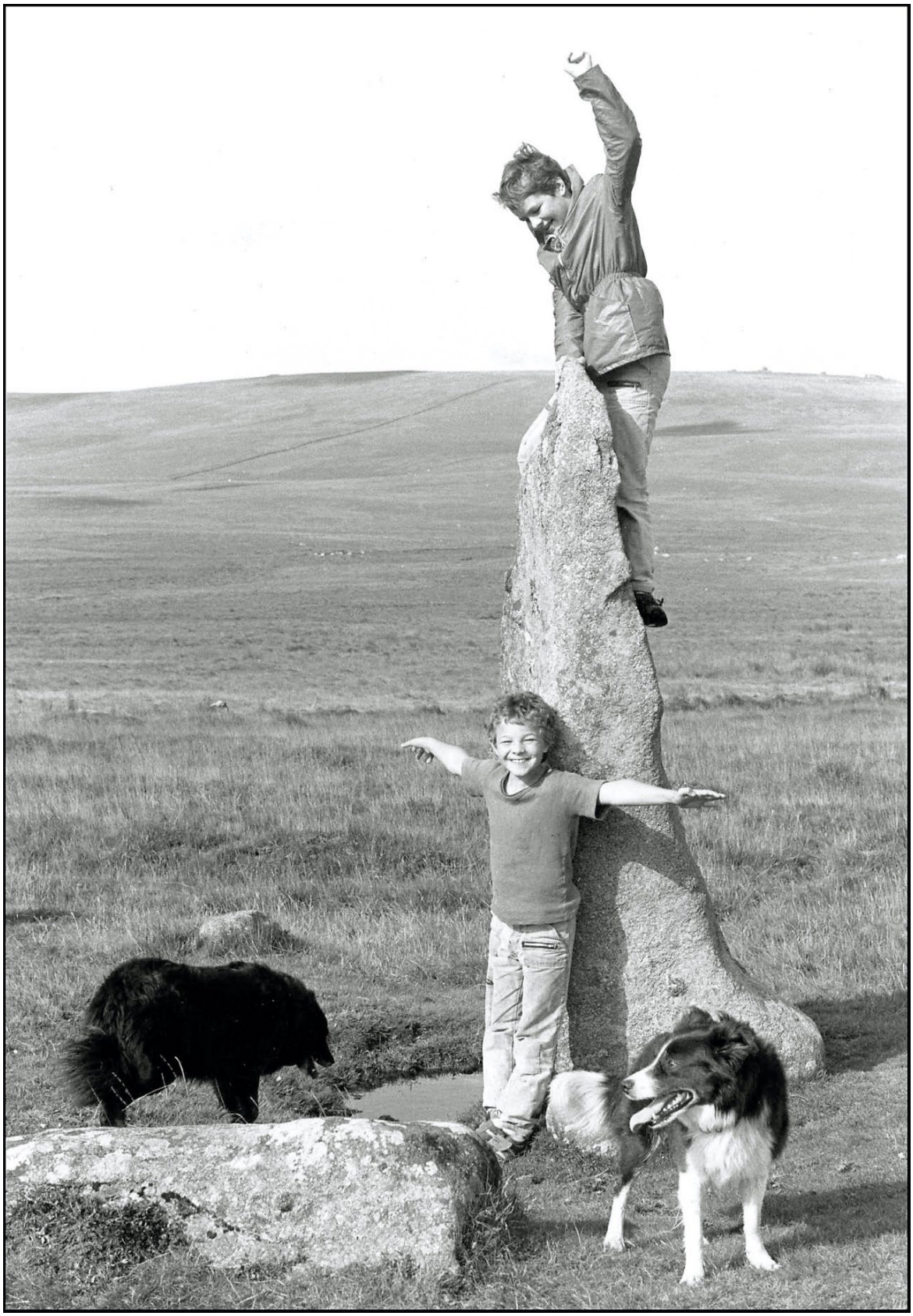


Figure 11 My brother and I with Cloggy's dogs on Dartmoor, photo by Cloggy.

Dartmoor Summers: My introduction to the practice of photography.

Before I delve into the world of technical photographic practice and how we attempt to teach this to students at our institution I want to look at my own introduction to the craft in relation to the French VET terms *savoir* (to know), *savoir faire* (to know how to make) and *savoir être* (to know how to be…) introduced at the beginning of this Chapter. I want to return to some of the formative experiences of my childhood and the time we spent with a close family friend, my brother's godfather. I'll call him Cloggy because that is the pseudonym he chose for this study.

I'm in my early teens. It's the end of the 1980's. For three consecutive summers, my brother and I would travel from North Herefordshire to the edge of Dartmoor in Devon, to stay with my brother's godfather. These summer breaks are a treat for us. They are a chance to stay with a trusted family friend, where the normal day-to-day rules don't apply. I suspect it is also an opportunity for our mum to have a break from us. We pile on to the train, wave goodbye to mum and arrive after a couple of changes and a few hours later to be met by our host. We're excited to meet up with Cloggy, ready for who knows what. We're on an adventure.

My brother's godfather is a photographer. He has spent a lifetime recording rural life on Dartmoor, documenting the farming community as it has changed over the years. Along the way he has worked as a freelance commercial photographer, a Dartmoor walking guide, a TV presenter, a stills photographer, and a filmmaker. At the time of our visits he was enjoying a successful period as a property and interiors photographer, working for estate agents and hotels. As a young man with little experience of what to do to entertain two teenage boys, Cloggy's solution was to treat us as photography assistants and take us to work with him.

This wasn't our first experience of being allowed to observe Cloggy's photographic practice. He had known our parents since before we were born and had often visited our growing family to help dad with his building projects, always creating portraits of us as a gift for our parents before he left. These prints hang on my mother's study walls, charting our changes as we grow from year to year. We also had the opportunity to see his studio in action on numerous family visits. My memories of his rural studio are rich with the quality of the light in his barn conversion, the smell of the dark room chemicals, and the sound of running water as I watched his finished prints being washed in an elaborate cascading water bath setup. Although there were things we weren't allowed to do or touch in this space, we were lively young boys after all, we were welcome to observe what was going on in there.

During our teenage visits we were allowed a greater insight into Cloggy's working practices. If the weather was good there might be an opportunity to complete an estate agent's commissioned shoot, which would often involve setting up the perfect shot of a house and then waiting for either the light to come right or for a few clouds to drift into view, to add a little drama to the blue skies. Fair weather might also involve travelling to a distant location for an event, hiking across the countryside with a heavy camera kit to get the ideal shot, or pretending to be guests at a hotel to add a human element to their advertising images. Poor weather would often mean a chance to see how the developing and printing side of Cloggy's practice worked. I distinctly remember being shown how an enlarger works, making an exposure onto photographic paper, and then seeing the print appear before my eyes in the developing tray under the red safelight of the dark room. It wasn't all work, and there would be trips to the cinema, walks on the moor with his collie Pip, visits to standing stone circles, and the occasional swim in one of the rivers, but as a practising photographer Cloggy would always take a camera with him.

In hindsight I can clearly see these events as my extended introduction to the art and craft of photography. Cloggy made the practice accessible and interesting without forcing it on us. When we had questions, he would answer them. We were allowed to watch him work, to see him interact with his clients, his subject matter, and his photographic equipment. We could see first-hand how his practice was governed not just by the demands of his clients but also by elements beyond his control, such as the weather, all the while looking to balance his commercial work with his personal calling to document the changing landscape and life of Dartmoor. Intentional or not, we were learning from being in the presence of a master, and gaining, considered in relation to the concepts of *savoir*, an insight into how to be a photographer.

So, why have I started by talking about my own educational experiences? These experiences have shaped my career, not only in the creative career path I chose but also in the way I think about the work I make and do. There is inevitably going to be a bleed through of concepts from these to my own teaching practice, just as there is an element of the good grounding in customer service relations that I picked up while working in the cruise line industry, something that I feel has become increasingly relevant as more of our degree level students come to regard themselves as customers (Abell, 2018, p.156). My first bit of teaching practice, working as a short course tutor on an introductory photography course, was built entirely on my own experiences of working as a professional photographer. I still look to refer to stories from my own experiences to illustrate examples of good (or bad) practice when running technical inductions and workshop sessions at the college. Stories are a key part to how we learn. They can be used to illustrate what problems we may encounter, how we may overcome them, and what outcomes we can expect. They allow us to connect with each other. They allow us to belong to a community. Gregory describes stories as the 'narrative cradle' that connects us to humanity (2009, p.1).

I also understand through my research that both my attitude and approach to photographic practice has changed over time. From childhood through to my 'A'-level studies photography was for me a form of play, part of my creative practice, expressed in the way that children make art. I wasn't concerned with rules or the technicalities of making images. I made images of people, places, and things that I found interesting. Sometimes images were created as a document of a project, sometimes as a resource to draw from to add to a work. I was playing and using cameras that only required me to point the camera in the right direction and press the button at the right time.

From the beginning of my 'A'-levels my focus shifted. I took a place on an AS level in photography, and my family invested in a professional entry level 35mm SLR, a Canon AE1 with a standard 50mm lens, to support my studies. I started to learn about the core camera settings (aperture, shutter, and ISO) and the processing side of photographic practice. I didn't pursue the course beyond the 'AS' level, put off by the increase in the technical knowledge required to push through to the full 'A' level.

At Foundation I found myself increasingly turning to photography as a creative practice, encouraged by a supportive photography technician at college. I made images but stayed away from engaging with photographic history and theory, preferring to remain in the playful mode central to a foundation course where students are encouraged to explore all the varied workshops and processes on offer.

Photography remained an active part of my creative practice throughout my degree studies. I discovered that the college darkrooms seemed to have an open access policy, something I also encountered when visiting my girlfriend at her university. I made images as part of my college work, to document my artworks and projects and as part of the works themselves. I took images of things that interested me and kept a box of prints, an element of my practice that was to prove crucial in the last few months of my studies.

In the spring of 1996 I, along with several of my housemates and college friends, recognised that our degree course was about to end. This strikes me as something of a lightbulb moment, a critical incident in our education, as we realised how many of us had or hadn't planned for our next steps. Our conversation turned to how we each expected to start earning a living following our somewhat unconventional arts degree. One of us, the most dedicated photographer in our group, had been looking at the job vacancies in the photography trade magazines, and had found an advert for cruise ship event photographers. As a group we thought this sounded like a very exciting opportunity. Of the eight of us involved in this conversation I was the only one to apply for this post.

I got an interview and needed to attend with a portfolio of images. Smartening up for the interview was easy. I had lost my long hair to an unfortunate trim when my clippers collapsed after a couple of cuts, forcing me to shave my head about a month beforehand. I could borrow a nice shirt from a housemate. The portfolio of work was a little harder to pull together. I enlisted the help of the friend who had found the initial advert and we set about editing the contents of my box of prints. With her help I managed to create a portfolio with a surprising amount of good portrait work in it, something I wasn't consciously creating or pursuing. It was ideal for an interview with a company that specialised in social photography. I wish I could lay my hands on this portfolio now; it got me my first start in a career that I have loved.

I started my professional career as a cruise ship photographer (or 'smudger') towards the end of 1996, flying out to the Mediterranean to join my first ship. This section of my photographic journey lasted for the next five years or so, and there are numerous critical events that defined my thinking in relation to photographic practice that happened while working within this industry. There was a clear commercial focus to this part of my history. It became crucial for me to deepen my technical knowledge, learning the practical intricacies of colour photographic processing, of studio flash lighting, and more importantly learning to work to tight deadlines under pressure while maintaining a high level of customer service and producing the financial results expected by the cruise line and our concession company. More than anything else this period of my life was about making money.

In 2001 I returned home to Herefordshire to get married. Five years of a very restricted pattern of work on the cruise ships had worn me out and I wasn't intending to be a photographer. I felt burnt out but found that I kept getting requests as a photographer. Nor could I ignore my interest in photography. Within six months I found myself launching a career as a freelance photographer. I married in 2002 and found myself being pulled into a wedding photography business in partnership with my wife. We found a deep empathy with and for our wedding couples, and this business was to dominate our creative practice for more than a decade.

We engaged with other photographers and photographic organisations. We joined professional societies like the Master Photographers Association, passing a rigorous panel application judged by established and well-known photographers. We looked for ways to improve what we were offering our clients, attending workshops, seminars, and regional meetings. We made efforts to unlearn the bad habits that we had collected from our time on the cruise liners. The industry was transitioning from a predominantly film-based process to a digital one, and we found ourselves climbing a steep learning curve. Where we engaged with the theoretical side of the photographic practice it was generally linked to the commercial side of our enterprise. We had individually oscillated in and out of love with our business over the years, generally balancing each other out and keeping things on an even keel. Around 2012 or 2013 we found that our interests had aligned, and that we needed to move away from the wedding photography business. We felt that our practice had grown stale, and it was time for a change.

For me, starting to teach photography at the Art College felt like the step from one discipline to another, like the historical process described by Sennett (2008, p.58) in *The Craftsman* where a master craftsman would look to return to journeyman status to learn another craft.

Here, as an educator, I find an interesting coincidence of many of the modes of practice I have previously experienced. I find myself encouraging students to be playful in their approach to creating images while also encouraging them to develop a deeper understanding of the technicalities of the photographic process. I have had to broaden and deepen my practical and technical knowledge, not just to support students in my role as technical demonstrator but also to contend with the 'out there' requests made by arts students across all degree disciplines. I find myself discussing critical theory, business planning, and customer service, sometimes in rapid succession with the same person. In this role I find myself drawing upon all my years of experience.

Figure 12 State department store 'Univermag', Leningrad, Russia, Soviet Union, Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1954.

Returning to David Hurn: The story of a Russian Hat

David Hurn recounts a pivotal moment in his early career that saw him change tack completely. He had enrolled as a cadet at Sandhurst, intending to follow in his father's footsteps as an army officer. To escape some of the strictures placed upon him he joined the camera club, noticing that members had to leave the site as their darkroom facilities were located elsewhere. Engaging with photographic practice led to a greater interest in and analysis of published images, and to seeing the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson published in Picture Post in 1955. One image (fig 12) showing a Russian officer buying a hat for his wife

resonated with Hurn, reminding him of a similar experience from his childhood. This image tapped into and connected with Hurn's memory of a shopping trip with his parents and broke the spell that the army was building of the Russians as other, as belligerent and uncaring. Hurn recognised in this image 'the touch of authenticity. It felt real and true.' Here were people like his family. Hurn left the army and began a career in photography.

Hurn's story touches on an important aspect of photography. It has the potential to connect people. The connection in this instance comes from the feeling of authenticity within the image, that this is an honest observation of a moment within the real world. When looking to unpick the spectrum of photographic practice it's worth considering the motivation behind an image, who created it, and for what purpose.

In writing about my own photographic practice, I begin to see the distinct motivations behind the work I was producing. While studying at college I was using photography to create or document artworks and projects. When I moved into a commercial photographic souvenir setting, during my stint on the cruise liners, I was making images to make money. We worked to very tight guidelines about what was considered to be good work. The expectation placed upon photographers in this instance was (and still is) that they would be able to work to a set pattern, determined by convention and material limitations, and common across most if not all ships in the industry. Being able to manage this would allow you to step from one ship to the next, and from one team to another, with minimal disruption to the smooth operation of the photography department. An example of this in practice: one of our best sellers was a shot of the passengers meeting the captain, imaginatively titled Captain's Handshake. This shoot took place on the first formal night of the cruise, with passengers dressed up for the occasion. The captain would meet and greet all the guests on their way into the lounge for a cocktail reception and welcoming speech, before they headed off for dinner. Our remit was to photograph each couple as they shook hands with the captain. This would be a posed shot, the captain turning to the camera for a moment with each set of guests. The standard composition for this shot was to frame the subjects from mid-thigh up to a small space above the head, something a little larger than an apple, or as one of my managers put it "bollocks up, apple on top". On one of my ships we even had a handy set of reference photos featuring people with apples on their heads for those of us struggling to get the spacing right. The framing of this shot was critical, particularly as we were shooting to 35mm film at this time, and poor or inconsistent composition would lead to a headache for the team member doing the printing and an ear bashing for the culprit. Timing was also critical. We wanted images that we could sell, so we had to look out for missing someone's smile or catching them blinking. It was extremely repetitive work, and on a ship that carried 1500 passengers you could expect to take somewhere in the region of 720 images for this one shoot alone (20 rolls of 36 exposure 35mm film). Each of those 720 images involved the 'perfect' repetition of composition, lighting, and timing with no room for hesitation or deviation. Within this context good practice from our point of view is related to the consistency of the results produced and to the sales figures. Revenue was a big decider in determining the value of a shoot, with little thought on our part as to the emotional value of these images. Good practice from the cruise line company's point of view hinged on revenue and speed of operation, a balancing act between making money and holding things up for the captain and passengers. A standard comeback to any Cruise or Hotel Director trying to speed things up with this, or any, shoot was the reply 'I can't go any faster, I'm already shooting at 125th of second.' On almost all my ships this shoot was produced as a 5x7 inch print. My first experience of this shoot was on a disastrous cruise. We had suffered a serious setback regarding our printing facilities on board, the upshot being that we had to find labs in each port willing and able to print our work at short notice. The first set of captain's handshake photos I ever shot had to be printed in a smaller 4x6 inch size, the kind that was standard for years when people had their holiday snaps printed. Not only did they keep falling off our

display boards, but we also got a telling off from a returning passenger who was not happy with the smaller size and produced her photos from the previous year's holiday to prove her point.

I encountered a similar regime when training with a national school photography company, one of my early freelance gigs after leaving the ships. I was initially engaged to shoot school portraits, individual headshots of each pupil. The guidelines supplied by the company were comprehensive, covering everything from setting up the studio and lighting, to returning the film to them. I still have the training manual somewhere. It's a hefty piece of literature, the majority of which deals with the finer details involved in producing a single headshot. Good work in this context is almost certainly going to be getting the same results from a large body of photographers.

In both of these examples the remit of what constitutes good practice is very narrow, with little to no room for deviation or modification. The pattern is set, well established. It was so well ingrained in me from my years at sea that I found myself occasionally slipping back into old ways of working. Years of working within the constraints imposed by technical and material limits had narrowed my horizons. It was easy to work to a low ISO, mid-range aperture, standard shutter speed, flash lit pattern because I was so used to it. Breaking away from the habits of posing people, of making sure that everyone was smiling and looking at the camera, was hard to do at times.

When we struck out for ourselves and started to build our own business, we had to look critically at the work we were producing. Our criteria for evaluating good work changed, influenced by our interactions with other photographers at seminars, with emerging trends within the wedding and portrait industries, and from within ourselves (the result of our art school educations). We wanted to offer more than we had received from our own wedding photographer and had seen produced at friend's weddings. The photography industry was in a state of flux at this point, with the expansion of digital imaging technology and workflows beginning to dominate the scene. In a few short years after the turn of the century we, as an industry, transitioned almost entirely from using an analogue film-based process to a digital one. A year's development in imaging technology by camera manufacturers could create a huge change in attitudes held by established professionals. I remember the sea change that swept through the attendees at an annual training event. This event was a busman's holiday of sorts, a chance to attend a series of seminars by notable photographers, a week of talks and socialising in an overseas holiday resort. We attended a couple, the first in Tunisia when I got lucky and won a place through my freelance school photography, the second in Lanzarote that we paid for (and claimed as a business expense on the advice of our accountant). The discussion of digital imaging technology was almost entirely negative at our first conference, an unwelcome complication that simply was not and never would be as good as the current prevailing film camera systems. Fast forward a year and the same people who had been so vocal in their criticism could not praise the new digital cameras enough.

New technology opened new horizons. The practical limitations of analogue photography were removed. Where we used to be limited to thirty-six frames to a roll of 35mm film (thirty-nine if you were very careful loading your camera) our new cameras allowed us to shoot hundreds of images without having to pause. We could adapt to changing lighting conditions on the fly, no longer restricted to the limits imposed by a single ISO setting until we changed the film. We could review our images immediately, checking for misfires, mistakes, or unfortunate expressions before moving on to the next photo opportunity. No more anxious waiting to see what you had captured, you already knew. With this new change in practice came a renewed incentive to experiment. By investing in a digital kit (camera, computer, memory card) we had transferred the production costs of creating images upfront, but unlike investing in a finite stock of film, with digital capture we could shoot as much as we wanted.

It took time for me to unlearn the habits I had from my practice on cruise ships. Interacting with other photographers opened my thinking up to different approaches to image making. I was particularly taken by the notion of expression put forward by a friend and mentor that I met through my school photography experience. 'Expression is everything' was the core of his message, that it didn't matter how technically accomplished your images may be, if the emotional expression is wrong, they won't sell. Bringing the right expression through in an image is a skill, something vital to their success. I am reminded here of a critical incident early in our wedding photography business.

In February of 2006 we photographed a wedding. Winter weddings were becoming increasingly common at the time. The tradition for the majority of weddings to be held in the summer, usually in June, July, or August, had started to break and couples were increasingly opting for dates throughout the year. Even so, a February date was unusual, and it can certainly be a bleak time of year, with little vegetation on the trees, no flowers in bloom, and no guarantee of good weather. Our first child had arrived, born a couple of days after Christmas, and my wife agreed to the bride's request to cover the bridal preparations. Our normal modus operandi was to cover the bride and groom's preparations separately, meeting when they did at the church, and working together from then on. My wife had intended to take a few months maternity leave but made an exception on this occasion. So, on this dreary winter's day she headed off to the hotel to document the bridal party in their curlers, my mother accompanying her to look after our infant child.

Figure 13 A selection of images from our wedding photography portfolio.

Part of our preparation and research into this wedding business revolved around the type of images needed to tell the story of a wedding day. Ranging from documenting moments as they happen, creating carefully composed and staged group photographs, to recording the details of the day, both large (think wedding venue and surrounding landscape) and small (details of the wedding dress, cake, rings), every image created could be an integral part of this visual story. I have included a selection of images from our

wedding photography portfolio above (fig 13). At some point we attempted to draw up an exhaustive list of the must-have shots we wanted to capture, an internal template for us to work to. The list fills several sides of A4 paper. One of the key shots on our list was the bride leaving for the church.

Figure 14 The bride leaving the reception venue for the church.

In this instance we only got one frame of this moment (fig 14). The resulting picture has numerous issues. The shot is out of focus and shows movement from camera shake, the latter caused by the selection of a shutter speed too long for the photographer to hold the camera still. The image is flash lit when we were trying to use natural light as much as possible. The colour rendition is off, lending a strange colour cast to the image. The image is wonky, stuck in the middle between a good clear horizon line and full 'Dutch Tilt' effect. From a technical perspective the image was terrible and would have been consigned to the bin if we hadn't felt that it had 'something' about it. Besides it was an important part of the story, so we kept it in the selection. At this point we had moved our wedding workflow to a system that allowed our clients to choose their album photos from the hundreds that we felt were good enough to show (an average wedding for us at this time meant that we would shoot in the region of 2,000 images, edit this selection down to about 500 photos that we would show to our couples for them to choose from. Of this 500 an average of 120 would usually make the album). A friend had advised us to keep a few terrible photos in our selections, as an easy pick for clients to discard. This notion had come from his days of selling wedding prints using an analogue workflow. All his images were printed, then edited for potential keepers. Once the selection was made a couple of definite rejects were added back to the top of the pile, a pile that would contain more images than the agreed package. When these duff prints were discarded by the bride and groom he would take them, tear them into pieces and put them in the bin in front of them. The remaining prints would, more often than not, be scooped up by the couple, usually accompanied by the phrase 'you're not doing that to any of my other prints', and a swift additional sale was added.

This image didn't get discarded. In fact the response from our bride was overwhelmingly positive. "I love it! I want it big on my wall" she said. I remember three thoughts running through my head in rapid succession. Firstly, "why do they like it, it's technically terrible?" I understand this one as a throwback to the perfectionism of my cruise ship training. This was some time before I read Sennett's point in his discussion of Louise d'Épinay's advice on parenting, that 'good enough' can be good enough but the pursuit of perfection is futile (Sennett, 2008, p.102). Secondly, "I want to know why they like it, this is interesting", a thought process I attribute to my art school experience. The third thought was the one I vocalised first, having paid attention in the business seminars I had attended. "That's great" I replied, "How big would you like it?"

The picture was a hit because our bride connected with the visual style inherent in the image. To her it looked like the kind of image produced by paparazzi photographers. It had something of a celebrity caught leaving a nightclub, of someone famous captured in passing through a limousine window, the kind of image you might see gracing the front page of a tabloid or the cover of a glossy gossip magazine. It wasn't anything we had set out to create, and I can't think that we ever created anything quite like it again, at least not on purpose. In their selection of wedding images it won out over any number of carefully posed or well-lit romantic portraits. I used this image recently in a presentation to staff and students and was interested to note how critically our students responded to the technical elements of the image, with only a couple of people picking up on the emotional side that might be there. For me it was a timely reminder of the importance of our customer's opinion and input into our creative process. Where before on the ships we had had a far stricter discipline to work to and a more restricted range of imagery to offer, balanced by the enormous volume of images to be created, here we had the opposite: a much closer relationship with our couples, allowing us to explore the creative side of our practice and deepen our understanding of the imaging needs of our clients through experimentation, presentation, and dialogue.

I was also struck by the importance of allowing a style to develop in an open and inquisitive manner. Stepping back from a point of 'knowing best' allowed other influences to enter our practice. I am conscious of the dangers of developing a restrictive, technical, 'house' style, of offering imagery, or instruction in the creation of imagery, that leaves little to no room for expansion or adaptation. I am reminded of a conversation with a colleague at work regarding the prevalence of a house style within a creative arts course. Students were guided towards a distinct set of outcomes, through a series of projects, workshops, and tutorials. From a distance the big picture resolved into a similar pattern spread across each cohort. Each year produced students whose work centred around fairies, wooden beach huts with seagulls mounted on wire, and wooden automata, to the extent that for a while the course was known for little else. A similar accusation was voiced by my secondary school art teachers, frustrated that some of our year had taken extra lessons with a local, well-established, and distinctive artist. This artist had a successful career in painting and drawing, experimenting with a variety of stylistic approaches over the course of her career. She ran art courses and Saturday classes, helping anyone who felt that they needed to improve their artistic abilities. The art classes were an important part of her portfolio career, producing enough income to run her studio throughout the year and allowing her time to work on her own projects. She was a family friend and neighbour for many years, an outspoken and interesting character in our little village. I liked her a lot, but as a young boy I had two serious issues with her Saturday kids' art classes. First, she wouldn't let me paint or draw what I wanted. Now I understand more the importance of pushing students out of their comfort zone or encouraging them to work in a way that you know to be important to their career, at the time I was less happy about this. Secondly, I wasn't a big fan of her teaching style, roaming the room with a roll up cigarette clenched between her teeth, pausing while she passed comments on her students' work. Her approach was dominating, her artistic stamp evident in the work

of those who attended her classes. In both cases of these there is an element of a 'reproductive aesthetic code' being the dominant teaching mode, an approach identified by Bernstein as 'collection' and quoted by Daniels in his discussion of a study that includes the analysis of art classes and the value attributed to the display of finished works within the school (Daniels, 2001, p.162). Considered in light of Dewey's work on education, this approach leans towards the curriculum and 'good productions' rather than experience of process or materials (Dewey, 1902). What hope for innovation if your teaching only allows students to progress as far as imitation?

In both cases the issue I find most problematic is the imposition of a person or institution's style upon someone else, at the expense of their individuality, a process I recently heard described as the overlaying of one person's psychic geography upon another. It is an easy trap to fall into when you are in the role of teacher, offering unnecessary and unwanted advice that gets in the way of the receiver's efforts. This advice often takes the form of suggested actions the other party could take, phrased as 'you could…, you should…, why don't you just…' and worst of all 'if I were you I would…' My teenage child recently expressed the frustrations inherent in this situation in one fell swoop. "I know what you've just suggested is a really good idea, but now that you've suggested it, I'm not going to do it." The danger here is that what should be an interesting opportunity for conversation falls flat, leaving both student and tutor unhappy. As a tutor if our ideas are not acted upon, we feel disappointed that our advice has not been taken. As a student we may feel that we no longer own the project or work, that it has been taken away from us. Beyond this it doesn't leave room for dialogue, for the growth of a democratic relationship, or for the growth of the student's individual creative identity. A far better approach, as presented by a colleague at a seminar, may be to view the college as a creative midwife, there to help the student bring their work into the world, but not taking ultimate responsibility or ownership of it. At the end of the day the midwife goes home, the baby stays with the parents. An integral part of a successful portfolio career revolves around the development of a unique creative personality. To stifle that through the careless, technical handling of an emerging creative practice could almost be considered criminal.

'A three-legged stool never wobbles': A brief note on the nature of portfolio careers.

I first encountered the term 'portfolio career' a couple of years ago when it was introduced to the Contemporary Craft MA group which my wife was studying by a visiting lecturer Pete Mosley. The notion is simple, that to run a successful freelance career, in any field, you need to have more than one string to your bow. I had also encountered the idea at a photography seminar in Birmingham, where the speaker likened it to the creation of a stable piece of furniture, such as a table or stool. 'Your business furniture needs lots of legs, if you lose too many legs it will fall over.' Sage advice, although my father taught me in my childhood that the ideal number of legs for a stool is three as it won't wobble. There is a very good reason why tripods are a key tool in photographic practice. Tables with four legs that aren't levelled, usually found in cafes or restaurants, drive me mad. My father, a master builder and talented, if erratic, craftsman, built a stool for my first child when they were a couple of years old. It had four legs and did nothing but fall over, a reminder that sometimes even those of us with decades of experience and knowledge can still get it wrong.

In retrospect I can identify that I have been operating within this classification of portfolio career ever since I left college in 1996, but that I hadn't been able to articulate it. If you have ever had more than one employer, or had a combination of employment and self-employment, or run a side-line business (Slimmer's World, Jamie's Kitchen, or Anne Summers parties) then you have been operating a portfolio career. You may also hear it described as 'going plural', particularly if you are broadening your career activities and adding to your list of job titles. When I was running a full-time photography business, in

partnership with my wife, we identified several distinct strands that made up our revenue stream: Weddings, Family Portraits, School Photography, Events, Commercial, Documentary, and so on. In my current situation I maintain a photographic practice, teach in three different roles at my college (short course tutor, associate lecturer, and photographic technical demonstrator), and fill my portfolio with the role of student/researcher on the SUNCETT program.

Portfolio careers seem to be the emerging model for employment within creative arts practices, with practitioners juggling responsibilities across several part time jobs or setting up plans to allow them to work 'seasonally' when particular types of work are available. (I have a cousin who balanced the demands of working in advertising production for about six months of each year with garden landscaping and his own creative ceramics practice.) The notion of 'get a qualification then get a job' may no longer be relevant to creative careers, and graduates looking to maintain a career and practice that suits them need to be well prepared for a shifting landscape of obstacles and opportunity. This is where I feel a good introduction to photographic practice can help support our students.

Pete Mosley (2011, p.14) touches on the importance of documenting creative career practices and positive feedback in his guide to earning a living from pursuing the career you want, with the pertinent advice to "get a good camera and learn how to use it well".

The Photographic Process In Four Acts

"You can learn all you need to know about the technical side of photography in three days, but it takes constant practice to make it so instinctive that you are in the right position, at the right time, with the right exposure and focus, without any thought about equipment or technique."

David Hurn, *On Being a Photographer,* 2009, p.102

The following graphic is offered as a simplified illustration of the photographic process. I have rendered what I understand to be a complex process into four distinct areas to open the discussion about elements integral to each part, and to shine a light on some of the language used. This graphic is offered as an introductory illustration, like the flowchart that Waring (2017, p.16) uses to highlight his discussion of methodological research standpoints.

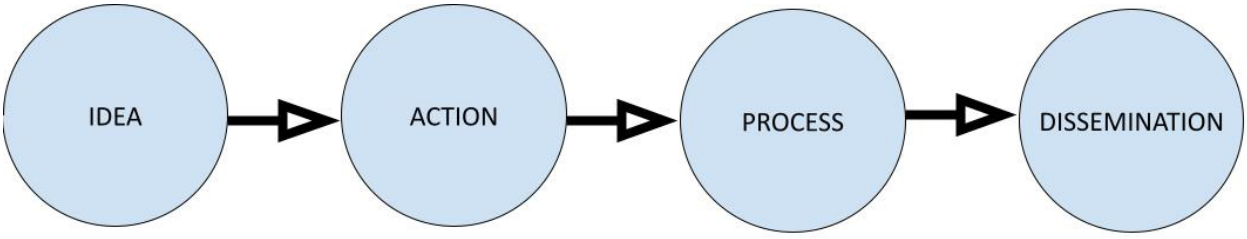


Figure 15 The photographic process in four acts.

Rendered to its simplest form an overview of the imaging sequence can be read little like this:

1. You are inspired to make a photograph.

2. You create the image.
3. You process this image.
4. You share the image.

Say it fast enough and it sounds easy, like Hurn's assertion. In many ways it can be easy depending on your knowledge and what you hope to achieve with your images. It is also easy to over complicate the process.

Act 1 Idea

Everything starts with an idea. This initiating idea may arrive in the form of a concept that emerges from deep intense research, as an opportunity presenting itself momentarily to the photographer, or as an external request from an interested party. The idea might take ages to form, the accretion of numerous thoughts, observations, and previous actions. Alternatively it may appear in the form of a lightning bolt or lightbulb moment, a fleeting event to be caught before it disappears forever. Were we to link this to a philosophical concept we may want to consider it in regard to the Greek term *Phantasia*, often translated directly as imagination, although it may be more complicated than that: Plato (427-348 BC) appears to describe this as a blend of perception and judgement, while Aristotle (384-322 BC) attributes mental imagery, hallucination, and dream to this concept as well.

The idea may involve lengthy planning, with time spent working out the logistics of a complicated shoot or storyboarding a sequence of frames to hold a narrative together, both common practices in video production. It may involve an in-depth consultation prior to an event, like the exhaustive pre wedding checklist I used to run through with clients before the big day. It could also be as uncomplicated as the decision to grab a camera before heading off on a family outing, 'just in case' there might be something interesting to photograph.

Figure 16 Rue Mouffetard, Paris, Henri Cartier-Bresson, 1954.

Act 2 Action

This is the physical action of creating an image. In terms of drawing it would be the moment the pen or pencil leaves a mark on the paper. In photographic practice it can be as simple as the press of a button, or as complicated as programming a series of actions into an automated camera system. Cartier-Bresson described this action as the decisive moment, the point in time and space where the photographer chooses to capture an image. I included one of Cartier-Bresson's better-known images to illustrate this (fig 16).

This moment can be surrounded by its own attendant activity. The measuring of light to assess exposure levels, the selection of key photography settings (ISO, Aperture, and Shutter Speed), the adjustment of focal point and composition. Here we return to Hurn's comments about the importance of being in the right place at the right time. All these concerns are in play at the time of making an image. They are also in play with other concerns. Am I in the right place, is it safe, am I legally, ethically, and morally able to create images here? My experience of working as a wedding photographer taught me the importance of considering my actions and interplay with others in the context of complex social occasions. The best description I ever had from a bride to be, when discussing her decision to book us, was that she could see that we would be able to operate as "photographic ninjas", able to blend into the background, or step to the fore and take control for family group photos as required. Friendly, relaxed, and unobtrusive became the by-line for the photographic style we offered early in our wedding career, and I've lost count of the conversations I've had with guests who assumed we were long term friends of the happy couple.

It wasn't long before these three terms became ubiquitous among the promotional material used by wedding photographers in the mid 2000s, to the extent that it became hard to find anyone offering an alternative, although I wish someone had; offering unfriendly, uptight, and obtrusive photography would have been quite the unique selling point. Incidentally my early experiences of wedding photographers, at friends' weddings in the mid 1990s, pretty much fit this description to a tee. Our understanding of this as the standard mode of behaviour for wedding photographers initially turned us against entering the industry. It would take a shift in our understanding of what prospective wedding couples were looking for, in tandem with an increased empathy following our own wedding, to tip us towards entering this market. It was also fortunate that the first couple of weddings we photographed turned out to be a lot of fun.

Act 3 Process

I'm using the word process here to cover several activities, in this case I am using it specifically to address the elements of photographic practice that come after we have created an image.

Here too the activity involved could range from almost non-existent to super complicated. For most of us I would expect this part of the practice to consist of little more than a simple reviewing of the images created. We may double check an image captured on our phone to make sure that everybody looked good in the family portrait, or interrogate the histogram offered on the screen of our digital camera to make sure our exposure is correct before moving on to create another picture. That may be the end of it as far as this part of the process is concerned.

Alternatively it may be far more laborious, the beginning of a lengthy process, either in the darkroom as we mix chemistry to start the developing process, stripping silver from our analogue film to reveal inverted 'negative' images, or as we download thousands of RAW images from our cameras in the edit suite to be converted to shareable files via imaging software such as Adobe's Lightroom. Tied up in both systems

there will be an element of selection, of interrogating printed contact sheets or high-definition screen previews to choose which images will be kept and which discarded.

Other terms that can be applied here include workflow, post processing, retouching, and proof printing.

Act 4 Dissemination

Photographs are made to be shared. As Hurn states, in an interview with Bill Jay, “Photographers should not put pictures in a box under their beds and be the only ones to see them. If they put film in their cameras it presupposes that they want to record what they see and show somebody else. Photography is about communication”, (2009, p.84).

This is the last stage in this process, what to do with the images you have created. We can lock our images away in digital filing systems, forgetting about them for the time being. We can share them on social media, through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We can print them, as individual prints on paper or bound into heavyweight albums and books. We can have them framed as gifts for family mantlepieces or printed supersized as wallpaper for our living rooms.

As I said at the start of this illustration, I am offering a simplified overview of a complicated process. It is worth bearing in mind as well that this is not a strictly linear progression as the flowchart may imply. It’s not unusual for some elements of the process to extend over lengthy periods of time. I know that I have unprocessed rolls of film in my 35mm camera bag. I have no idea what’s on them and look forward to finding out when I next get the chance to process some film.

In a similar way I know that when working at a social event I am likely to experience the first two stages almost constantly simultaneously while in that mode of activity. I will occasionally check my settings by reviewing an image or two on the back of the camera and may share a knockout image with my client by way of a confidence booster, but most of that processing activity is set aside until a later date. Understanding these modes of activity allows me to move freely between them as needed.

Having introduced the Greek concept of *Phantasia* earlier in this discussion now might be a good time to introduce four other philosophical concepts relating to activity, even if only briefly. These are Aristotle’s (384-322 BC) forms of knowledge, and they are *Techné, Poesis, Praxis*, and *Phronesis*. Here we may find *Techné* in the understanding of how the camera can be used to create an image, *Poesis* in the creation of something new, of adding something to the world, and *Praxis* in understanding where this activity sits within the craft of photography: does it belong to a particular genre or another, does it fit within a tradition or is it something new? Finally *Phronesis*, and the understanding of where our actions sit in relation to wisdom. Are we doing the right thing in making these images, in the way we go about creating them, or is there a deficit in our understanding between our actions and their outcomes?

The camera is a box with a hole in it.

Now that we have a (hopefully) relatively clear illustration of the photographic process let’s talk technical details. Almost all photographic imaging systems share the same three key elements involved in the recording process: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. At its simplest this can consist of little more than a single point of light entering a darkened room. The camera obscura is an early manifestation of this, light cast upon an interior surface to offer an inverted view of the exterior.

Chemical experimentation in the early 1800s opened new possibilities for recording images with the simplest of cameras. Fox Talbot is widely credited as the British inventor of photography, with his successful mouse trap cameras, small wooden boxes equipped with a single lens and a sensitised plate to record a picture on (fig 17). This style of camera is still popular today, almost 200 years on, in both the beautifully hand-crafted cameras built by Dora Goodman (fig 18), and the experimental contraptions cobbled together from biscuit tins and black tape made by our first-year photography degree students, reminiscent of Miroslav Tichy's homemade machines (fig 19).

Figure 17 Henry Fox Talbot depicted with one of his cameras. Photograph by John Moffat, 1864.

Figure 18 A promotional image featuring one of Dora Goodman's handmade pinhole cameras.

Figure 19 One of Miroslav Tichy's homemade cameras, photo by Roman Buxbaum.

Some two centuries of experimentation, technological advancement, and refinement have extended the range of photographic imaging systems to an almost dizzying degree. Significant waypoints in this evolutionary history include the development of portable darkrooms, roll film, 35mm camera systems, the advent of digital capture systems that are compatible with existing analogue cameras and lenses, and the rising popularity of the smartphone.

Despite all this almost all cameras operate in a similar way: light travels through a lens to be received by a recording medium. In analogue cameras the recording medium is a gelatine backed film impregnated with light sensitive grains of silver. For digital cameras the sensor offers an array of red, green, and blue pixels that react to light when the shutter is opened.

How much light hits the recording medium and for how long is controlled by aperture and shutter speed settings respectively. Aperture or 'f stop' numbers indicate a fraction of the light that can pass through the glass elements of a lens, usually expressed as a range of numbers with typical values running in this sequence: 1.4, 2, 2.8, 4, 5.6, 8, 11, 16. At each step the amount of light transmitted through the lens is either doubled (5.6 to 4) or halved (5.6 to 8). The lower the aperture number the greater the amount of light travelling through the lens, the brighter the exposure, and the lower the apparent amount of focus in the resulting image. Want to create a portrait and blur the background out, use a low aperture value like 1.4 or 2.8. Shooting a family group shot with lots of people, choose an aperture in the region of f11 and you'll have most if not all your group in focus.

Shutter speed offers a similar array of effects. Measured in seconds or fractions of a second, the shutter speed controls how long the light passing through the lens is allowed to hit the film or sensor for. Typical values for shutter speeds tend to follow this pattern: 30s, 15s, 8s, 4s, 2s, 1s, 1/2s, 1/4s, 1/8s, 1/15s, 1/30s, 1/60s, 1/125s, 1/250s, 1/500s, 1/1000s, 1/2000s, 1/4000s. Again, at each step the amount of light is either halved or doubled, affecting the brightness of the image recorded. Shutter speed also influences the amount of movement recorded within an image: the longer the exposure time (8 seconds for example) the more movement, while shorter exposure times create a freeze frame effect popular in sports and wildlife photography.

The last of the three key settings is ISO, one of the few words to become capitalised in its own right. Originally standing for International Organization of Standardization, ISO became shorthand for the sensitivity rating assigned to varied analogue film stocks. The name itself is not an acronym, due in part to the variations to be found around the world. The official explanation from the organization is that name derives from the Greek word Isos, meaning equal. The light sensitive part comes from silver halide grains in the film. The larger the silver grains the quicker the film will react to the light coming through the lens, and the higher the ISO rating. Films rated at 100 ISO are good for bright, sunny situations, while those in the 800 to 1600 range will generally work well under poorly lit conditions but will produce a grainy effect in the resulting images.

In terms of digital cameras, new sensor technologies offered a flexibility that would have been much harder to replicate in analogue film cameras. The new cameras offered photographers the opportunity to switch between ISO settings mid shoot. No longer restricted to working around the film loaded in the camera, ISO could be switched as photographers moved from one lighting situation to another. This was invaluable to us as wedding photographers, particularly when transitioning from working inside a dimly lit church to blazing sunshine outside on a sunny summer's day.

Digital sensors have their own peculiarities. They are generally built to an optimum ISO setting, usually 100 or 200. At this ISO you can expect the best performance in terms of image quality from the sensor. The higher you set the ISO the greater the evidence of digital noise (think fuzzy video effects) within the resulting images. Although this effect was an apparent and unwanted element of digital capture in the 2000s, technological advances and a research and development race between camera manufacturers over the last twenty years or so have produced cameras that can produce clean results at almost every ISO.

Exposure

All three settings (Aperture, Shutter, ISO) can be combined to create an optimum exposure. In terms of photographic capture the term exposure is a catch all for the picture itself, the brightness of the picture, and is also related to the light metering process that indicates what the three key settings should be set

to. Choosing the correct exposure setting is generally informed by the desired effect the photographer hopes to achieve in relation to the prevailing lighting conditions. The exact combination is a balancing act based on these three settings. Not enough in focus? Change your aperture. Too much movement? Change your shutter speed. Too dark? Raise your ISO.

I want to take a moment to emphasise how critical exposure, in terms of the brightness achieved in an image capture is. To be usable image data needs to be recorded within an acceptable range, regardless of the medium used to record it. Exposures that fall outside this range present issues for anyone trying to extract an image from them. Underexposed images are too dark, and can often present unwanted artefacts within the picture, particularly colourful noise within shadow areas and poorly represented colours. Overexposed images will be too bright, with a loss of detail within highlight areas. These issues are further complicated by the technology used. While you can extract a reasonable image from an overexposed analogue negative (up to a point), the same doesn't hold true for digital captures. Overexpose a digital image and you will get nothing but pure white data in the lightest areas of your photos. This was and continues to be a serious issue for photographers. When we first started using digital cameras and were able to review our images on the fly a weight was lifted from our shoulders. No more anxious waiting at the photo lab on Monday to see what we had got from Saturday's wedding, we could see it immediately. A second weight was lifted when manufacturers added histogram and zebra warning options to the camera playback, enabling us to see straight off if we were getting it wrong. This development was particularly useful for us, offering a clear and immediate indication when we had lost all the detail in a bride's exquisite wedding dress and allowing us the chance to remedy the situation.

Much of this issue revolves around how we, as photographers, operate our cameras. I learnt to rely on manual camera settings early in my career, and still prefer to choose aperture, shutter, and ISO based on what I am taking photos of, what I want to achieve within the images in terms of stylistic visual qualities, and the lighting conditions I'm working within. I struggle to step out of this practice and let the camera do any of the heavy lifting for me via the semi/automatic modes. I like the responsibility that goes with this way of working. I like being in control and understand this as good practice.

I have generally steered clear of the automatic settings. I don't like the feeling that my camera kit is double guessing me, or that it will generate an image I can't use by applying camera settings I would normally steer clear of. I have on occasion found parts of my camera kit in conflict with each other, usually through a mismatch in settings somewhere within the camera setup options, and probably something that I have done by accident or through experimental tinkering that I have forgotten to reset. KISS (keep it simple stupid) sums things up nicely here, as does PICNIC (problem in chair, not in computer). Nothing quite beats a camera that doesn't get in the way of you taking pictures.

I also understand that the way I work isn't for everyone. While I think that understanding the camera, its settings, and how they affect the exposures you generate is a vital part of photographic practice, I acknowledge that others will want to operate their cameras differently. There isn't (or shouldn't be) a defined hierarchy of photographic settings; there is a variety of options available for photographers of any level to work with. The important thing here is to find the way that works for you.

Much of this comes from our understanding of the tools we use and the materials we interact with, an area of study gaining ground under the heading of material intelligence (Sennett, 2008). We learn the limits of a material or process practically through trial and error. How far can I stretch a rubber band, how many times can I fold a piece of paper, how many times can you bend a copper pipe before it breaks? My brother and I found the answer to this in our youthful pre-teen years, when a game of 'look at what this

pipe can do' quickly became a flooded parent's bedroom when we broke the water pipe leading into the radiator.

If I learnt any lesson from this experience, beyond an insight into the malleability and breaking point of copper piping, it was the importance of assessing a crisis and reacting with a viable solution. That we never, to my recollection of the event, got a beating or a serious dressing down says a lot about my mother's attitude to parenting. It's certainly an approach that I have found to work throughout my life.

The important thing here is to experiment within a safety net. I'm reminded here of an experiment conducted by Professor Jerry Uelsmann with his photography students, recounted in *Atomic Habits* (Clear, 2018, p.141-142) and *Art & Fear* (Bayles & Orland, 2013, p.29). Uelsmann split his class in two. One group would be marked on quantity, to get top marks they would have to submit one hundred photos, ninety would merit a B grade and so on. The other group would be marked on quality. This group would only have to submit a single image each, but the images submitted needed to be 'perfect' to get top marks. According to these two accounts the quantity group produced in volume and saw a marked improvement in the quality of the images they created. The quality group struggled to produce anything. This story resonates with Sennett's (2008, p.262) clarification of the good craftsman as one who avoids perfectionism and is driven to create in multitude. Within this story I find a safety net, but really only for the quantity group and with a proviso: assuming Uelsmann was working with motivated students who were keen to improve their photographic ability then this group could not fail if they engaged with the activity. The key word here is 'if'. A safety net is no use if you don't land in it.

Test an idea and test it again. Try using the different settings on your kit day in and day out. Play with different print processes, software editing tools, presentation options. Do all these things until you know you have the confidence to tackle a wider audience or a paying market. Part of a practice is doing a thing to the point where it becomes second nature, something you don't have to actively think about when you do it. Sennett describes this process as 'embedding', the change from active thought and practice to 'tacit knowledge' (2008, p.50).

When we worked with film the film stocks ISO set the tone for these settings. Almost every photograph I took as a cruise ship photographer would have been on 100 ISO film, the shutter set to 125th of a second because I was working with a handheld camera, and the aperture at f8. We would have used a flash to add foreground illumination to the images. These camera settings were so ingrained in my practice that I had to actively unlearn them when starting up my wedding photography practice. My practice was 'jammed' through a lack of innovation, modification, or change within the repetition of the activity (Sennett, 2008, p.38). I don't have an issue with flash lit photography *per se*, but one thing it is not is unobtrusive, and you really shouldn't use it in the middle of a church ceremony.

I think it's worth noting here the importance of the specific language used within photographic practice. When the industry transitioned to digital capture at the turn of the century camera manufacturers took the old ISO convention from analogue photography and applied it to the new technology. They did this to maintain strong links with an existing customer base. An alternative option would have been to adopt the system already in play with video capture technologies, to use the term Gain instead of ISO, a perhaps more accurate description of the way the system works. Other differences include the retention of aperture and shutter speed, as opposed to iris and shutter angle respectively. We use differing names for the same things depending upon what tradition and community we belong to. The descriptive terms used for the activity of photography often link to hunting. Photographers go out on 'shoots', pictures are 'taken' or 'captured', the additional flashes added to cameras are 'flashguns'. Traditionally the transmitters on

studio lights that allowed you to synchronise flash timings where called ‘master’ and ‘slave’, terms that are only recently beginning to be left behind in favour of transmitter and receiver. It’s interesting to me to note how the participating students test out their knowledge of photographic terms in data set 1, sometimes questioning their use of a term or admitting that they don’t know what they are talking about. I expect this is much the same when I attempt to use phrases that belong to blacksmithing practice.

All the gear and no idea: Why a sudden attack of GAS can be bad for you and your wallet.

Figure 20 Some of the contents of my current kit bag.

Generally speaking, photographers will at some point develop brand loyalty. We find a camera system that fits. We like the way the camera feels when we handle it, the subtleties of the images it produces, the sound it makes when we take a picture. This is a tactile experience that enters our muscle memory and can become a part of our identity as a creative craftsperson. When we get used to a camera system we experience it instinctively, the touch of the equipment embedded in our practice (Sennett, 2008, p.50).

It is also common practice for photographers to buy into a camera system. We start off small, usually with a camera body and a lens or two. If we’re not careful that kit list quickly grows, as we identify gaps in our arsenal or feel the need to upgrade equipment. At the height of our wedding business I estimated that between us we were carrying about £5,000 worth of camera kit each, not including the backup equipment and accessories stashed in the boot of our car. Bitter experience has taught us the need for carrying spare gear on shoots; the collapse of even brand-new cameras on a wedding day a swift lesson in going prepared.

I mentioned earlier that my first proper camera, back in 1990, was a 35mm Canon A1. I haven’t used Canon cameras at all since 1997. I am, and have been since 1996, a Nikon shooter. I’m not entirely monogamous in terms of camera systems, and have used Olympus, Minolta, Sony, Fuji, Hasselblad, Bronica, and Mamiya cameras as well, among others. I have long maintained that all cameras are simply boxes with a hole in them, and that the best zoom lens you can get is your legs, when asked for advice on camera kits.

When we moved from film to digital capture in 2002 it was via the Fuji S2, a crossover camera that saw Fujifilm's excellent electronics coupled with Nikon's body and lens designs. Essentially, we stayed within the Nikon kit system. Fuji dropped out of this market after two more camera releases, returning in 2014 with the release of the mirrorless XT-1. I had nursed a soft spot for Fuji since the S2 and bought into the system early on, thinking that this may revitalise my practice. Since then I have bought and sold seven cameras from within their X range, each one lasting only a couple of months. Each time I felt that each camera offered attractive features that would benefit my photography: truly silent shooting, small lightweight designs, an innovative sensor design, and so on. Each time I find the cameras spending too much time in my kit bag in favour of my Nikon kit.

Camera design has shifted towards differentiation in the last few decades. If we look back at the common 35mm single lens reflex cameras offered by most manufacturers from the late 1940s onwards, we'll find a ubiquitous shape. The cameras are mostly rectangular boxes with a lens set midway in the front. Operation is based on a right-handed orientation, the left hand focuses the lens, adjusts aperture, and supports the camera body while the right grips the camera body between thumb and three fingers, leaving the right index finger free to operate the shutter button. The layout of these cameras is common to most manufacturers, and although you can't generally use one company's lenses on another's camera body, you can switch between cameras from different manufacturers without too much disruption. Everything is pretty much where you expect it to be.

At some point in the history of these changing designs the camera companies started to move away from each other. It's very noticeable in digital cameras released over the twenty years or so, but I think it was starting to happen with 35mm film cameras back in the late 80's and 90's. This differentiation presents itself in a few ways. The move away from the constraints of having to build your cameras around a common media system, the 35mm roll film cassette, has opened camera design up to new possibilities. Simply put, the controls don't have to be in the same place anymore. The flipside of this innovation in digital imaging is that a whole raft of additional features, menus, and controls have been added to our cameras, and they're not always in the same place. As a long-term Nikon user I struggle to use Canon cameras. Everything is in the wrong place. It also doesn't help that the two companies use different terms for some things, such as TV (Time Value, Canon) vs S (Shutter Priority, Nikon) for the mode that allows you to set the shutter speed you want while letting the camera figure out the other exposure settings. I had real issues with this when I first started teaching photography, to the extent that I had to borrow a student's camera manual to figure it out.

We invest in a camera system. We develop brand loyalties, and sometimes we buy into the feature implied benefits offered by new innovations, releases, and accessories. We pick a side and we fight for it. The kit is and is not important. Sometimes we do need a new lens to improve what we do, and sometimes we need to improve how we do what we do, and no amount of new gear will help. It can be easy to assume that new equipment will change our practice. Sometimes we fall prone to gear acquisition syndrome. You can, should you so wish, invest more than the average annual UK wage in a camera, but it won't necessarily improve your photography, and new releases from the more expensive end of the camera market are often met with derisive comments along the lines 'ooh, a new camera for well-heeled dentists and plastic surgeons to buy' within photography forums.

In some ways we, as photographers, may have a love/hate relationship with the photographic tools we use. There are no shortage of arguments within photographic communities on the merits, benefits, or deficiencies of one system versus another. We may be happy to talk about camera kit and technique with other insiders, talking from a shared vantage point of knowledge and experience, but will dread being

cornered by a camera bore while out working. The context of the conversation is an important factor here, as is the perception of the camera and the photographer.

External perceptions of the camera are important. While we understand the intricacies of the camera as a tool and how to use it, others will react to the camera itself. It's a common complaint among photographers that they have to deal with comments along the lines of 'nice camera, I bet it takes good photos'. This used to wind a friend of mine up so much at wedding shoots that he went through a phase of putting the camera down, stepping away from it, waiting a bit, then replying with the phrase 'I don't know, it doesn't seem to be taking any on its own'. I also know of other photographers who went out of their way to disguise their camera brand and model, painting out the logos or masking them with gaffer tape. I think it is really the misguided perception of outsiders that places the equipment used as a superior factor to the skill and experience of the user. I have often heard, in response to the question of how long it took to create something, a figure quoted that is either the length of time that someone has been studying a craft or their entire lifetime.

There is also an element of expectation here. Using an expensive kit won't make you a better photographer but it can help you to look the part. I know a couple of commercial photographers who specialise in food. Their portfolio is mouth-wateringly good, full of exquisite images. A few years ago they invested in a Phase 1 camera system, a huge investment. One of the driving factors of this decision, besides the excellent image quality afforded by the camera, was their commercial clients' expectation that they would be using this brand of camera. Running this camera system puts them into an elite group of photographers. Funnily enough, even though their images are fantastic and would make excellent large format prints, 99% of them are produced for social media and are never seen larger than the screen of a smartphone, tablet, or PC.

The camera itself is a powerful external signifier. Carrying a camera implies that you are intending to make photographs, to create images, to document something. I was advised early on in my cruise ship career to hold my camera high when approaching people to photograph, so that they could see what I was about. The camera can act as a passport, it can be seen as a message of intent wrapped up within a tool. It can open doors for you.

I also learnt the importance of presence and being present at the right time. Working as a photographer means turning up early whenever possible. Being on time is the same as being late. Simon Roberts, in discussing his work on the general election of 2010 in a talk at the art college, highlighted the importance and benefits of this way of working. Simon often works in the style of old school press photographers, using large format film cameras, shooting from the roof of his van. In some cases this would mean camping out overnight to make sure that he was in the right space for the shot that he was hoping to get. By being there ready to go before anyone else he becomes an accepted part of the environment. His book We English (Roberts, 2009) features numerous crowd scenes taken from this elevated viewpoint: picnickers sunbathing in a park (fig 21), swimming in a lake, trawling through a car boot sale, and so on. These images would be much harder to capture had he rocked up with his van halfway through the afternoon.

Figure 21 Keynes Country Park Beach, Shornecote, Gloucestershire, 11th May 2008, Simon Roberts.

Here too is the argument of the best approach with photographic genres such as street photography. Many street photographers favour a discrete or surreptitious approach, in the mode of a silent or secret observer, possibly hoping to emulate Cartier-Bresson. Others operate in a more overt 'in your face' fashion, quite literally in the case of photographers like Bruce Gilden (fig 22). I personally agree with a friend who struggles with a covert or non-dialogic approach, if there's no conversation or communication between photographer and subject then the resulting images are going to be one sided. Hurn's take on this relationship between photographer and subject, in relation to the creation of pictorial essays, leans towards a deeper involvement (2009, p.84-93). If you want to document something (a place, a person, or as in Hurn's example, a nightclub) then you need to spend time in that environment or with those people before you start making pictures. This notion resonates with Dunne's (2005, p.152) discussion of the value of internal goods and experience and reminds me of an encounter I had with a young photographer while on holiday in Wales. We were sitting with friends on a small beach on the Welsh coast, somewhere near Mwnt, and enjoying a patch of good weather, the kind of moment when the children are happy playing and there's a chance to relax. One of our friends was having their hair braided by another when, seemingly out of nowhere, we were swooped on by a young man brandishing a 35mm camera. He appeared suddenly, stopping within a couple of feet of us, crouched to frame a picture of the hairdressing activity, took a single image, and left without a word. As a photographer I understood what had happened, that he had seen a moment that he wanted to record and had acted upon it. Had he asked permission he may

have been refused, and he may have considered that it was better to act and ask for forgiveness later, only he didn't engage with us at all. I found the event invasive in terms of our personal space but of little concern. My friends were furious. Later I found him dipping postcards in the surf, wanting to add another element to the souvenirs he was collecting on his travels. We talked briefly about his travels, and not at all about photography.

Figure 22 Untitled, New York City, Bruce Gilden, 1990.

Steppingstone: Starting to teach

Back to school

I am a photographic educator. I came to teaching at the tail end of my thirties, having spent the preceding 18 years working as a professional photographer. Late in the summer of 2013 an opportunity arose to teach a short evening course for adult learners. This course is offered at our local arts college and focuses on introducing students to the basics of digital photography. The sudden departure of the current tutor and a recommendation from a friend led me to apply for the position.

I was excited by the challenge of taking on the educational leadership of this course. I worked through the previous tutor's lesson plans, added notes about things I felt were important to include, then sat back confident in the feeling that I had enough experience to draw on to make the course a success and waited for the first session to roll around. Two things spring to mind here: first that I was experiencing what some refer to as the Dunning-Kruger effect, of estimating my ability to teach as far greater than my experience of teaching, and second that the college was complicit in this assumption, as touched upon by Sarason (1999, p.2).

I very quickly realised how out of my depth I was. I may have known my subject well enough, what I didn't know was how to teach it! The first lesson shot past in a tense blur. I distinctly announced how scared I

was out loud to the students at least once. It took me a while to calm down as I sat in my car after the session had ended. I knew that I had to do something to improve what I was doing but I did not know what it was.

I returned to the friend who had suggested teaching on the course in the first place and asked for advice. 'Sign up for a teaching course, you can do an evening course at the tech college next door' was her advice. I enrolled in a fourteen-week program that started the following spring. It made the evening classes easier. Good examples of teaching practice were highlighted and relevant educational theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, were introduced and explored. I was learning about teaching in a group of people who were working through similar issues to the ones I was experiencing, and there was an element of sharing our problems and ideas on how to solve them. Small changes that I hadn't thought of or hadn't thought suitable for my evening class became usable. I was learning as part of a community of practice. Back in my evening course I was able to relax into the role of tutor, allowing more room for discussion and debate within the sessions. Thanks to the pedagogical theories we had looked at on my course, such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), I no longer felt guilty if I wasn't talking the whole time. One of my tutors pointed out to us that there is nothing wrong with leaving space for the students to work in or moving the style of the lesson from delivery of information to a guided activity. Some of the most successful classes involved little more than pointing the students in the right direction and letting them explore.

It still took time to get the order of the course into the correct shape. Lesson plans were refined through trial and error. Early discussion of individual students' needs, and desired learning outcomes, allowed the groups to find common ground and support one another. The running order of the lessons would have to be rearranged to accommodate the group's interests. Sometimes lessons would have to be repeated in part to allow some students more of a chance to grasp certain concepts. The format of the lessons quickly changed from a rigid lesson plan to more open democratic discussions on themes and practices, backed up with a foundation of technical knowledge. I estimate that it took me three to four years to get the course to run well (that's eight groups of ten people on each course for eight weeks). Even then the different dynamic that each group has brings another variable element to the experience.

The evening short course program is aimed at anyone, aged from 16 up, who is interested in learning a new skill or getting into a particular creative practice. Those choosing to sign up for the photography short course generally fall into one of three categories:

1. Coming to the course with no prior experience of photographic practice. I had one student arrive with their brand-new camera, their first DSLR, that they had yet to take a single image with.
2. Coming to the course to refresh or update their knowledge of photography. These students often have experience of using analogue film cameras and are looking to update their knowledge. Most of the basic techniques are the same for digital and analogue processes, with a few very important differences.
3. Those who have identified a need for good quality images in their professional practice (teachers, estate agents, carpenters, online retailers, *etc.*) and who have very specific needs in terms of the skills they want to develop and the results they want to achieve.

The timing of the course (midweek, 6:30-9pm) often means that we don't have our full complement of students every week due to work or family commitments, and it is not unusual for some of those that start the course to drop off entirely before the end of the eight-week run. Any change in the composition of the student group influences the way the sessions run and how the group works.

Even from the very first few, admittedly shaky, sessions I knew that there are three key elements that I feel are vital to photographic practice that I wanted to get across.

1. Photography should be fun. Your camera should be a pleasure to hold, there should be joy in looking for the decisive moment, a great composition, or exciting lighting, and even greater rewards in being in the right place at the right time to capture these.
2. You must keep making photographs. Even when the weather looks awful, or your inspiration is running low, or you really don't know why you are making photographs. Photography is a practice like any other, you have to put the hours in to be good at it and accept that not every image you take will be great. Learning to edit your own work and reflect upon it is an important skill in itself.
3. You don't have to do it alone. In fact, you shouldn't work alone. Like any other craft photography has its own communities, with their own language, interested in refining their understanding and abilities to work within varying genres, from landscape to still life, portraiture to scientific imaging, snapshots to high art. Also central to practice is the important role of mentor. In much the same way that a master craftsman would guide an apprentice, photographers need to share their experiences with and seek advice from other photographers. Beyond this community there is a wider audience of interested parties who enjoy photographs. Sharing your images is vital, otherwise what's the point?

If eight 2½ hours sessions is a reasonable amount of time to educate keen, self-motivated, learners in the basics of photographic technique and practice, why do we offer fee paying arts degree students so much less? I can see that even basic photographic practice would be of great use to students involved in creative arts degree courses such as blacksmithing, textile design, and performing arts. The exception here being those students engaged in studying photography itself, we already do a great deal to help these individuals develop their practice.

A key question I asked myself at this point was, why so many of our introductory inductions had become exercises in ticking health and safety checklists, reciting the rules and regulations for borrowing kit or booking studios, with little or no follow up on improving the quality of the images created by our students?

Problems

What's your problem?

If I am intending to treat some of this experience as data, and considering the use of thematic analysis to interrogate these autobiographical accounts of lived experience, what are the key themes that have arisen so far from this account of my educational experience?

In its small and close up form this research began as an intervention into improving the technical photography introductions I offered to our degree level craft students. In a wider view and following the idea that the specific and small scale can be applied on a wider scale, then the research expands, informed by Aristotle's (384-322 BC) forms of knowledge, to cover ideas of good practice, community, aspiration, and ambition.

Early on in this research process I identified the following as points to consider:

1. How can photographic practice be encouraged from an early point in the participating student's academic and creative studies?
2. What constitutes good, ongoing, reflective practice in the context of an art college?
3. How can a technical program be tailored to suit individual courses specific needs?
4. How do skills sit within a practice?
5. What images are needed and for what purpose?
6. How can I encourage participation for students whose core studies are not photography related?

In the next chapter I'll turn to some of the literature that has guided me in this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter One presents a narrative account of my own journey into becoming and being, first a photographer, and then a teacher. It describes the stages and processes I encountered in my own acquisition and development of craft in both fields of practice, including consideration of questions such as the pedagogic principles and practices which underpin the development of craft, what we mean by good work in any craft, as well as issues surrounding how achievements in craft should be developed and assessed.

Chapter Two explores these questions in more detail and in some depth. It looks to theoretical and historical perspectives to foreground some of the main contributions to this discourse from peer-reviewed, published literature and research.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a critical discussion of different perspectives and leading contributions to this discourse. It aims to provide frames of reference which it is hoped will be useful in informing this enquiry.

This literature review begins with a discussion of the work of Sennett (2008) and his contribution to the discourse surrounding the nature of skill and the stages and processes involved in skill and craft development. Sennett's discussion of craftsmanship is first employed in the thesis to chronicle the historical development of craft from its medieval origins to counterpart milestones in developments in craft today.

Taking Sennett's text as a reference point, this chapter then opens the discussion surrounding the elements, stages, and processes that Sennett identifies as being critical to our understanding of the acquisition of skill, craft, and the development of practice. These elements are subsequently considered in relation to ideas put forward by other theorists, practitioners, and researchers in this field of study and in relation to my own experiences in the above fields of practice. My intention here is to link these discussions to current educational thinking and practice in the Further Adult and Vocational Technical Education (FAVTE) sector.

It's my party… And I'll cry if I want to

Sitting in the presence of others

In a recent tutorial, while discussing the importance of being selective in a research reading list, I was encouraged by my tutor to think of the literature review section of my thesis as a party. I can't credit the originator of this idea, but the idea and its possible varied images stuck with me. I found myself linking it to the somewhat fanciful 'mind palace' that appeared in Sherlock (2012), something I turned to myself in a moment of crisis a couple of years ago. I also found myself passing it on as a way of encouraging others to bring their influences into a livelier state.

The idea is good. Imagine you are hosting a party. It's your research party and you can invite whoever you like and for whatever reason. The idea is vague enough to offer a broad interpretation. Is this a formal dinner party, with assigned seating, or a casual affair along the lines of an impromptu birthday bash, where

conversations ignite and flame along unexpected patterns? Is it a polite or rowdy affair? Do all your guests get on, or are they diametrically opposed to each other from the start?

If it's a formal affair, are you sitting someone at the head of the table? Is there a dominant voice in the crowd, or a group agreement? Where in this party do you sit, and who do you want to talk to about what? Then I realised that I had already imagined such an event, with a few differences.

A few years ago I went through a redundancy process with my employer. At the time my partner and I both worked for the same college and found both of us to be in this situation. This process started at the end of the academic year, just after we had finished the first UK wide coronavirus lockdown, so a stressful few months that included switching from a personal practical delivery to a remote model of teaching gave way to a summer of justifying my role at the college. Not the most relaxing summer ever, but one with a few glimmers of light.

One such glimmer occurred while out walking the dog. This was before I started running, but essentially the same looped route, out past the village church and down through the fields to the river. Movement and fresh air are a tonic in helping me to think properly, and I was taking the time to consider options and possible pathways for future activities depending upon possible outcomes from the redundancy process. By the time I reached the weathered wooden bridge that crosses the stream, out by the abandoned railway line, I had come round, by way of Sherlock (2012), to thinking about the idea of the mind palace.

The mind palace is presented as an imaginary structure, a fantastical building with multiple rooms and hallways, that each contain something of importance. Essentially it is presented in the show as an elaborate mental filing system, allowing for easy recall of vast amounts of information. If you want to remember something you go to the relevant room in your mind palace.

I wasn’t looking for things or events in my wandering, I was looking for people. I imagined a grand ballroom, populated with everyone whose company I had enjoyed, then started looking for those that may be suitable as mentors. I wanted to tap into a group of people I knew who had been through the kind of experience I was dealing with or had plotted their own career course independently of larger institutions. I wanted advice from people I could trust.

It does sound fanciful as an activity, and I will admit to actively enjoying imagining a grand courtly estate with wide avenues and impressive sculptures. Its practical effect was to enable me to identify a group of people that I wanted to turn to for advice. I was interrogating myself as to who I felt I could turn to before reaching out to them in the real world, and I was correct in my selection of mentors, because the advice offered was invaluable to me at the time and remains so today.

So in a similar way allow me to introduce the collected party guests that have been identified as notable attendees, distinct voices, and insightful conversation partners during this research process.

It would be hard to offer up a discussion of craft, practice, and skill without referring to Sennett’s (2008) work in *The Craftsman*. Sennett’s work is comprehensive in its overview and examination of the role of skill within a craft practice, and Sennett casts his net wide in looking for his examples. He turns his attention from musicians to architects, from mediaeval workshops to atomic researchers, from the modern drive to learn skills in pursuit of a portfolio career to the importance of motivation in craftsmanship. All of this is kicked off with the story of an encounter with Hannah Arendt, so Arendt is

invited to the party too, and because Arendt is concerned with the lack of critical thinking within human activity, so we find a like mind evident in the writings of John Dewey.

It would also be hard to have this discussion without referring to Aristotle's (384-322 BC) thinking on forms of knowledge that include *techné, phronesis, poesis,* and *praxis*, but in this instance (at this party) there are intermediary gatekeepers between us, so we find ourselves talking to Dunne (1997) for his take on Aristotle's ideas, to Kemmis (1995) for his elaboration on the relationship between practice and theory, and Biesta (2018) for his thoughts on the point of creative education.

Into this mix of bodies we also find Hyland (2019) discussing the mind/body divide, Bailey (1990) offering an overview of the history of technical education, and Coffield (2009) for ways in which theories and ideas can be employed in the practical environment of a classroom by both teacher and student. Coffield is not alone in this endeavour, because here too we find Maguire (2018) and her encouragement for people to consider how they learn.

Figure 23 Nighthawks, Edward Hopper, 1942.

Ultimately it doesn't matter where you imagine meeting them and having the chance to engage with their thinking, whether it is at some grand occasion in a palace, out walking in the countryside, or sitting in a greasy spoon café like the one I used to frequent while at college with my fellow art students. Since I started considering this idea visually I keep returning to Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks* (1942), reimagining the scene with the varied voices mentioned above (fig 23). This reimagining is not unusual. Hopper's painting is known well enough to feature as the basis for numerous reinterpretations and reinventions, redrawn with fictional characters such as *The Simpsons* (1989) or the otherworldly patrons of the cantina in *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope* (1977).

One thing that interests me here is the position of the viewer regarding this image: Hopper's viewpoint is distant and excluded. He appears to stand outside the events depicted, acting as an observer. This distant positioning is evident in many of Hopper's paintings. Other works, such as Davinci's *Last Supper* (DaVinci, c. 1495–1498), bring the viewer into this depicted space, into the same room as the subjects of the image. Within our research we need to ask a similar question, where are we in this relationship? Do we sit outside as observers or are we more directly involved as participants and actors within the event? Hunt (1987, p.25) indicates the importance of this question when considering his theoretical and practical experience, that a "brief teaching stint" opened his eyes to the "overwhelming complexity" of the classroom and gave him an insight or "teacher's-eye" view. Hunt notes that this experience helped him to understand why most teachers would only listen to "those experts with actual classroom experience". Hunt's discussion of the value of direct experience in relation to educational research was an important and validating point for me in the early days of this project.

Now that I've set the, admittedly imaginary, scene and introduced a few of the key voices that I've turned to or encountered over the course of this research, I want to take a moment to discuss the central text that I've used to inform my thinking, Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008).

Sennett and the importance of craft to humanity

Published in 2008, *The Craftsman* is seen by many as a critical and timely work, opening the debate about the importance of craft practices at a time when there was a resurgence of interest in creative effort and enterprise. The Crafts Council report *The Market for Craft* (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2020, p.53) indicates that, from a financial perspective, the market for craft goods and products in the UK has more than tripled, growing from 11.3 to 38.3 million buyers between 2006 and 2020. This coincides with the emergence of online craft retailers such as Etsy and Not On The High Street, and the rising popularity of television programmes such as *The Great British Sewing Bee* (2013), *The Great Pottery Throwdown* (2015), and *The Great British Bake Off* (2010).

The Craftsman is split into three main sections. The first addresses the role of the craftsman, offering historical insight into the activity and representation of the master craftsman, the workshop, machinery, and materials associated with this role. The second section turns to the importance of the hand, of manually getting to grips with a process, material, or practice. The third section turns to ideas of quality, opening a debate on the nature of expertise, vocation, ability, and motivation.

Sennett establishes the credentials of this work within the first few lines of the prologue. He recounts a conversation with his teacher, noted political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt, about the development of the atomic bomb. Sennett would have been about nineteen at this point.

The point of their discussion, in the winter of 1962, was Arendt's argument that it is unusual for people who make things to fully understand what they are doing. They are often guided by external factors and do not have full control of the process. In other words, any maker of material things, Arendt claims, is not master of their own house.

Positioning this argument in relation to the development of atomic weaponry adds a global scale to the discussion, not to mention a frisson of terror. This is an event that has the potential to affect us all. By opening with an account of his conversation with Arendt, Sennett is indicating that this is not a trivial throwaway argument, and that discussion of craft is of universal importance to all humanity.

Figure 24 Cellini's salt cellar.

Imagine if, instead of atomics, this work was introduced with a different example. Cellini's salt cellar (fig 24), Stradivarius's violins, or Ming dynasty ceramics may appear too niche or inaccessible to a wide audience, a milk bottle too mundane to elicit excitement. These alternatives would have nowhere near the impact of the Los Alamos project or the Cuban Missile Crisis. Sennett highlights craft and our understanding of it as a matter of life and death. It makes me think of the idiom 'go big or go home'. Sennett goes big.

Sennett draws links to Greek mythology, stating that the fear of destructive invention can be traced back thousands of years within Western culture, to the myth of Pandora. The takeaway lesson here is that this story allows us to understand something of our own nature, that there is an inherent risk in founding or living in a culture built around man-made things. The risk identified here is of creating a self-harming culture. This sentiment reminds me of a popular meme that surfaces from time to time on social media platforms, that we are in trouble culturally because we value things and use people, instead of valuing people and using things. I have yet to find a definite attribution for this phrase, a side-effect of the internet's ability to disseminate and confuse at the same time.

According to Arendt, the argument here is that we (humanity) are guilty of continuing to perpetrate this harmful action. We operate under the illusion of neutrality in this process, turning to curiosity, wonder, and excitement as excuses for our unthinking actions. As Dewey (1934, p.21) in *Art as Experience* reminds us:

"We see without feeling; we hear, but only a second-hand report, second-hand because not reënforced by vision. We touch, but the contact remains tangential because it does not fuse with qualities of senses that go below the surface. We use the senses to arouse passion but not to fulfill the interest of insight, not because that interest is not potentially present in the exercise of sense but because we yield to conditions of living that force sense to remain an excitation on the surface. Prestige goes to those who use their minds without participation of the body and who act vicariously through control of the bodies and labor of others."

We are, in general terms, lacking the critical thought needed to explore our actions. Arendt's position is embodied by Robert Oppenheimer's expression of the 'technical sweetness' of the problems presented by the Los Alamos project. Oppenheimer puts the ethical and moral arguments of what to do with the atomic bomb to the end of the process, after the successful completion of the work. From this perspective, if it then seems possible then it should be tried and tested in the world.

On a domestic scale, I often experienced this with my youngest son, who developed an interest in pushing the boundaries of family behaviour in his toddler stage. I can think of several instances where, having been told not to do something like pressing the buttons on the boiler 'or there would be trouble', my son would make sure he had my full attention then commit the action in order to see what the 'trouble' was going to be. This may be something that is hardwired into us as humans. Our natural curiosity encourages us to climb higher, drive faster, and dive deeper regardless of risk and heedless of warnings. Sennett paraphrases the theologian Niebuhr's work as essentially stating that it is part of human nature that if something seems possible then it should be tried.

Certainly, Arendt is critical of the lack of ability to think, evidenced by her observations of the war criminal Eichmann and his inability to move beyond speaking in *cliché*, follow a train of thought, or empathise with others at his trial. Arendt found Eichmann to be thoughtless (In Our Time, 2017).

In a similar vein, Eisner (1993, p.5) points to the importance of education as a mind-making process. For Eisner the process of encouraging the development of an embodied mind is at the heart of education. I want to expand on this notion here before returning to Sennett, but first a word of caution.

Warning: Spoilers Ahead. Altered perceptions.

No, really, I may be about to ruin Star Wars for you.

In the first year of my degree I had the opportunity to study film theory as my contextual studies option. We received a warm welcome from our lecturer, coupled with a caveat. On the plus side she informed us that we were going to look at genre films, specifically Westerns and Science Fiction movies. Her warning was that she was about to ruin the cinematic experience for us, that if we stayed on her module, we would never be able to look at films or television in the same way. We were about to cross a barrier in our understanding, to 'boldly go' forward in our understanding of this medium (and yes, like many of us who

signed up for her course, she was an unapologetic *Star Trek* nerd). “You’ll be the one in your group grumbling about the depth of field or *mise-en-scene* in the latest blockbuster, while your friends look on with confusion wondering what on earth you are talking about”, she informed us. I consider myself fortunate to have married someone who has similar interests in this regard to me, that we find ourselves discussing the nuance of changing hair styles in a tv series or commenting on the framing and lighting within a dramatic moment at the cinema (after the film naturally, talking during a movie is very bad behaviour).

Good storytelling requires the audience to suspend their disbelief. To fully engage with a story, you have to make the step into believing in it. This engagement is what allows us to be swept away by the events in a book, to be mesmerised by the silver screen, and to be entertained by our friends when we share gossip, adventures, and shaggy dog stories. A good story can be a delight, and as Gregory states “stories are *important* for everyone” (2009, p.2). Gregory claims that exposure to stories is educationally formative, but that they can only extend invitations and not guarantee or enforce effects.

I am reminded here, of an incident that happened while I was working on cruise ships as a photographer. We were a small team, five in total, but very sociable. This contract proved to be a very friendly one with regards to the crew’s willingness to party. We enjoyed a good staff bar, well stocked with a wide range of duty-free alcohol, and it was common for our team to end our working day, close the photo gallery around 11pm, then head to the bar. Cigarettes were very cheap here, one of the reasons I quit smoking within a couple of weeks of starting on this ship. It was also common for one member of our team to hold court, entertaining us with stories of near misses and narrow escapes, peppered with witty one liners and snappy comebacks. It was good fun until a friend pointed out that, “none of his stories are true, you do know that don’t you?” I had to admit that I didn’t, and he indicated a small but significant tell, a slight pause in our friendly orator’s narration, usually after the first line, where he would look away from his audience for the briefest of moments while he considered where he was going to take his story. “The first line will be true but everything after that is bullshit.” I witnessed this for myself later that same day. The spell was broken, the magic shown to be a trick, and I found myself re-evaluating everything that I thought I knew about my colleague. I was initially angry at the time, however the further I move away from the event the more I am entertained by it, perhaps because I was offered a glimpse of how the trick was performed. I found myself in a similar situation a couple of years ago when I noticed the one upmanship a friend couldn’t resist. Been ill or injured, they’d had it worse. Done something exciting, adventurous, or dangerous, they’d done it harder, faster, better. I’m reminded of the adage ‘never let the truth get in the way of a good story’, but I have to ask how do we square this with truth and honesty within the context of research?

Figure 25 Behind the scenes image from a shoot in a blacksmiths workshop.

The potential for spell breaking is ever present in any discussion of craft and technique. Insight into the mechanics of an artefact's creation is likely to disabuse the viewer of any fanciful notions relating to how it has been made. Even a simple behind the scenes photo will go some way toward dispelling any myths about an image's creation (fig 25). There is something special about an insight into a craftsman's practice, a peek at a craft's jealously guarded secrets that may offer a deeper understanding of the activity, as long as you don't get stuck on the technical details the insight offers. There is a recurring joke at photographic conferences and conventions, of presenting craftsmen being asked what camera settings they used or what fee they charged for their prints. These questions are generally considered irrelevant or redundant by more experienced photographers. Knowing what aperture someone else used for a particular photo or what they sell their work for isn't going to isn't help you improve your photography or your business, whereas questions that relate to why they choose to work in a particular way or how they grew their business and what advice they can offer from their experiences may be of real value. The problem here may be that we're asking the wrong questions, that our perception of what information we may ask for and that we believe has value may be off target.

Figure 26 Workers in craft - Cox London, Alun Callender, 2020.

Some storytellers intentionally break the audience's suspension of disbelief. Alun Callender has made a feature of this within his project on craft workers, allowing the compositions of his photographs to expand beyond the confines of the traditional canvas backdrop (fig 26). Within the context of written fiction you may find authors addressing the reader directly or writing about themselves writing the book you are reading. Kurt Vonnegut uses this extensively in *Breakfast of Champions* (1973). In film, tv, and theatre characters may literally engage directly with the audience, breaking the imaginary fourth wall that separates us from them. The con artists in *Hustle* (2004) did it every episode as a way of explaining how they had pulled off their latest scam. Phoebe Waller-Bridge used it to masterful effect in *Fleabag* (2016), delivering monologues out of blue in the middle of scenes. *Rick and Morty* (2013) do it constantly, referencing previous episodes and other tv shows, as well as having a go at their own viewers when certain elements of the fanbase started to make unreasonable demands of the show's creators. When handled well the result can be great.

I'm going to offer you the same warning I received from my film studies tutor. I am going to discuss a specific aspect integral to a popular series of films. In a similar way to an image that contains an optical illusion, or the secret behind a magic trick, once you are aware of this then you will always be aware of it. The series is *Star Wars*. If you want to skip the next two paragraphs, then I won't hold it against you. Consider yourself warned.

Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope was released in 1977. A fantastic film, a much bigger hit than its studio ever thought it would be. It launched a series of sequels, prequels, and merchandise the like of which is almost unrivalled in cinematic history. It was a huge influence upon me as a child, one of my all-time favourite films. I believe it was the first film I saw at in a cinema, and I was hooked.

A New Hope contains a specific sound effect. You can hear it about an hour and a half into the film, when Luke shoots a stormtrooper during his attempt to rescue Princess Leia. This sound effect is known as the Wilhelm scream. It first debuted in the film *Distant Drums* (1951). It is a distinctive scream, created by actor and singer Sheb Wooley, and named after a character in the film *The Charge at Feather River* (1953). This sound effect has gone on to be used in over 439 films and tv productions as of 2020, becoming something of an inside joke, one of many references added to movies that those in the know will pick up on. It is in almost every *Star Wars* film and here's the problem I have with it. It is distinctive and recognisable, and because I am aware of it, thanks in part to my film studies lecturer, it completely snaps me out of whatever I am watching. It breaks the spell of the story for me.

I wonder if, in a similar fashion to my film studies lecturer, we should as educators warn our students that the course they are embarking upon is likely to change the way they think. It will alter the way they feel about what they are studying. More than this it may change the way they see the world. If not handled carefully it may strip away some of the magic that attracted them to this area of study in the first place.

I discussed this notion with a colleague recently. His experience was that, although his students had been initially resistant to or unhappy with these newfound insights, given time to adjust to them they had come to appreciate their value.

For me these anecdotes are linked through perception. In the case of the tall stories it is my friend's observation of the storyteller's behaviour and body language that indicate the moment of transition from fact to fantasy, and the sharing of this insight that alters my perception. Within the film studies it is the recognition of an intentional auditory inclusion that serves to remind me that no matter how engaged I

may be with the story it is a crafted piece of work. Sennett touches on the development of critical thought and action throughout *The Craftsman*, in his discussion of the craftsman's attention to detail in the creation and assessment of work, of developing an eye for quality, and of developing a critical eye for the work of others that allows us to engage with the incredible detail included in work by Cellini, the contrasts in the architectural designs of Loos and Wittgenstein, or the lack of care for quality work as exhibited by demotivated soviet builders. Sennett touches on the notion of the development of a critical eye that sees the craftsman, through repetition, continued practice, and direct experience develop an ability that becomes finely attuned to problem-finding, problem-solving and critique. Wittgenstein is held up as an example of an architect obsessed with the fantasy of building the perfect house first time around, while Loos is noted as spending huge amounts of time on site adjusting his design to real world problems and finding suitable solutions. Time and again, Sennett makes a point about the importance and value of observation and interaction, for drawing as an activity in the form of sketching and drawing from experience to deepen an understanding of what we are looking at and engaging with.

This highlighting of direct experience resonates with Eisner's (2002) discussion of embodied learning, that we experience our qualitative world through all our senses, and that our sensory system in tandem with our cultural tools allow us to develop and create ourselves. Eisner argues that by engaging with a creative activity, in his example watercolour painting, we stimulate imagination, foster judgement, develop technical skill, and refine perception, therefore becoming intelligent within that domain (p.15). The activity is complex and demanding, requiring a deeper level of cognitive activity that occurs within the body as a whole. Eisner is indicating, in part, a level of cognition that some may refer to as a flow state, an ability to act where the individual does not actively have to think about what they are doing in order to do it effectively. Also here Eisner is indicating the importance of engaging with the world in a sensory fashion that does not rely on any single sense as the most important, although Eisner leans towards the visual in his discussion of seeing. The point being made here is that active seeing, the type that requires greater attention than day-to-day living, is an 'achievement' (p.12). Following Dewey's lead, Eisner argues that seeing is connected to recognition and then labelling, and that when we have labelled something we are no longer actively looking at it. The act of consciously looking and observing indicates a shift in our perception.

A life without speech.

If, as Sennett (2008, p.4) notes, we pursue technological advances without thought as to their consequences, then we may be in danger of turning technology from a simple risk to an enemy. This idea is explored in *The Terminator* (Cameron, 1984), where a computerised military defence system becomes self-aware and turns upon its human creators. Watch the film carefully and you may also notice that many of the contemporary technologies designed to improve human life (Walkman, Answerphone, *etc.*) serve to hinder the survival of the film's human characters. Recently we have experienced a boom in the presentation and capabilities offered by large scale AI models, with concerns raised as to the cultural significance of the use of these technologies. Some argue that human creativity is under threat from machinery that will scrape, plagiarise, and homogenise our creative output. Others worry that the technology will be used by some to take the 'hard work' out of learning, that students will start to lose their critical, intellectual, and perceptual faculties to an easy machine-made alternative. Why struggle to write, draw, or paint when an algorithm can do it for you? Viewed with a less anxious eye we can contextualise the advent of new technologies in a more balanced fashion. What positive benefits can be found within emerging technologies and what are the pitfalls to be avoided? What do we want these new advancements to do for us?

Sennett points to a shared desire to retreat from the modern world, either to Heidegger's hut in the woods or to an imagined past where the craftsman could live simply, concerned only with immediate needs and unbothered by events on a greater global scale (p.3). This retreat regularly surfaces in meme form on social media: a photographic depiction of an idyllic house in the woods or on the edge of a lake by the mountains (fig 27). Because the image appears as a meme it is often overlaid with a textual question, along the lines of 'would you live here for $1,000,000 / without internet / not allowed to watch football for a month?' I'm not sure why these things or the location are presented as a negative, I'm sure many of us would move there in a heartbeat.

Figure 27 The idealised hut in the woods. Where do I sign up?

This idealised retreat is problematic, often presented as an escapist solution in its ideal form, with no indication of how to cope with the realities presented by this situation. Unless you are aiming for a robust independent lifestyle, by way of Seymour's *Complete book of self-sufficiency* (1976), then your experience is likely to have more in common with *Withnail & I's* (1987) rural exploits than Tom & Barbara's urban *Good Life* (1975). Either way the image is an illusion, a fantasy that offers much in the ideal of a perfect escape and little to nothing in relation to the practicalities presented by the reality of living this dream. Where we to actually consider such a move we would do well to seek the practical advice of Barone's Billy Charles Barnett (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p.137-144).

As we have moved into a more secular age so has our understanding of catastrophic events. No longer the province of the gods, many disasters are our responsibility. Sometimes acute (Chernobyl), other times chronic (global warming) the scale of the impact and our collective contribution to these events can be overwhelming. Who wouldn't want to escape to the wilds when faced with this, or as Oppenheimer did, turn over the responsibility of his work to others.

The counter argument to this is Arendt's belief that the public should have been involved in this discussion earlier. In favour of open candid discussion, Arendt argues that although these conversations would have been uncomfortable, they would have been of great cultural value. Sennett quotes her as saying, in *The Human Condition* (1958), "a life without speech and without action is literally dead to the world".

This quote from Arendt brings two issues to mind for me. The first is some of the difficulties we face at the moment in relation to open candid debate. Currently these are muddied waters. Fake news, misinformation, and uncompromising polarised viewpoints have left us little middle ground to meet in to discuss and resolve our differences. Arguments are often reduced to a binary option, or as I recently saw it put 'complex discussions that only offer a binary option as an answer are a bad thing: yes or no?' The second relates to how we engage with the wider world.

Stepping Stone: Let's talk Marmite.

Getting past binary oppositions.

One of the key features in much of the discussion are the consequences of reducing concepts of practice and its relationship to theory to a simplified binary option or opposition. The problem here is that complicated issues become oversimplified in their initial presentation. We want to get the debate started but we can come unstuck if there isn't sufficient progress within the discussion.

Let's start with Marmite. For the uninitiated or those that have never encountered it, Marmite is an edible spread made from yeast extract, a by-product of the brewing process, manufactured in the UK by Unilever. It has, as a popular food product, generated something of recognisable emotional connection, with many people either loving it or hating it, to the extent that it was marketed along these lines for some time. You either love it or hate it, and the marketing proposition and presentation is so strong that it would be easy to think that there really were only two options, at either end of a straight scale. We could draw it as a line with love and hate at either end and feel quite happy with a job well done. Put a little mark halfway along the line and you could split people either side. Easy.

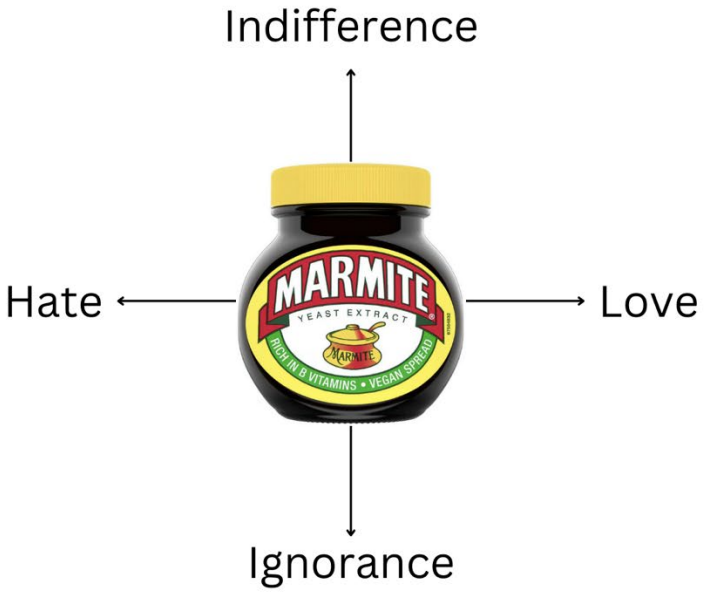


Figure 28 Love it or hate it.

However, this simplified scale really doesn't give us much in the way of depth. We could round this scale out by adding a vertical line that cuts through the middle of the first. On this axis I would suggest adding something like utter ignorance and total disinterest as two more options, so that we could measure a relationship with the spread on a graph that now offers options to include those who don't know what the product is to those who are utterly ambivalent about it. This would start to offer us a clearer indication of how people felt, but we've also started to complicate the question.

Let's complicate things further by adding context. I'll throw my hat in the ring and admit to being a fan of the spread. I like it, but context is key in understanding this. On hot toast with lots of butter on a cold winter's morning with a cup of tea, that sounds about right to me. Stirred into hot water like yeasty broth, I think I would have to be camping in winter to go for that. Added to chocolate as a special edition Christmas gift (this is 100% true, a present from my brother-in-law), then that is a hard pass for me. (It was horrible).

Binary oppositions are a recurring theme in the literature I have encountered while researching for this thesis. They can offer a useful route in to a complex discussion as long as we remember that this simplified opening doesn't really offer us the full picture.

The context of where we consider these arguments and critical theories is important. Dewey (1902, p.15) notes in *The Child And The Curriculum* that the extreme limits of theory are best left to theorists, and the real-world experience of education is more akin to a vibrant and inconsistent compromise, a foreshadowing of the pragmatic stance taken by others such as Coe (2017, p.6). Here too is a problem identified by Carr (2005, p.1), that of incompatible philosophies failing to find agreement, turning instead to attitudes that are either dismissive or assimilating.

There is also something of importance in the branding of this as well. Marmite is a recognisable brand. It has a solid cultural identity and consumers that exhibit a strong sense of brand loyalty. I only buy Marmite, even though there are alternative supermarket versions available that probably taste very similar. I don't know because I have never tried them. I have tried Vegemite, the Australian version. Once. Never again. So this isn't about whether I like Marmite because I like dark flavourful yeast extract spreads, but because this taps into my brand loyalty and affiliation.

I wonder if this is an element to the discussions of academic versus vocational training, that we have bought into a recognisable brand awareness of what we think our different educational institutions do and are for. All public schools are for posh rich kids. An academic degree level education won't teach you any practical skills. Further education is for hairdressers and plumbers (Coughlan, 2015). These assumptions are exactly that: misinformed assumptions that don't delve beneath the surface of practice and its development to find deeper, richer, and more complex meaning.

Stepping Stone: A life without speech

Secondly, in relation to artistic practice and the promotion of a creative career path for students, how can we apply Arendt's sentiment? Is it as simple as encouraging students to develop the outward facing side of their practice, that without exposition and exhibition they run the risk of their practice going unnoticed or misrepresented? There are numerous examples of this. In the photographic world I can think of Miroslav Tichy (1926-2011), Vivian Maier (1926-2009), and Francesca Woodman (1958-1981), all three of who have had their work extensively exhibited after their deaths. Tichy appears to have existed as an 'outsider' artist, rejecting conventional practice and society. Between 1972 and 1985 he created surreptitious images of local women using a cameras made from junk, wandering the streets in ragged clothes. His images were printed once only using basic equipment, often embellished with additional mark making and framing, before being discarded (fig 29). His photographic work was discovered and collected by a friend and neighbour Roman Buxbaum, who brought the work to a wider audience in 2004. Maier maintained a photographic practice from 1949 to an undetermined point between the late 1990s and the new millennium, a personal craft set alongside her professional career as a nanny (fig 30). Maier lost access to processing facilities at some point in the early 1970s, and her films went undeveloped after this point. As with Tichy, Maier's work was made as a private creative practice, and it is only the discovery of some 2,700 undeveloped rolls of film by John Maloof that has brough her work to public attention. Woodman grew up in a family of artists, and in contrast to Tichy and Maier, Woodman's work was made for exhibition and publication (fig 31). Her work has gained critical acclaim in the years after her death, supported by the Woodman Family Foundation.

In all three cases there has been significant discourse regarding the bodies of work left behind by each artist, regardless of whether this was ever their intention or not. It's hard to know what level of engagement, or lack thereof, Tichy or Maier had with their respective communities as photographers. If Dunne (2005), in his discussion of practice, identifies true practitioners as those insiders involved with a craft and its community then what are we to make of those that don't play by the rules or reject convention? In the early stages of my career as a teacher I struggled to comprehend why some students would submit to the experience of an expensive and intensive degree in photography without any observable desire to actually work as a photographer. Perhaps there is a risk here that we fall into a pattern of narrow definition for what constitutes a practice, and that the benefits of learning for its own sake are missed because we focus too neatly upon what might be better considered as training. Here too we find a discussion of class distinction within education, with Selina Todd and Anthony Anaxagorou engaging on the topic of access to creative arts education (Start the week, 2021). They identify a historical

drive for access to creative education for the working classes that counters the drive to offer education only as training, that this education should be offered for cultural enrichment, a sentiment that resonates with the notions of *savoir faire* and *être* as quoted by Méhaut (2011) at the beginning of this thesis and taps into Aristotle's (384-322 BC) idea of *praxis*.

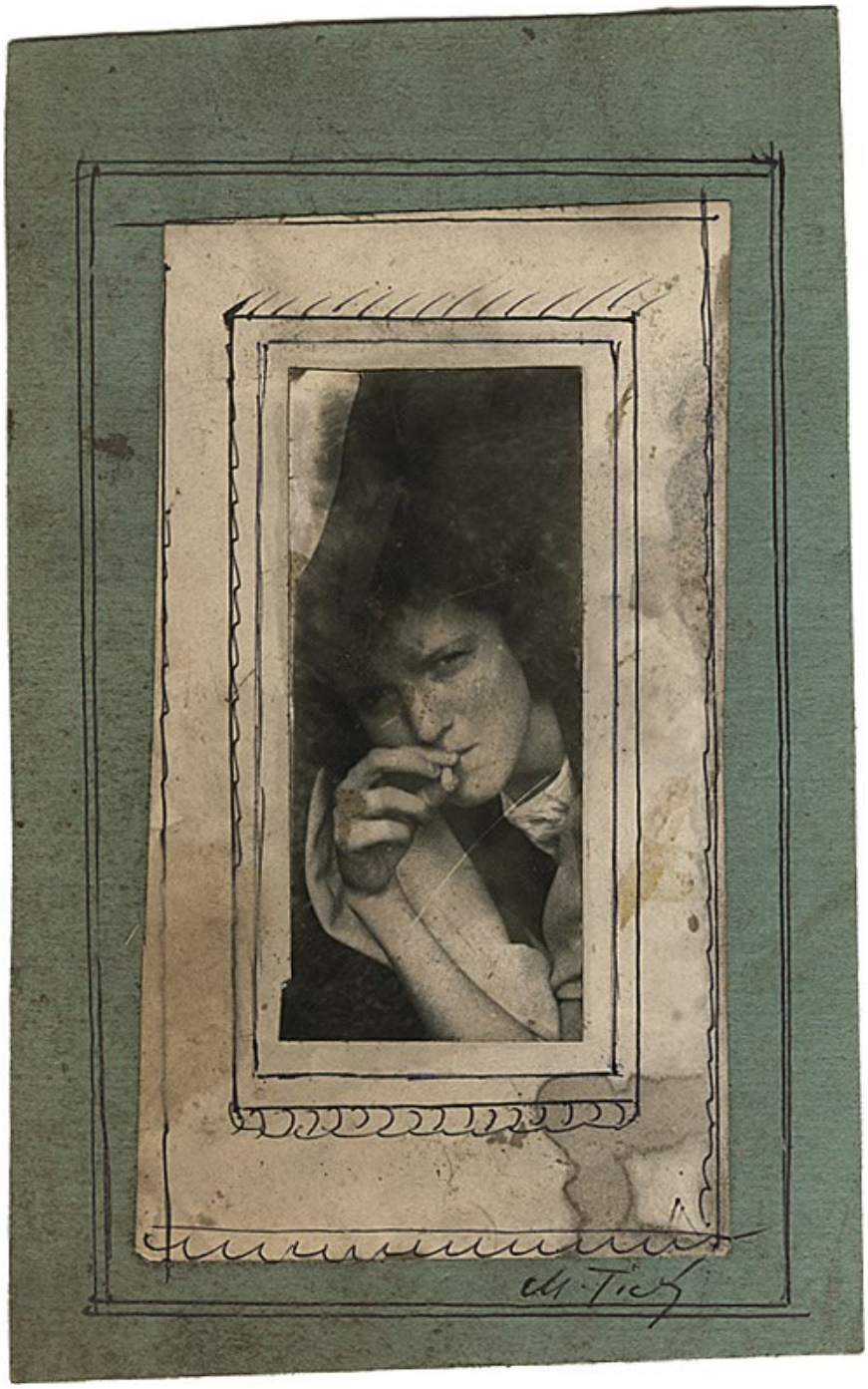


Figure 29 An image by Miroslav Tichy.

Figure 30 Canada, Vivian Maier.

Figure 31 Untitled, Francesca Goodman, 1977-1978.

Laying Out the Foundations for the Project

Animal Laborans in conversation with Homo Faber.

Having set out the argument that craft and the understanding of its importance is central to the human condition, even a matter of life and death that we cannot and should not hide from, Sennett moves on to discuss the concepts of *animal laborans, homo faber*, and the project that is his examination of craft. The two concepts are concerned with the positioning of our understanding of creative mankind: are we labouring beasts of burden or creative crafty creatures?

Sennett introduces and then explores these two key concepts in his introductory prologue to The Craftsman, attributing them to Arendt but criticising them as 'austere' depictions of the human condition. *Animal Laborans* presents humanity subjected to drudgery, a 'beast of burden', while *Homo Faber* is offered as a counter to this image, a maker of things. Sennett's criticism of this simplified depiction of human activity is that it is too meagre in its remit and does not include the things we consider an important part of a full lived experience such as, 'pleasure, play and culture'.

Once again, we are offered an insight or illumination of an issue or problem through the use of a contrasting pair, a binary opposition designed to make the discussion easier to understand. Here is one thing that is like this while there is the mirrored or reversed option. On one hand, I understand the value of this within a rhetorical discussion or debate, the clear lines of demarcation between the two examples serving to support or disprove an argument, on the other it plays into the trap of othering or excluding nuance, detail, and variation within these stereotypical or archetypal representations. The picture is a small snapshot. Presented on its own it only offers insight into a portion of the puzzle. Offered in multitude and variety, these snapshot pieces would start to build the bigger picture.

The bigger issue for me with the offering of binary opposites as a way to categorise activity, people, places, *etc.* is the way in which they can be accepted as absolute definitions, rigid in their boundaries, set in stone, invariable and immovable. While they may be useful for arguments and serve an illustrative need, they often aren't offered with any form of flexibility or mutability. They aren't allowed to change, to adapt or to move.

Perhaps here we find Sennett's intent within the prologue, a subtle nod to his main point within *The Craftsman*, illustrated by the illusory perfection of Heidegger's cabin and undercut by his assertion of Arendt's teaching as unsettling. Namely, that we need to question our understanding of what we mean by 'perfect' and what we mean by 'good'. This is not a new discourse. Philosophers have been wrestling with these notions since the days of Socrates (470-399 BC), Plato (427-348 BC), and Aristotle (384-322 BC). The main argument I see here lies between the way we apply the two terms and the achievability of the two states. 'Perfection' implies a finished realisation, but often seems to exist in an abstract form, only able to be fully realised within the imagination and impossible to bring into the world. 'Good' on the other hand indicates an ongoing level of achievement; there may always be room for improvement, and the term leaves space for adaptation and change. The good craftsman 'avoids perfectionism' (p.262).

I am reminded here of sage advice I received from one of my Fine Art tutors, within the first few weeks of my degree course. Our project briefs would be introduced with a guide as to the kind of work we were expected to produce, be it a book, an installation, or performance piece. Each project would have its own keyword, a title to get you thinking, such as 'time' or 'space'. In this instance our tutor delivered something along these lines: "I know most of you have already got an idea for this project. You can probably see it clearly in your imagination. Well done, you've completed the project. Now, you can either spend the next few weeks working towards that idea, or you can treat it as a starting point and see where it takes you. I know which I would find more interesting." To me, the intent behind this comment is clear: the creative journey is worth far more than the attempt to realise a perfectly imagined concept. Here too is a connection to Dewey's discussion of the senses and Sennet's writing about the misuse of CAD in architecture (p.39). In my experience, starting with a fully imagined concept for an art project, I run the risk of never being able to fully realise the end result. Imagined outcomes cannot account for or accommodate how an intended material or process might behave if my real-world knowledge of them is limited. Eisner addresses this in his discussion of representation (2002, p.7), noting that the ideas and images can as 'embarkation points' in a journey rather than specific detailed instructions, and that the

work and materials may guide the maker. Eisner identifies the element of surprise as a reward ‘bestowed by the work on its maker’.

Figure 32 An example of creative journaling from an MA Craft Design student.

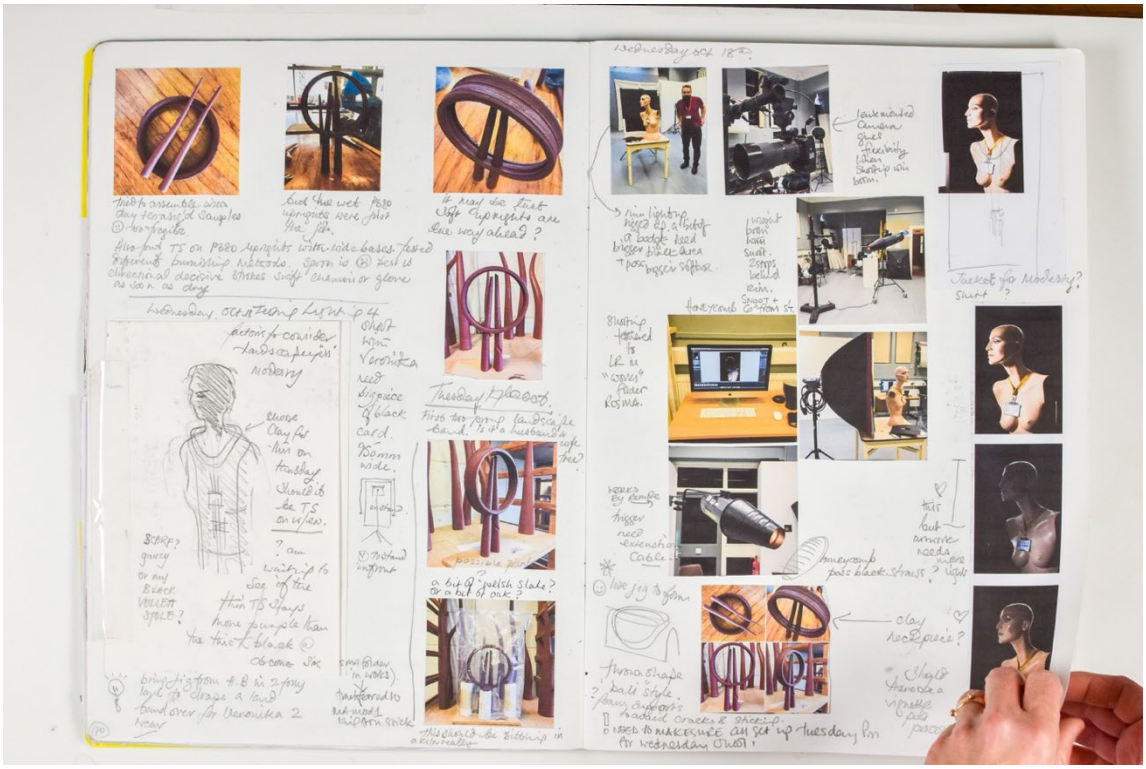


Figure 33 Craft journaling pages that touch on refining photographic practice.

Of note here is the interest an audience may have for insight into this creative journey, and the contrasting viewpoints that may be held by varied individuals and institutions. At the art college we are concerned with the progress made by individual students as they learn a craft and would hope to see some documentation of this learning progress, through sketches, photographs, notes, and journals (figs 32 & 33). You may understand these better within a research context if we used the phrase field notes. Some may question the value of this activity, of journaling and reflecting upon a process or practice, and whether it is of any value outside the educational context besides offering the tutor an insight into the students' work. However, these journals and sketchbooks offer a physical manifestation of a creative practice that has value elsewhere: with other students it offers a way of sharing ideas, with technical support staff it can illustrate what the student intends to achieve, making it easier to support, and for our future selves it offers us a way to carry our understanding into the future, to a point in time where we don't yet know that we will need it. During our second large covid lockdown I found myself making short films about processes like casting with our materials specialist in the 3D workshop at college, who had dipped back into sketchbooks from some thirty years ago while looking for inspiration, and articulated this as "I had to thank the 16-year-old version of me for keeping notes". Contrast this with a ceramicist friend who had destroyed all their notes after they graduated, including their glazing recipes, and had to start again from scratch, or the designer who only took one photo of the final piece for a competition commission, leaving out all the drama and discovery of the making journey.

Within an educational context I find it interesting to note the differing attitudes towards this insight: while we may feel within an art college context that the journey, with all its ups and downs, has value alongside the resulting outcomes, other institutions are far more driven by outcomes or products and expect to see work of a consistent standard continuously (Daniels, 2001, p.163).

This opportunity to record progress within a craft doesn't make the process any easier, but it does open an interesting train of thought or understanding of one's own craft, fostering the ability to move beyond the need to get things absolutely right all the time. Even disastrous outcomes can be useful if you are open to what opportunities they offer.

Forms of knowledge

Sennett opens the discussion on *The Craftsman* with a series of illustrative caricatures, potential visual glimpses of the craftsman at work, "the carpenter, lab technician, and conductor". Of key importance here is Sennett's use of the term *engaged*. This is a book all about how people engage with a practice, and why that differs from disengaged activity.

Sennett wastes no time in identifying a pitfall in current practices, where there is a loss of connection between practice and theory. These binary separations are immediately assessed as detrimental, and Sennett states that the secondary aim of this book is to show what happens when these divisions are in play. Binary separations appeared in a different but equally detrimental form in Charles' keynote conference presentation, as social 'rifts' that split society (IPFREC 2023).

And here too is the discussion of the rule of ten thousand hours practice, a notion touched on only briefly within *The Craftsman* and attributed initially to nothing more than a "commonly used measure" (2008, p.20). Somehow, most likely due to the few references this idea gets in this work, the idea that you need to expend something in the region of ten thousand hours practice has become linked to Sennett, as if this

is the overriding notion of his work. It is not. Practice cannot be boiled down and reduced to a set number of hours for any craft, art, or skill. It's not that simple.

I recently encountered the notion of the importance of time spent practising while looking for a trombone with my eldest child. We had found our way to a local music store on the recommendation of a music student and were investigating the opportunities offered by plastic trombones as an affordable option over the traditional brass versions, when we fell into conversation with the young man who was looking after the shop that day. After some initial discussion of the pros and cons of plastic instruments, my child mentioned how much they were enjoying learning the trombone and that they were managing to find fifteen minutes to practice every day. We aren't always able to run to a set schedule in our house, and I was delighted that my child had chosen the trombone themself and that they were practising on a regular basis. "That is nowhere near enough time to be any good at the trombone" was the shop assistant's reply, before he launched into a mathematical argument that directly linked time spent playing to musical ability, backed up by the assertion that he personally needed to practice an hour or more every day to stay fit musically, and that a friend of his who played several instruments needed to practice most of the time. An hour a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year would equal 365 hours a year, and it would take several years to be any good at that rate. You aren't doing enough was the bottom line of this reasoning. We left the shop without buying anything, and I had to coax a response from my tearful child as to what they were thinking and feeling about the conversation we had just had. They answered with a determination to practice more, as did their younger brother who was also with us, and that they would never buy anything from that shop. I agreed with them on both counts, a bit more time practising would not hurt, and although the thinking behind the assistant's forceful urging to encourage more time spent on practise was for want of a better word 'good', the delivery left a lot to be desired.

This idea of time spent only offers the one measurement of effort: time itself. Where is the room to accommodate the conditions in which the practice is being made, or the company being kept at the time of engagement, or the timely advice or intervention of a tutor, colleague, or friend. The measurement of time spent suggests a linear rate of progression, each moment a steppingstone towards perfection, to be followed by what? Who knows?

This doesn't resemble the more likely path of creative learning, with its twists, turns, and diversions, with its stops, starts, and lightbulb moments.

Sennett traces the root of some of this division, or separation, of theory from practice back to the early Greek philosophers, noting the change in language used in relation to craft activity appears around the time of Aristotle (384-322 BC). Sennett identifies a culture with three distinct tiers, with the *demioergos* or craftsman set in the middle, a middle class sandwiched between slaves and nobles. This middle class is broad, and the term covers anyone involved in a craft. The examples presented here are potters, doctors, musicians. The Hymn to Hephaestus celebrates these craftspeople as civilizers.

If Homer celebrated the craftsman in his time, then this status had shifted by the time Aristotle was on the scene, evidenced according to Sennett by Aristotle's adoption of the term *cheirotechnon* instead of *demioergos*: the craftsman had been demoted or devalued from an agent of civilization to a hand worker. The change is attributed to a perceived lack of insight into why things are done, not just how.

This reversal or decline of fortune is echoed within recent educational history, as noted by Fletcher *et al.* in their discussion of the workforce in FE (2015, p.89-111). In tracking the changes brought about by incorporation, they note that the good work and pay conditions experienced by technical teaching staff,

codified in the 'Silver Book', gave way to less favourable options in the late 1980s, one local authority introducing these changes in their 'Gold Book'.

The naming of things has power. We use words to impart and convey value, status, and importance. The ownership of titles and designations is important too. Within the world of clay related craftsmanship, we find the terms potter and ceramicist at odds with each other. To do pottery harks to an unconsidered craft, the stuff of evening art classes, where people make nice things. To claim the title ceramicist is to take ownership of a deeper understanding of the craft as an art form. However, both names are up for grabs and are used by artists at all levels. Turner award winner Grayson Perry is considered a potter, ceramicist, and artist, among other things (lecturer, TV presenter, a success). If you were looking to be rude or derogatory about this creative practice you could refer to someone's 'clay lump habit' or, as I only recently heard, call them a 'mudslinger'.

Now that we've mentioned Aristotle, if only in passing, this may be a good opportunity to open the debate on his theories regarding action, particularly the set of phrases Aristotle uses to explore notions relating to craft. In this I have taken a leaf from Dunne's (1997, p.8-10) book *Back to the Rough Ground*. I have approached Aristotle's concepts through Dunne's explanation of them, rather than diving straight into the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself.

Dunne's text is the product of his desire to address a practical problem that needed a historical and philosophical approach, a problem thrown up by the emergence of 'the objectives model' of teaching. Gaining ground in the 1970s, the objective model (according to Dunne) sought to deliver a 'royal road to learning', a 'one size fits all' blueprint for education, with results measured in isolation to the situation in which they were generated. In Dunne's evaluation of this approach there were numerous missing pieces, such as the importance of context, for example. All value was placed upon the outcome or result, and not the process or the means through which the outcome or result was achieved.

To explore what could be done to counter this, Dunne turns to Aristotle, but instead of going directly to the works of Aristotle, he approaches the concepts via the work of Arendt, Collingwood, Gadamer, Habermas, and Newman. In particular, Dunne wants to explore Aristotle's concepts of action, in relation to practice and theory. Welcome to the discussion of *Techné* and *Phronesis*.

Techné, Praxis, Phronesis, & Poesis

My first encounter with these terms came when my wife was studying for her master's degree. An intensive dive into theoretical ideas as applied to creative craft practices, meant that terms such as *Praxis* became a regular feature in our discussions, in much the same way that new phrases and terminology help us to explore and refine our understanding of the subject matter with which we are engaged. Specific meaning and use mean that the right set of language is important. I am reminded of how new terms appeared and stuck within my arts education, definitions and descriptions such as juxtaposition and postmodernism. Encountered for the first time within a lecture or presentation these may appear initially baffling. Dropped into casual conversation they may be used to elicit an air of worldliness, of a well-rounded education, even if the user doesn't know exactly what they mean or where best to use them. It wasn't unusual for some of the photographers I worked with during my stint on cruise ships to suggest that a passenger's photos didn't come out well because of either chromatic aberration or reciprocity failure, rather than poor photographic practice on our part. The adage, picked up by my father-in-law from his territorial army days, that bullshit baffles brains, will only carry you so far and relies entirely upon your supply of bullshit outweighing your audience's supply of brains.

Even with the knowledge that Aristotle's terms, as picked out and elucidated by Dunne, carry a specific and important meaning, it has taken me a while to get my head round what these meanings are. Sometimes we need a bit of time for things to sink in.

The terms are, in no definite order: *Poeisis, Phronesis, Praxis,* and *Techné*. That they are presented in no particular order is important. The concepts are aligned and linked but not offered in a strict sequence or order. There is no set hierarchy within these ideas, no one idea placed at greater value than the others. Each idea is set with a parity of esteem, and each has something of value to offer.

Poeisis

Dunne defines *Poeisis* as a kind of productive activity, one which creates a 'durable outcome'. Importantly in this case the maker is aware of what they are aiming to create, and that the resulting outcome will have durability beyond the act of its creation. Dunne illustrates this definition with the examples of 'a house, a goblet, a person restored to good health', so the idea relates to more than the creation of physical objects; it also includes changes in state. Dunne highlights Aristotle's linking or alignment of this idea with that of *Techné.*

Techné

Techné is the expert knowledge of the techniques involved in how to make something. This is the information and experience of an activity that contributes to the mastery of a craft, the understanding of the underlying causes and contributing factors to a creative process.

Praxis

Praxis is another form of activity, a form of practical knowledge that relates to how we operate and act within the world. *Praxis* is complicated; Dunne's explanation may be swift at only a page or so of text, but the content is important and worth examining in greater detail, particularly as this concept touches upon ideas of conduct within society and the intimate and personal engagement with a practice that are a part of this idea. Dunne defines *Praxis* as the activity of bringing excellence to a community, of contributing to society from experience and with practical knowledge, with no ulterior motive or objective, but with the knowledge that this contribution offers something worthwhile and of value in the way we live our lives.
This idea touches upon the way we live with others, although there is no definition offered for the scale of the community being discussed here; it could be realized within any context, from family life to a creative community, to a wider national or international view. Further to this praxis is closely linked to the individual, to emotion and experience, and is proposed as an idea that both forms and reveals a person's character. In contrast to *poesis* and *techné*, *praxis* requires a greater understanding of personal experience that allows a flexibility of action. This practical knowledge of how to act, the regulatory element attached to *praxis*, became defined as *Phronesis*. Dunne's definition of this concept is 'something nontechnical, but not, however, nonrational'.

Phronesis

Phronesis is the practical wisdom or knowledge that is a part of *Praxis*.

Dunne's argument is that there was an overriding philosophy of education emerging in the form of rationalism, and that this rationalism was being presented as a 'necessary and sufficient' guide, the foundation of or support for installing technical reason as a dominant form. Dunne approaches the work of his chosen philosophers as a counter to this movement and argues that by opening up the discussion of rationalism and technical reason they are able to offer insight into the shortcomings of this approach. At their core their argument is that practice cannot and should not be reduced to pure technique, presenting instead a broader, more nuanced, and differentiated view of practice and the forms of knowledge at work when we engage in a practice. Dunne's definition of these ideas resonates with the French notions of *savoir* as mentioned at the start of chapter 1.

Something that struck me was Dunne's criticism of the atomizing of a subject matter, that the 'atomistic objectives' of a process or practice may be worthwhile if the small parts aggregate over time. The separate elements need to be connected to have value. This reminds me of the scientific illustration of a human being, where the component parts, expressed as a set of measured elements (x iron, y water, *etc.*) are combined in a mixing tub. The result is a mix of various chemicals and so on, but quite clearly not an actual human being. In a similar way a friend once advised me to step back from what I was trying to achieve and view it in another light. We were in the midst of setting up and running our own businesses, something that was at times overwhelming, particularly when you felt that you had stacked too much on your plate in terms of tasks or issues to address. "Stop looking at it as if it's a mountain you have to move, see it for the stack of pebbles it is and start moving those". Every element and chemical that forms part of us is important in the right place, every pebble in that stack is an important activity in the practice that is my business, but they must be connected or addressed in the right way to have value.

Biesta (2018) offers an illuminating discussion of these philosophical concepts in his essay *What If?*, with only passing reference to Aristotle (384-322 BC) and a brief mention of the term *techné*. His criticism of a rapacious education system, one built on the measurement of skill and the reduction of the arts in education to a system that categorises them, either in their utility in service of other higher ideals or offers them up as the room in which to express ourselves, even if that expression is unpalatable or harmful in a wider social sense.

Biesta offers a glimpse of what may lie beyond these two points, that there may be a worthwhile destination if we can navigate our way between the rock and the hard place of this experience.

Biesta sets out to discuss the purpose of education, or rather what education should be doing. In his definition, education should serve humanity, it should help us to understand our place in the world and encourage us to take responsibility for our actions, activities, and interactions. It should enable us to exist within a meaningful and ongoing dialogue with everything and everyone around us. It should help us to grow up.

Importantly, Biesta (2018, p.13) identifies the outcome of education, in relation to the Aristotelian idea of *Techné*, not as the production of an object, but as a "human being with an altered outlook," an idea that resonates with Eisner's definition of education as mind-making process (1993, p.5). Through our education, defined not in the set steps that an education system may offer, with set hours, measured pathways, and clear cut-off points, but as an ongoing process of dialogue that allows us to mature in our understanding, and to move from thinking in an infantile manner to a grown-up way. To be grown up is to understand ourselves as a part of the world, rather than taking ourselves to be the very centre of it, and to be aware that the important question is how we operate in the world.

Years ago I encountered this concept at a discussion on Buddhism. This Buddhist practice offered a secular route, free from the structures of an organised religion. The practice revolves around the chanting of a mantra and a set of phrases, ideally performed twice a day in front of a small shrine that could be located anywhere in the home, although there was often discussion of the best option in relation to where and how you set yourself up to chant. During our time practising this form of mindful meditative chanting I found two distinct groups emerging. The first, and this includes the friends who had introduced us to this practice, advocated the importance of the practice itself. The chant was the important thing, and even if you only managed to repeat the key phrase over and over, you would start to feel the benefits of the practice. Fair enough if the only time you had found to chant was while sitting in traffic, and if you weren't upset that you had spent time chanting to the back of a dirty delivery van. Chant when you need to, and you will feel better.

And this feeling of 'betterness' comes from a mindfulness that the practice promotes. The activity helped to corral unruly thoughts or unwanted desires. Sometimes it offered moments of enlightenment. On one occasion I found two decades worth of resentment and hurt dissipate in the blink of an eye, an emotional weight lifted from my shoulders, as I had a sudden insight into my own actions and where I had contributed to a falling out with my friends at secondary school. I moved, in this instance, from object to subject as I realised and took responsibility for myself in that instance. Importantly I realised that it wasn't all 'them', I had been an arse, and if I wanted to be happier in this world then I needed to take ownership of my actions and experience.

This ownership and awareness of responsibility was summed up at this discussion as moving from the state of being a human being to a human doing, that we should take responsibility for ourselves and our actions. In Biesta's terms, we grow up, enter a dialogue with the world, and take responsibility for ourselves.

What of the other group within this Buddhist practice? How do they contrast with the first lot mentioned above? This is where we started to move away from the practice. Our initial introduction had been focused on the importance of the practice itself. To chant with an open mind, to chant with a question or desire you were struggling with, was the important point of the activity. Chant for world peace, for the health and happiness of a friend or colleague, for a snazzy new car like the one you always wanted, it doesn't matter what you chant for because the practice will offer something you need, even if it's only the realisation that the new car won't necessarily bring you the happiness you're looking for.

Somewhere along the way the dynamic of the group changed. Where it had been open before, an open invitation to chant for change and happiness within your life, a strand of study started to grow. Discussion of Buddhist ideals and themes had always formed a part of activities. Chant at a friend's house and you could expect some discussion of the meaning of the mantra itself, or the Buddhist notion of numerous worlds, identified as states of being, ranging from hell to heaven. When these were informal post practice chats with accompanying teas and coffees, they were very enjoyable. Then they started to become more formalised. Some started to study seriously in the more academic sense, revising for and sitting exams on the practice. Others would criticise you on your pronunciation of the sutras or disparage the location and setup of your shrine. Woe betide you if you didn't have the correct amount of fruit or the right greenery attached, or you didn't chant for long enough at the correct time of day.

This is where we drifted away from the practice, where we found that the practice was being overly complicated with unnecessary concerns that interfered with or got in the way of the practice itself. Presented as a litany of 'must dos' imposed from outside by another, the whole practice became

unpleasant and unattractive. In my view, Biesta is right in his assertion of the educational gesture as needing to be 'hesitant and gentle'. The actions of a few members of our group, in attempting to help improve our practice, had effectively stopped us from practising. One such flying visit from a regional deputy (or some such accolade) was so unwelcome in our house at that time that we didn't offer anything by way of refreshment and ushered them out before lunch, an act that prompts some embarrassment today upon reflection of our poor manners. But, although the intrusion was unwelcome and poorly timed, and would probably have best been avoided if at all possible, I do recognise that the motives for the visit came from a place of good intention.

Dewey (1902, p.17), writing in *The Child and the Curriculum*, identifies this need as the desire to pass on knowledge, whether it is the collected knowledge of the past few thousand years that has been retained and held up as important, or the personal experience we hold ourselves. The desire to impart the often-hard-won knowledge gained through experience is a strong one. Sometimes we may find it so strong we can't help but offer it as advice, a tricky thing to do when and where it may not be wanted.

I can offer an example of this in the form of a conversation I had with my eldest child. During a pause in a discussion over what they should do next during the evening after school (take a bath, do some revision, pack your bag ready for tomorrow, *etc.*) they admitted that although they understood the beneficial intent of the suggestions I was offering they felt compelled to reject each one in turn, even when they recognised the positive impact some of them would have for them. "What's wrong with me?" they asked, to which I replied, "absolutely nothing, you are a teenager, it's perfectly natural to reject anything and everything other people might want you to do".

This rejection is a perfectly normal response to anyone trying to impose their will or thinking upon you. I would expect we can all recognise some experience or event that follows this pattern, of rejecting the psychic imposition of someone else's thinking upon us. It is a minefield to be carefully navigated within a teaching environment, particularly regarding creative practices. You may find yourself as a teacher walking a thin line between disinterest and overwhelming enthusiasm for someone's project work. Get it wrong and you run the risk of taking ownership of the work away from the student, having given them your 'good' ideas. Equally there can be disappointment on your side as all your ideas are spurned and the work generated falls short of your imagined ideals.

Nobody wants unwelcome advice, in the same way nobody wants an unwelcome gift. Rock superstars U2 managed this feat in collaboration with Apple a few years ago with the release of their 2014 album *Songs of Innocence*. Instead of working within the usual parameters of music sales, releasing singles and offering the music as a buyable album or download, the band opted to make a deal with Apple that saw the release added to every iTunes users account, regardless of your interest in the music offered. While it might have been a pleasant surprise for many to receive this as a gift, plenty of other users where dismayed to have an unwanted album added to their music collection, even more so when it proved difficult to remove.

Seen through the type of marketing lens that sees all news as good news you could argue that this was a bold move that reminded people that the two brands in question, U2 and Apple, are important and not to be forgotten. I am aware that even writing about them here will contribute in some small way to the strength of their history. If I really wanted to see their legacy diminished, I might be wiser not to mention them at all, an argument I put forward to counter a friend's negative criticism of Damien Hirst's *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* or 'that shark in a tank' (1991). This 'terrible piece of tat from the 90s was not art', or so his argument went, supported by a lengthy tirade on social media on why this piece was destined to be forgotten. In doing so I believe that he was contributing to

the dialogue and discourse around the work, and therefore keeping it alive and worthy of debate for future generations. Far from allowing it to sink into the mists of time, he was unconsciously keeping it alive.

Seen through the lens of perfect ideals, we can view Apple's gift as an example of an ideal or perfect idea that doesn't survive exposure in the real world.

The workshop is the craftsman's home

In the summer of 1995, as the second year of my degree ran to an end, I decided to stay on in my student house and look for some agency work. I wasn't bothered what work was available, was willing to give anything a try, as long as it was temporary, something to earn a bit of cash from before our lease was up. I signed up with a couple of agencies, and one of the first work placements they found for me was in a sugar factory.

I think this is my first experience of working within a factory environment. Previous part time or casual work had revolved around farming (picking blackcurrants in the summer), building (a stint as a general dogsbody and gopher on a building site), and catering (waitering in pubs and cooking food at music festivals). While I was aware of the idea behind production-line work this was the first time I saw it at a large scale and divided into small chunks suited to individual workers. The catering at festivals had a simplified production line but the team would work together on some aspects of the job, such as setting up the marquee and food prep, and it was good practice if more than one of you knew how to work each part of the kitchen, otherwise there would be no room for a break.

The sugar factory was not like that. Tasks were assigned to individuals, who then took ownership of both the activity and the territory that went with them. Step in to help someone else or pick up the slack at another person's post and they would not be happy. I learnt this when half the group in our area went on a break but the machines kept running. Stepping over to tidy up brought a rebuke from the regular body as they returned from break.

Other notable observations from this experience include the precision of the timed day, the ever-present music piped into the factory floor (fifteen or so of the latest popular radio hits played on loop without the interruption of a DJ or news broadcast), and the quietest tea breaks I have ever encountered. This last one is notable to me; it has survived some twenty-five years of lived experience and I can still recall it clearly today. There were three of us from the agency, students looking for part-time casual summer work to earn a bit of cash. We found ourselves sitting together at a white formica table in a pristine canteen. I can't recall there being anything on the walls to brighten the place up or to add interest. The music that played on the factory floor was thankfully absent, but in its place was silence. We were sat in a room with some twenty tables, most of which had two people seated at them in the opposing corners. Nobody, apart from us, was speaking. There was no banter, no serious debates or friendly conversations, nothing was being said by anyone to anyone. After fifteen minutes a bell rang and we all went back to work. On the third day they said they didn't need all three of us from the agency and I immediately volunteered to leave.

My takeaway from this experience is of an environment that is built to support a steady flow of work. Distractions are removed. People keep to their time and place. I rejected it as the antithesis of what I had previously enjoyed within working environments, whether it was the jovial banter to be found on a

building site and in the fields on the back of a blackcurrant harvester, the collaborative effort needed to set up a temporary kitchen in the middle of a festival site, or the feeling of connection you get from direct communication with other human beings. I found it to be thoughtless and that seemed to me to be a terrifying prospect, to spend so much time engaged in a routine and unthinking activity. But all my understanding of this environment and the people who work within it is based upon a very small exposure to it. My entire observation and my understanding of this are drawn from slightly less than three days working there, coming in as a keen, observant, and excitable arts student. I gained no deeper understanding of what it was like to work there because I never managed to have a conversation with any of the regular factory staff. Perhaps I was in on an off day, or hadn't been around long enough to fit in, a little like the dead silence the unfortunate hikers experience as they walk into the Slaughtered Lamb in *An American Werewolf In London* (1981). I can't account for the richness of the interior or exterior life that the factory staff lead because I gained no insight into it. This is only a small snapshot, a reflection on a personal experience that offers little in the volume of contact compared to Coffield and Borrill's *Entrée & Exit* (1983), Patrick's *A Glasgow Gang Observed* (2013), or Rook's *The Hooligan Nights* (1979).

Sennett defines the workshop as 'the craftsman's home' (p.53) and it may be worth considering this in relation to the spaces available to the degree level students that participated in this research. Working across two distinct campuses, the blacksmiths have access to two key spaces dedicated to their education. Within the body of the art college they are given a personal desk space within a studio room. These spaces usually include a dividing board that defines and encloses the space, allowing for several desks to be grouped together without students work spilling over onto another's desk. These dividers act as notice boards, offering room for inspirational material and visual research to be pinned up. Space is at a premium. Some students will, if the opportunity presents itself, expand their territory to claim nearby empty or unused desks, or enlarge their visual board space to include the walls. The use of the spaces fluctuates, sometimes busy with research, reflective journalling, or discussion between classmates. At other times the studios can be eerily empty, with all the activity for the day happening elsewhere. In addition to these studio spaces the college offers other dedicated spaces: a canteen, library, photography studio, 3D workshop, IT suites, and so on.

The second key space is the teaching forge, located a few miles out of town at the campus of an agricultural college. This is the site where practical production happens, but it would be wrong to define this space as the only point where practice occurs, or to think that elements of the design process taught at the art college don't carry over into the activity here. Amended designs can be seen scrawled in welders chalk on the side of a forge's hood, and students are often to be found discussing practical issues of production with teaching and technical staff, as well as their peers.

Sennett defines the workshop as a 'productive space' where 'people deal face-to-face with issues of authority' (p.54). Authority in this instance resides within the body of the master, or in this case workshop manager and technical support staff. It is their skill within their respective domain that adds credence to their authority to teach their craft. Degree level craft students can however have several masters, all of whom bring their own specialisms and experience to enhance the degree level offer. Workshops and process lead studio spaces will have their own teachers, as will the departments that deliver theoretical aspects of the course.

Sennett identifies the need to account for autonomy as well as authority. For students to learn they need to move from imitation, historically the realm of the apprentice, to a greater level of self-direction within their work. In his discussion of the stages of medieval craft careers, Sennett identifies the need for those striving for journeyman status to show leadership through trustworthiness and managerial competence,

recognising a need to demonstrate an understanding of a craft that moves beyond a 'brute imitation of procedure' to a greater understanding of how to apply their knowledge. Fox (*The Art of Japanese Life*, 2017), in discussion with the calligraphy artist Tomoko Kawao, touches upon the stages of learning a craft, of moving from imitation through to breaking away to transcending and making something new. Kawao identifies the value of copying works by the masters to hone technique, a regular part of her daily practice. Through this imitative practice Kawao hopes to then move on and create her own style of calligraphic art. Kawao expresses a perception of deep connection between the artist and the work, that in her practice expression flows through the body from the heart and into the artwork.

An alternative view of the learning process addresses the sequence of activity between tutor and student. In its simplest form the pattern runs, from the point of view of the instructor, 'I do, we do, you do'. This pattern offers support for the novice, allowing the tutor and student to gauge competencies and gaps within knowledge and practice that can be addressed at the point of action. Students are supported to move towards autonomy through mentoring.

If as Sennett states, the modern factory has become an 'archipelago of workshops' (p.54), then the teaching forge can be viewed in a similar fashion: a series of islands of individual endeavour. In stark contrast to my experience of the sugar factory there is a level of interaction between all parties within this environment. There is no distraction of a constant 'radio' like noise. The activity is constantly changing as students work through the processes involved in the generation of their projects. Individuals come together when necessary to support each other in their making, whether through practical support or by discussion. When the whistle for a break time sounds everyone takes a break together. Sennett identifies these factors, rituals, mentoring, and face to face interaction, as the glue that holds people together within a workshop (p.73).

Chapter 3: Methodology & Methods

Getting started with methodology…

Coffield & Borrill make an entrance.

In the early days of this research project, shortly after I had scraped together a loose idea of what the thing could look like and how I might conduct this study, following an application for a place on the MA Short Course (for which I will be forever thankful to our scholarship manager for helping me to fill the forms, including a whole host of acronyms and links to initiatives that I had never heard of) and after a brief telephone interview, I found myself being sent a copy of Coffield and Borrill's *Entrée & Exit* (1983).

I had been trying to reengage with academic studies since I started working with FE and HE arts students, and I now identify the lack of coherent incisive arts theory as something I really missed from my commercial professional practice. Projects and portfolios would be held up in industry journals as examples of a gold standard from a technical or commercial viewpoint, and I'd find myself wondering as to their artistic or intellectual merit. I had started to read some of the recommended texts that were on the photography degree reading list, and I'm grateful for the help from the learning support team at my college for helping me to make some headway into them, but I was still finding this form of activity tough. I hadn't had to engage critically with texts for a long time, not since my own degree level days, and in hindsight I can see the gaps in my knowledge regarding how to approach this kind of work. As a result of my dyslexia I learnt to read late and love reading, but always felt that you were supposed to read the whole book through in a single go. While this may be fine for short stories and novels it can prove far more daunting when applied to academic textbooks, and without the strategies and tools promoted by the college's learning support team or McGuire (2018), the work of study can become onerous. I don't know that I ever explicitly had instruction in how to read a key text before I started on the SUNCETT program, or even if I did it was so small, light, and insignificant that I never adopted or incorporated it into practice. Textbooks looked intimidating.

Then I received a copy of *Entrée & Exit* as a bit of preparatory homework, to be read before the first residential. I printed it off and curled up on the sofa, ready to slog my way through some dry academic text full of esoteric terms and highbrow concepts. What I found was a surprisingly accessible text that drew on several sources to bring the research to life. Here, at the start, was scene setting information, enough to give you an idea of the location for the research without telling you the precise six figure Ordnance Survey grid reference. Then there was the story itself, a recounting of observations gathered over a period of time, culminating with the event that saw the researchers driven off the estate by the research population themselves. At some points I laughed or gasped, some passages I read aloud to my family. Here was an academic text I could engage with.

Coffield and Borrill do two things exceptionally well with this study. Firstly, they seem to rescue something from what could be seen as a disastrous piece of research. From a pragmatic perspective, this is good practice, to see that your research project still has value even if it didn't quite run to plan. Secondly, they make the study accessible, believable, real. When I was studying for my degree, I kept finding myself having to work with theoretical texts that offered little or no illustration, in either pictorial or text form, of the visual art they were discussing. How could I understand the differences between cubism, dadaism, or surrealism with no visual references to work from?

So, this was to be my first insight into what my research could draw upon and look like, the next question would be how to describe this way of working. As a researcher in the early stage of a project or study, it can be daunting to grapple with this idea, scarier still to look at the mass of heavyweight textbooks available on the subject and begin to wonder where to start. At first glance Coe *et al.'s* (2017) *Research Methods and Methodologies in Education* is intimidating, one of several weighty tomes passed around within our cohort accompanied by wide eyes and concerned expressions. Expressions of 'who are you grappling with?', 'what do they mean by ontology?', and 'I don't think I get this at all', where never far from my lips. It takes time to digest even the easiest of writers within this field. Hard-won lightbulb moments may be few and far between, but with practice and good guidance I found that I was beginning to make sense of what I was reading. Then, to find that I could articulate what I was researching in an understandable manner, was fabulous. This was one of the guiding principles of our research: that if you cannot explain your research easily to the next person you meet you don't understand it well enough yourself yet.

Being able to explain your research and why it is important is vital, as is the understanding of what drives the work from a philosophical and methodological viewpoint. To articulate this meaningfully within this context, you need to figure out where you are, justify why you are standing where you are in terms of the form and nature of the social world, and how what is assumed to exist in the social world can be known. That's what this chapter is all about. In my first chapter I laid the foundation for the research, identifying the problems encountered and the context in which they occur. Chapter 2 delves deeper into the critical discussion of key contributions to the discourse in this field of study related to the research question and problems set out in Chapter 1. In this chapter, I review issues surrounding methodology and methods in educational research and how my understanding of these inform and guide my research. This chapter examines and discusses theories and concepts that underpin differing methodologies and methods in educational research and how they affect researchers and their approach to their area of study. I do this in order to highlight some of the strengths and weaknesses in what are often (sometimes wrongly) seen as mutually opposing or competing views by those contributing to this field.

Finding your feet.

Considering Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, and Methods.

The question is how can I know where to begin in trying to decipher different definitions of the world or navigate my way through this maze of concepts and unfamiliar language? A good starting point may well be Waring's (2017, p.16) flowchart styled diagram that encourages us to consider four linked questions related to considerations of Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology, and Methods in educational research.

Waring's discussion in Coe *et al*. (2017, p15-22) of issues surrounding the importance of finding your theoretical standpoint is one of the most direct academic text's I have read on this subject. He introduces the issue of theoretical positioning by outlining a four-step process to help researchers find answers to and identify the importance of understanding this process. The aim here is to reach the right, or to be more accurate, justifiable, informed, and coherent epistemological and ontological position. Waring directs our attention towards problematic issues in terms of the 'conceptual confusion', or the split between practice and theory, and the ongoing debate as to the value of one approach over the other. However, this is not the focus of this chapter. The main point here is to foreground the importance of

being aware of and understanding the assumptions we make as researchers about the nature of the social world, how we can identify the developmental interplay of different forms of knowledge and their implications in the conduct of research.

As with Coe (2017), Waring (2017) initially places opposing viewpoints on an extremely simplified, binary, and limited 'continuum', starting with Ontology. Defining Ontology as the form or nature of the social world, Waring asks us to question our understanding of this notion of reality and asks us to identify with one of two positions: Firstly, do you believe in a single objective reality that exists independent of our perception of it? If you answered yes to this Waring argues then you are a realist. Let's put you at point A on our scale. However, if realism is not for you and you feel that reality as we know it is constructed by individuals through their experience, and that therefore multiple realities exist then please make your way to point B and number yourself among the constructivists.

Our understanding of our position on this scale forms the base for the Epistemological question coming in round 2. Assuming that we are happy with our position on this scale then we can move on. Question 2 relates to Epistemology, the theory and study of how we can know or understand the social world based on our assumptions about it. For the researcher this translates to 'how can what is assumed to exist in the social world be known?' If you believe or follow a realist pathway, then you would pursue certainty and direct knowledge and understanding of the social world through observation and measurement. This would put you in a positivist position. If you follow the constructivist path, then your pursuit is not of certainty but of trustworthiness, authenticity, and transparency and you look to accounts and observations of experience that need to be shared and interpreted in order to be meaningful. In either case, if you follow a constructivist approach then the opposing positivist approach seems inappropriate and vice versa.

With question 3 Waring turns to look at Methodology, in this case defined as the logical procedures to be employed in the study. Again Waring's definition of appropriate and coherent research procedures is split between the preceding two binary positions. If you are hanging out with the positivists then nomothetic and experimental approaches which rely upon hypothesis testing and deductive logic are for you, otherwise you are using ideographic, dialectical, and hermeneutic approaches which begin with particular cases and employ inductive logic to inform your research in order to move tentatively and incrementally towards what may reasonably be inferred to be more general.

Question 4 turns towards the techniques that the researcher will employ when collecting data, pointing out the confusion that arises from the terms methodology and method. I think there is more at play here than simple confusion between two similar words and that the process of research can be messy, especially for those new to the field. So far this process of determining a research position has been presented as a straightforward binary and linear process, and that your understanding of your ontological perspective will inform your epistemology and so on. What happens when you start somewhere else or your understanding of one of these four elements changes over the course of your research? This raises the question of the extent to which a circular design process, like the one employed by the design courses at the art college (fig 34), could be more helpful here, recognising that you can start at any point on the cycle and the direction of travel can be in either direction.

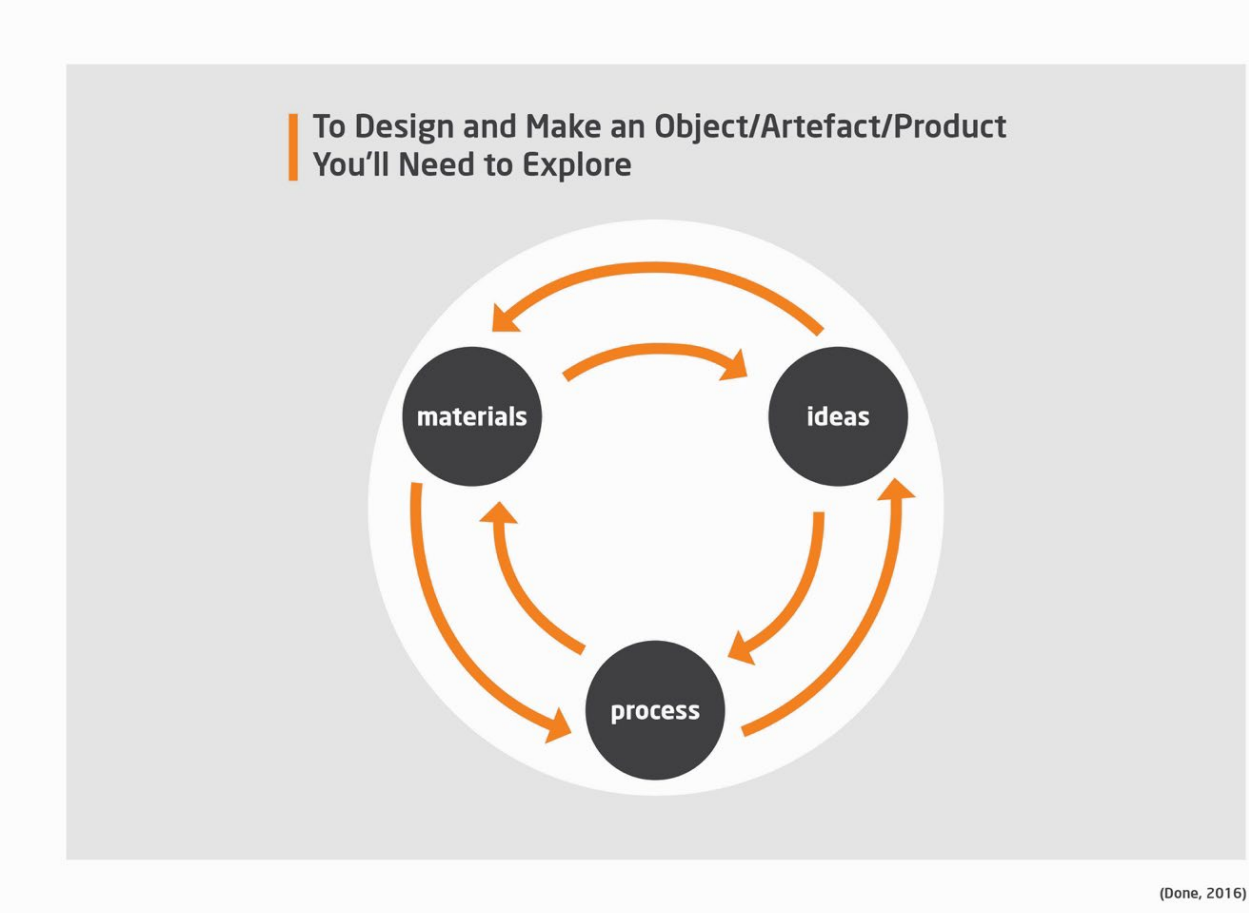


Figure 34 The design cycle employed by the art college.

When I started this research project I came with some preconceived ideas of what methods I could use. I still harbour a soft spot for some of these, although I recognise that they may be impractical or unsuitable for this work. Selecting the right methods has taken time, my choices are now informed by practical issues as well as pragmatic ones.

"I am here, where are you?"

Navigating a new terrain

In the summer of 1995 I took part in a performance art piece. I had taken up the offer of a trip to a summer art school in rural Poland. We were staying at some form of academy, in a town which seemed to have little more than a single bar and coffee shop. We were a mixed group of staff and students, some local to Krakow, some of us from England, Germany, and further afield, all of us together for two weeks. There was a lot of discussion about art and the various forms it could take. We mostly worked to our own plans, exploring ideas and processes, building sculptures, or making drawings. We ate together in a dining hall, breakfast, lunch, and dinner all signalled by a bell that rang throughout the building. In the evenings we drank at the bar on the edge of town, a tiny shack where the vodka was hidden away in the back room and had to be specifically asked for.

We were all expected to make some artistic contribution, and our tutor asked us to help him with a performance piece. This is how I came to find myself standing on a sandy tennis court in the dark, holding a torch and two tin cans connected by strings to my friend and my tutor, watched by the other attendants of the summer school. The piece was titled *'I Am Here'* and was a choreographed performance where we would illuminate ourselves with the torch and call out to each other before turning the torches off and moving to a new location. As the piece went on the strings got tighter and three of us got closer to each other, ending in a huddle.

I don't remember much else about this experience. There may have been applause from the onlookers. We may have discussed the event afterwards at the bar. I haven't thought about this for years, and was delighted to see that my tutor had this event listed on his CV. It came to mind as I was considering the question of where I was in relation to methodology, and that I had spent the first part of this chapter without indicating where I might be within this discussion.

I now understand myself to be a constructivist. I also now recognise the subtle sense of Coe's pragmatic and eclectic approach, and understand that some audiences and interested parties have a need for quantitative data that sits alongside the qualitative data. Few researchers in the early stages of their careers can confidently sit on either end of a tightly defined spectrum, and these positions are best left to theorists, as Dewey reminds us that, '… common sense vibrates back and forward in a maze of inconsistent compromise,' (Dewey, 1902, p.15).

With this in mind, it is important to consider what other terms and definitions may be of use in understanding my methodological position? Researchers interested in narrative as a research approach, or those new to the area, would be well-served by turning to Connelly & Clandinin's (1990) extensive overview of the subject. Here the aim of their article is to show the potential and the importance for narrative within social research, in that it enables the researcher to bring lived experiences of human life and educational research together. It also offers a valuable resource for choosing appropriate methods and finding other researchers that may lend weight to the argument for choosing narrative accounts and stories of experience as valid forms of research and being a first place to start. I have often found a need to turn to my own personal experience as a resource to inform my teaching, and my gut feeling at the time was that this approach had a place both in my teaching practice and in my research processes. Finding peer-reviewed, published material has enabled me to deepen my understanding of methodology and methods in the field of educational research well enough to justify my use of them in this thesis has been an important part of this journey.

Further to this, Bhatti's (Coe *et al.*, 2017, p.89) discussion of ethnographic research has also proved helpful in refining my understanding and approach to educational research, even if her description of the style as 'very hard work' may be worrying for any of us who recognise ourselves as lazy. More importantly Bhatti notes that ethnography is unforgettable and transformative, and in that sense, I have to agree. Eisner (1993, p.5) defines education as a 'mind-making process'. However, it is quite something to realise the mind you are altering is your own. And here I find myself an auto-ethnographer interested, engaging in, and reporting narrative inquiry and research in the context of this thesis.

Methodology

Educational researchers are expected to present and justify an understanding of the methodology underpinning their research in terms of the approach to truth and reality adopted in their studies. These issues have been and continue to be informed by philosophical traditions and debates which have a long

and distinguished history. Coe (2017, p.5) points out that the position taken by the researcher regarding matters of truth and reality directly impacts upon their research methods and the techniques they employ in the conduct of research.

As discussed above, methodology is something of a problematic term in itself, particularly because to the uninitiated the word looks so similar to method, causing some confusion for many who are new to the terminology of research. A general definition of the term describes methodology as the logic, procedures and techniques used to identify, process, and evaluate information. Within educational research the term also relates to an intellectual philosophical standpoint taken by the researcher that informs their approach to the nature of the social world and how what is taken to exist in the social world can be known. Judgments made about the nature of the social world (ontology), and how what is assumed to exist in the social world can be known (epistemology), frame this research project and underscore the ways in which those involved with and within the research are regarded, including the ethical approach underpinning this study.

In writing about the nature of educational research, Coe (2017, p.5-14) draws attention to the importance of understanding the philosophical viewpoints regarding the nature of the social world and what it means to know something in that world. He also helpfully points out that this is not the first attempt to address these issues this and that much discussion of methodology and the philosophical perspectives which characterize different philosophical positions about the nature of knowledge and reality can be found in many books on educational research. What is helpful is his clarification of his own position, his understanding of where he stands on these issues, and his justifications for adopting these standpoints. Coe points to a conciliatory and flexible understanding of the defining philosophies as an important aspect of his advocated approach, noting that researchers need to have an understanding of their own viewpoints on these issues as well as a critical command of other differing or diverging views. Although he introduces the key concepts in a polarised binary format, with positivist and constructivist views at either end of a spectrum, he hints that researchers will need to have some flexibility in their adoption of stances and that they may move between the ends of the spectrum as he does in a 'pragmatic and eclectic' fashion. Coe introduces varying ideas and approaches almost as if he was announcing team players as they enter a pitch or arena, with viewpoints aligned to distinct dominant sides. Beyond this initial listing, Coe notes that there are a significant number of influences that start to alter the dynamic of each side, as further refinement and development allow branches to split and splinter. He also hints that the use of a binary illustration is problematic and that this two-dimensional format omits nuance and subtlety that might be better served by a flexible diagram that operates in three dimensions, if only the definitions of each position did not keep shifting.

Coe then introduces and discusses the notion of a paradigm as a dominant world view or perspective, derived from the work of Kuhn (1970).

Paradigm Wars

Pick a side…

Coe's reference to 'paradigm wars' and the 'weaponizing' of different paradigms within educational research sounds fantastic and exciting.

My first memory of encountering the term paradigm reaches back to early 2010 as a key point in the Dr Who story *Victory of the Daleks* (2010). In this episode the last few remaining Daleks have infiltrated the WW2 Allied war effort, masquerading as helpful inventions created by the British forces in order to coerce the Dr into recognising them as Daleks, thereby activating a piece of technology (McGuffin) that would allow them to reboot their race (don't overthink it!). The Daleks' plan succeeds, the new/ancient technology works, and a 'new Dalek paradigm' is created.

The Dalek design has been around for decades. First created by Terry Nation in the early 1960's, the classic design, the work of BBC designer Raymond Cusick in 1963, has some iconic features: a tank like pepper pot design, with semi-circular orbs set in the base, a manipulator arm (usually resembling a plunger, occasionally replaced with a whisk like device) some form of pipe for a gun and big round eye on a stalk at the top (fig 35). The Dalek has remained a popular adversary within the show's history.

The design itself has changed over the years with minor alterations. Early versions added a satellite dish to the back for a short time, colour schemes would come and go, as well as minor changes to abilities that improved their capabilities. When a new design (fig 36) was launched in 2005 it was accepted and became the defining shape for these creatures. My point here is that changes to the design of these iconic villains were incremental. Numerous minor modifications allowed the show's producers and designers to experiment without causing too much upset among the show's fanbase. The launch of a new Dalek shape in 2005 was a success because it was wrapped up in and part of the relaunch of the show itself, ending a long hiatus.

Figure 35 Designer Raymond Cusick with the original Dalek design.

Figure 36 The 2005 Dalek design.

Figure 37 Matt Smith as Dr Who with the new Dalek paradigm.

The new paradigm was introduced in 2010 as a superior version, designed to be taller so that they stood eye to eye stalk with the current doctor at the time, Matt Smith (fig 37). Out went the dark gold pattern we'd seen on almost all the recent set of Daleks and in came a new range of primary colour coded designs, each colour representing a different function (red for drones, blue for strategist, and so on). This new incarnation of the Daleks replaced the existing design, obliterating the older designs within the story.

This new paradigm proved to be unpopular with the show's fanbase and received widespread criticism. It was quietly retired before the next season, with only a few of the red drone models making appearances in later episodes, usually tucked away in the back of scenes crowded with the 2005 versions.

As far as a reference to popular culture goes, I think this highlights issues relating to an ideal or perfect vision that is carried through into practice that fails to take hold. Coe (2017, p.7) talks of the paradigm, as introduced by Kuhn, being a shared understanding within a group, in his case scientists. While there may be issues relating to their studies, sometimes perceived as 'known inconsistencies' that become 'puzzles' to be dealt with within the existing framework, and that occasionally these mutate into 'anomalies' that in turn trigger a scientific revolution. He notes that it is more common to find that an older generation of scientists cannot be persuaded to see things within a new paradigm and that for a new paradigm to take hold it needs to sweep away the older dominant one. The new Dalek design introduced in 2005 was similar enough to the original one to be acceptable to old and new fans alike. Looking to update the design and presenting it as the new and only model in 2010 was a step too far for many fans and it was rejected.

Within Coe's examination of theoretical position stands a deeper point. He indicates that the use of paradigms is still common and generally split along quantitative/positivist versus qualitative/constructivist lines. Further to this if you accept one paradigm and it's need for coherence and consistency of argument and approach, then you should accept that it may not fit or play nicely with other paradigms. Coe argues that if you follow the logic about the incommensurability of competing paradigms then you must accept the parameters that define one end of the philosophical spectrum from the other. Therefore, to achieve consistency in your theoretical standpoint you cannot pick and mix from all the available options, that 'there is no middle way' or compromise between different understandings and interpretations, and that educational researchers, need to 'pick a side and fight for it'.

It would be unfair and inaccurate for me to characterise Coe's standpoint as the one offered above, this incommensurable viewpoint of how paradigms could or should be viewed and employed is one of three options touched upon in his discussion of the nature of paradigms in relation to educational research. The other approaches are compatibility, where researchers are expected to take a philosophical standpoint with the understanding that this 'does not necessarily constrain other choices' relating to the research, and pragmatism, where we find a rejection of 'traditional philosophical dichotomies' and in some cases a view of the concept of paradigms as unhelpful.

Lost in Lenses

Researcher position

Back in Chapter 2 I touched briefly upon Hopper's painting *Nighthawks* (1942) as one of a set of images used to illustrate the idea of setting up literary references and authors as if you were involved in a party. This image has stuck with me, and I find myself returning to it to consider the effect it has in locating the viewer as an external observer looking in through the plate glass windows of a cafe/diner.

Hopper's work is known for offering a quiet, possibly contemplative, view of the subject matter. I don't remember ever seeing any of his paintings where there is a direct connection to the viewer. None of the people in his images break the fourth wall to engage beyond the canvas. The effect is one of quiet voyeurism, albeit not of a salacious peeping tom variety. These are observations without interruption.

And here's the link I want to make with research as a practice. At the moment it manifests itself in two parts. One deals with the ideas of the researcher and whether the researcher should be an outside observer or an active participant in the research. The other deals with the concept of lenses, with the often-used phrase relating to which lens are you using to view something through. As a photographer by practice, long before I started my research journey, it feels only natural to start this conversation with a minor diversion into the idiosyncrasies of photographic lenses and their uses.

Lenses of course are a multi-faceted element integral to photographic practice. To say they are important is only the very tip of this iceberg. To say the subject is massive would be an understatement, and it would be easy to get lost in the intricacies of prime versus zoom lenses, or bogged down in schematic diagrams of lens construction, number of glass elements, modulation transfer function (MTF) graphs and test data. For the purpose of this conversation, I am only (I hope) going to look at angle of view and how it effects the photographic image.

Let's start by setting out some clear language for this discussion. Like many craft practices photography has its own language, its *lingua franca* common to the initiated and baffling to others. It doesn't help that many of the terms are used incorrectly, in a similar way to the common use of the term 'tremolo' for the bar on electric guitars that changes the pitch of the strings when the correct term is 'vibrato'. With photographic lenses we find a common use of the numerical measurement, such as 50mm, to define the angle of view that the lens will produce, which in this case would be about 39.6° on the horizontal and 27° tall. For some context in this human vision offers a viewpoint of about 140° by 80°. The mm measurement attached to the lens defines the distance between the focal plane, where the film or sensor is located, to the point in the lens where the light rays converge when the lens is focused at infinity. This measurement doesn't tell you what the angle of view is, this is something you'll pick up by using a system with a variety of different lenses for different tasks. It also changes with different camera types, so an 80mm lens on a medium format camera is equivalent to a 50mm on a 35mm camera, or a 35mm lens on aps-c camera. See how quickly we get lost in the lingo. In the description above 35mm camera refers to the size of the film stock used.

What makes the 50mm lens important is that it fits into the range of lenses that offer something very close to how we, as humans, perceive distance between objects. The results look natural and undistorted. Within photographic circles there is some debate as to right lens to use to achieve a natural look, with lenses falling between 35mm to 60mm being offered up as the right choice, so even within what could be defined quite clearly as the right mm to work at for a natural looking image there is room for play. For a long time 50mm lenses where the starting lens of choice, the lens most cameras came with as a kit, the one many of us first learnt to photograph with. They are, as a rule, small, bright, and light, and because they offered a single angle of view, thus making them 'prime' lenses with no capability to zoom in or out, they forced you to physically move to get the composition you wanted.

What of zoom lenses, is there something wrong with using them? The short answer in my experience is no, there's nothing wrong with using them but it is good to know what they offer. I've had a core set of lenses in my kit bag for the last twenty years or so that covers a range from super wide angle (20mm, not quite fisheye but still pretty wide) to telephoto (200mm, great for discrete photography from a distance). These lenses are useful, but they can create distortion in the images produced. Using a wide-angle lens will increase the apparent distance between objects, making them appear to be further apart and adding curves to what should be straight lines. Close up or telephoto lenses offer the opposite effect, adding the potential to reduce the space between objects and to make them appear closer. The best illustration I found for these effects was to offer footage of sporting events such as Olympic cycling or horse racing. Seen from the viewpoint of the camera filming from the front of the race the contestants would appear to be neck and neck, battling away to win by a whisker. When the coverage cuts to a wider view from the side we get to see a different story, that there are huge distances between the riders. We are getting to see two very different stories, or more specifically the same story framed and presented in two different ways.

This proximity, distortion, and engagement is something I am acutely aware of within my photographic practice. There is a famous quote attributed to the renowned war photographer Robert Capa about the quality of your images and your proximity to the event, that "if your photos aren't good enough, you aren't close enough". Within our wedding business we often switched between focal lengths to get in close to the action while attempting to remain discrete and unobtrusive (like a 'photographic ninja' was how one of our brides described us). Sometimes you need to use a wide-angle view to get all the action, ideal for dramatic confetti throwing shots. Other times it felt right to blend into the background as much as possible, recognising that we didn't want to distract attention from an important moment such as the

exchange of vows but still tasked with capturing the moment. I was also very aware of how important our physical proximity to our clients was, to be working at the right distance, something I feel very much at this moment in this covid careful environment.

There you have my next conundrum: how to be part of something in the right way. For me as a wedding photographer it was a balancing act between being an active part of the day's events and an observer. Sometimes one role would dominate, or rather the role would require us to step up and take control of the events for a brief period of time, such as family group photos at the church after the wedding, before stepping back to allow someone or something else to move things along. In terms of my teaching practice as a technical demonstrator I found this interplay manifesting itself as the movement within a teaching space, in particular if I moved to allow students to step in and explore what they had just been shown.

"There's fresh cherries in the hall".

A note on participants and their gatekeepers

When I started this research journey, I was in a position that offered me broad access to a wide range of student groups. I was employed four days a week as a technical demonstrator, initially looking after the photographic needs of degree and postgraduate students, although as my research progressed, I found that I was also becoming involved supporting FE students. Alongside this I was teaching an introductory photography evening class and I had also become involved as a lecturing photography technician at the sixth form college. I was busy.

My initial research idea had centred on the use of our asset booking system with a view to interrogating the recorded data to see what effect, if any, could be created through some minor interventions. The advice at my first residential tutorial was to refine the intervention and to reduce the number of participants involved. Rickinson (2008, p.7) highlights the importance of working with a small sample of participants, stating that to do otherwise would be an almost impossible task. So who did I turn to when looking for the ideal participants?

I first became aware of the degree level blacksmithing course sometime in the early 2000s. Fresh off the ships, and looking to establish myself as a social photographer, I reunited with a couple of college friends while visiting family in Suffolk. I was surprised to find that one of them had been travelling to my part of the country to learn the craft but was assured that this was the place to study if you wanted to refine this strand of knowledge.

Fast forward a decade or so and I found myself involved with the art college as a photographic technical demonstrator. The more time I spent at the college interacting with staff and students, the more I became aware of the singularity of the course, and how far students were willing to travel to attend. My friend's journey from the east of the country paled in comparison to those coming from the other side of the world.

I also discovered a keenness within this set of students. They wanted to learn, preferably through activity, as I discovered in my very first camera introduction to this group. Picture this scene: twelve third year degree level students (almost) at the end of their studies, being offered an intro to college camera kits, to help them document their practice. I didn't say the timing was perfect, in fact it was this event that made

me question the pattern of photographic inductions we were offering and start the ball rolling on this whole research project.

Half of my group sat quietly, barely interacting with the cameras they were holding, the other six struggled to sit still, busying themselves pressing buttons, asking questions I hardly had time to answer, and taking pictures. I'll let you decide which group was the blacksmiths.

Other interactions included a lengthy discussion of knife making and cheffing over lunch in the canteen one day, the occasional keen student looking to bring metal work into the studio to photograph, and an impromptu morning when the entire cohort appearing wearing hi-vis kit for a lecture. They followed this up a week later minus the eye watering safety gear but with enormous cowboy hats.

As a group they appeared identifiable through their behaviour: keen, curious, sociable in the main, and interested in learning.

A change of staff brought me into closer contact with the course leader. I had been aware of her through anecdote and the arrival of a massive bowl of home-grown cherries, delivered to the main entrance of the college with a note that said simply 'please help yourselves'. A colleague who had acted as the go-to documentary photographer for the course changed role, and with a change in duties came a step back from this activity. I was delighted to be asked to step in and take over, to spend time in the studio creating images of their artwork along with profile portraits of the students themselves. Over time this activity expanded to include imagery of the students at work in the forge and in their design spaces, of exhibitions and public events, and the generation of promotional imagery.

With such an insight into the course and an established pattern of interaction with the staff and students involved it seemed the perfect group to approach as prospective participants. This research would have been far harder, if not impossible to pursue, if not for the support of the lecturing team on the course. There is, on occasion, a shifting pattern to the staffing of this course, as there is within the college as a whole. The shift seems to be a boomerang effect, of people who move away for academic opportunities elsewhere and then return because they are needed and haven't quite got over the college yet, or students who graduate, work away, then return to help as assistants at large public facing events or on the specialist demo days and project weeks.

Wobble

Running & Dancing

In the summer of 2021 I experienced a crisis of confidence. I am still trying to figure out whether there was a single root cause or multiple strands that contributed to this wobble. Contenders include, but are not limited to:

1. the ongoing effects of the coronavirus pandemic and how it was affecting us as a culture.
2. the sudden cliff edge of activity, from full on support within my educational role as a technical demonstrator to nothing overnight.
3. The age-related changes within my immediate family dynamic as my children hit their teens and moved for increased autonomy.
4. The sheer unrelenting heat.
5. The research questioning of what experience is and means to us as humans.

Out of this wobble, at its peak a long sleepless night where I couldn't settle or calm my thoughts, I found myself turning in numerous directions and to lots of people for help. I make a joke of this in discussing this event whenever the subject comes up, mentioning that I'd had a hard summer, but it was ok as I'd only joined two cults, first Parkrun, and then a local Morris dancing side. I include experiential accounts of these activities here.

Running

Run, Oli, Run

So, let's tackle them in turn, starting with Parkrun. At the start of this thesis I discussed my running practice, how I varied my running routes when out with my dog. This practice changed dramatically in August 2021. I was encouraged by close family members, one a long-term runner with decades of experience, the other my nephew, to join them on a Saturday Parkrun. They could see that I was enjoying running as an activity, and the opportunities for social running had opened up post lockdown.

I only have one prior direct experience of the Parkrun phenomenon, from almost a decade ago. Two laps of a city's central park, an event that sportier family members had become addicted to. I didn't enjoy it, although I could see why others loved it. The terrain was very flat, and I had that terrible sinking feeling that many novice runners have when you realise that you must run round the circuit twice to finish the course. It didn't take hold of me, and I dismissed the activity as something I wouldn't choose to try again.

What happened this time round is bound to be the result of a combination of factors. I was already running regularly. Six months or so of running practice had made the event look more attractive, and I was being encouraged to give it a go by family. Part of the fallout of my summer crisis was the perceived need to be active, to be doing things.

My experience of my first run at this local event was overwhelmingly positive. I had gone along not expecting to find anything better than my current running set up, what I found was an interesting course through woodlands with a lot of support. There were friends I hadn't seen in ages running with their dogs and children, friends of friends, and supporters stationed along the course, all of whom offered their encouragement. There were runners who would offer encouragement to 'keep going' as they passed you on a hill climb, and 'well done' as you passed them in turn. Marshals and spectators offering cheers and applause at various key points around the course. There was drama to be found in the 'dip of doom', a muddy puddle at the bottom of a steep hill climb, and a shared experience to be discussed in the aftermath of the run.

Run Date	Run Number	Pos	Time	Age Grade	PB?
20/01/2024	331	22	28:04	52.14%	
13/01/2024	330	33	28:24	51.53%	
06/01/2024	329	42	29:33	49.52%	
30/12/2023	328	36	28:54	50.63%	
23/12/2023	327	52	28:52	50.69%	
16/12/2023	326	43	30:21	48.22%	
02/12/2023	324	55	35:14	41.53%	
11/11/2023	321	29	28:11	51.92%	
04/11/2023	320	32	29:35	49.46%	
07/10/2023	316	26	28:43	50.96%	
16/09/2023	313	24	28:04	52.14%	
02/09/2023	312	36	28:19	51.68%	

Figure 38 A sample of my Parkrun data.

There are also statistics to be assessed, the hard data of the finishing order for the runners, their run times and personal bests for this course, and the mysterious age-graded score, all of which appears in your email inbox if you sign up for it (fig 38). I can trace the changing ability of myself as a runner through this data, but it only offers a narrow insight into the experience of each run. The field notes are missing. There's no accounting for adverse weather conditions, for the time I walked the course with my child because it was a bit much for them, or the point at which I changed my breathing pattern, following my absorption of Nestor's (2021) book *Breath*, in an attempt to improve my performance. I know when these events occurred, but they are omitted from the official data, as is any Parkrun event where I run but forget to bring my barcode to be scanned at the end of the race. I'm certain I had my best time yet at my most recent run, although I almost gave up halfway round when I realised that my official barcode credit card was sitting at home in my wallet.

What I wasn't expecting from this first Saturday outing was the knock-on effect it had on my running practice. Having enjoyed the camaraderie of the event and the challenge of the route I signed up online and set about trying to improve my running. From this I started attending the twice weekly training evenings that a local club offered, again at the invitation and prompting of my family. My running moved from a daily activity to a more focused effort, much to the dog's disappointment, as my departure from the house in running gear no longer signalled a canine expedition.

With the changed practice came insight into running techniques, stretching exercises, and a variety of training practices. The sessions were varied. Sometimes the focus would be entirely on running positions, the shape we make when running, other nights would be 'pyramid' practice, the time set for each effort getting longer then reversing past a set point. And there was a new social element to the training, a shared experience of the training itself and the sharing of experience over the less intensive parts of the activity. New terminology arrived, in the form of 'chatty' running which is pretty much what it says on the tin, and the more intense 'sparkle' running where there is no hope of any conversation.

This change in my running experience and practice prompts me to consider not only the importance and value of community within a shared practice but also the importance of some form of consensus within shared experience. Prior to this my recent experience of running was shared exclusively with my dog, and although we do communicate, we're not using the same language, and it was a lonely solitary activity. As a running club member races are shared, discussed, and reflected upon although not all experiences are the same. I love my local Parkrun route, some of my running friends hate it.

Morris Dancing

Stepping, Sticking, & Mumming

Figure 39 Morris dancers in action, Summer 2023.

The first thing I see as I turn the corner is Charlie's curly hair bouncing into view through the tall arched windows. As I reach the door I can hear conversation, laughter, and snatches of music. It's 8pm on a Wednesday evening and I'm here for Morris Dancing practice.

My connection to this Morris troupe reaches back over a couple of decades, linked through involved family and friends, and reinforced by the occasions where I've made it to a performance as either a photographer looking to document a local phenomenon or as an audience member. With inside links to the group came invitations to less well advertised events such as the annual Wassail and the May morning dance, and alongside these there was a repeated invitation to come along to practice and 'see if you like it'. That invite was there again in the summer that I was struggling in, and having recently freed up my Wednesday evenings, as I no longer taught an introductory photography course, I said yes.

I've arrived just after 8pm and the hall is filling up with bodies. Charlie, one of our most agile dancers, is stretching and bouncing. Currently in his 80's, he puts many of us to shame with his stepping, and it's a task to keep up with him. There are pockets of conversation around the room, and usually one or two people setting up the space for dancing. At the far end of the hall the musicians, led by Hedley, have set up in a row seated on armless stackable chairs of the sort often found in classrooms. The chairs are mostly there for comfort in between dances, as Hedley prefers to stand when he plays the melodeon.

At the other end of the room two distinct camps have emerged. On the left-hand side our 'Beadle' has taken his traditional position, complete with notebook and pen, ready to record the dances practised tonight, and ready to weigh in with advice and dancing if needed. To the right a collapsible table stands in the corner, laden with two canvas bags, one long and one short, that carry the mostly Hazel sticks, and home to any other props and accessories that may be required. A quartet of chairs have been set out in front of this table, turned to face into the room for the comfort of those not actively involved in a dance.

We migrate round the room, catching up with friends here and there, selecting our preferred sticks from the bags, and practising some light stepping or discussing some element of the dances. Sometimes there may be a more formal warm up, a couple of minutes of varied stepping to music to get the blood flowing, but more often than not we'll go straight into a dance. The room starts to warm up and will get louder in waves according to the activity taking place. There are usually several conversations going on at once, between the musicians as a group, and amongst the dancers in small pockets around the room. Above all of this our Squire will deliver instructions for the dance we are about to attempt, and when everybody is ready to start, we dance.

Morris dancing is complex. The location of the musicians is pivotal to the orientation of the dance. Dances are organised to work with a set number of dancers, usually 4, 6, or 8, arranged in rows so that each dancer has an opposite partner. There are set movements and patterns involved, distinct styles of stepping, sticking, and hanky waving that may be unique to each dance and different for each side depending on their geographical location and tradition. Instructions will be called by the Squire or Foreman, the lead dancer, who takes the number 1 position in the set. This is usually at the top, nearest to and facing the musicians on the left-hand side of the troupe. The musicians are located at the 'top', and movements towards them are always up, regardless of any other factors. This often leads to some confusion and momentary reorientation at practice whenever our musicians move from their regular spot in the hall.

I'm almost two years into learning the dances, and a lot of the moves have settled into my muscle memory, but it has taken time, repeated practice, and reflection on areas that I need to improve. As a newcomer to the practice I benefit from having the component parts involved broken down for me. My initial instruction revolved around stepping, the way to move your feet for each dance, that was for this side always single step, a light step on the ball of the foot with a small hop incorporated into it. When I first joined I was reliably informed 'all our dances are single step starting on the right foot, except for the ones that aren't'. Alongside single step you'll find double step, both with a variety of additions and exclusions, such as high knees, straight legs, hockles, capers, and kicks. Some dances incorporate three or four styles of stepping.

In addition to this there is sticking or hanky waving, again running to a set plan, and in the case of sticking usually working with your partner. Sticking has its own rules regarding the position and style of stick carrying, the pattern of blows involved in the sticking chorus, and the intensity of the blows inflicted against your partner's stick, ranging from light taps to ferocious whacks.

Finally, for a dance to work the dancers need to be aware of their timing and relative distance in space (TARDIS - I can't tell you how pleased I am to crowbar that Dr Who reference in here). Set up in a formation featuring opposing pairs, each dancer will have their home or starting spot. The Squire dances at position 1, top left facing the musicians, his partner opposite at 2, and the remaining dancers numbered according to whether they are on an odd or even side. Dances consist of choruses and figures, the change in activity between the two signalled by a change in music and defined by the Squire's instruction for which figure to dance. Generally the choruses, the bit with the sticking, will use the starting formation. The figures are more likely to break this formation, in the form of a change of 'sides', a 'round', or a 'hey', and dancers will need to move in time with the music and their partner to return to the correct place for the next part of the dance. Essentially the dances work best when a troupe can be in the right place at the right time doing the right thing.

At rehearsal all of this will be guided, a taught session primarily under the control of the Squire, often supported by one or two others who are drawing on a wealth of experience. I find it amusing and frustrating in turn, as a novice dancer, to receive instruction and redirection from multiple, sometimes contradictory, sources. I know everyone means well and are generally looking to offer something of their insight and experience, but it can be difficult to process when another version of good practice is added on top of current instructions before it can be assimilated or digested. The technical understanding of the component parts needs time and repeated effort to take hold. For those of us who are new to the activity it is more of a concentrated effort to learn and retain the information as if from scratch, for others with longer histories and experience dancing with other sides it can be seen as a long process of adjusting to a change in routine, of unravelling and relearning moves that are done differently elsewhere with other Morris sides.

Although we, as a Morris dancing side, refer to these sessions as practice, within the context and discussion of this thesis it would be more appropriate to consider these training evenings as rehearsals and to bring the entirety of the activity under the banner of a practice. This practice covers everything from how and when we rehearse, whether together on the regular evenings, in small groups with a refined focus working on a small set of dances, or the encouragement within the side to rehearse stepping whenever and wherever you can. It covers the style of dress chosen by the side, and the attention to detail in the selection of suitable attire, especially in relation to the decoration of the preferred headwear. Hats are to be dressed in a variety of accessories, pheasant feathers in the winter months only, real flowers and greenery throughout the year. No fake flowers please. It covers the way we act when we dance in

public (fig 39), and the small but important details of tradition within the side, such as the earning of bells that indicate that you dance well enough to perform in front of a public audience.

As an educator and researcher I have been fascinated by the way my Morris dancing side have sought to teach newcomers like me. Early on in my experience there was an initial deconstruction of the varied composite elements of a dance, coupled with an instruction to concentrate on certain parts. For dances where I was struggling to maintain the precise stepping involved, I was instead encouraged to concentrate on being in the right place at the right time and getting the sticking right, that the stepping could wait. Sometimes our sets are rearranged to place more experienced dancers as partners to novices. This offers the opportunity for instruction within a dance on a personal level and reduces the chance for novices to completely derail a dance by turning the wrong way or getting lost in one of the intricate maze-like heys. I have lost count of the times I have done this myself over the last couple of years, but the delight at getting a dance right is fantastic. To paraphrase our Beadle's thoughts on learning to dance, there is nothing easy or hard about the activity, only dances that are familiar or unfamiliar. There is a level of *bonhomie*, of *camaraderie* within the troupe, that for the most part allows mistakes to be laughed off, and with instructors who are willing and able to admit when they get things wrong themselves, the shared experience of learning a dance together is a pleasant one.

Figure 40 Morris dancers performing the battle between St. George and the Dragon as part of The Mummer's Play.

Thankfully this level of acceptance for mistakes, miscues, and errors extends to the Mummer's play as well. The Mummer's play is a short piece of rough theatre, a small play with a big cast, intended to last about 15 minutes, traditionally performed at midwinter events (fig 40). The play incorporates song, dance,

and epic fight scenes. Characters include Father Christmas, St. George, and Napoleon Bonaparte amongst others. A Dragon and an Oss round out the creatures for the show. The play is mutable, operating on a loose framework of lines and action that is open to improvisation, even if we are repeatedly instructed to stick to the proper words by our director. It is often updated to contain references to modern events, celebrities, and villains. Roles are shifted within the side, so it is rare for anyone to play the same character twice in a row. In essence it is the same show every year, built upon the same set of words and directions, the same jokes, action scenes, songs, and dances. In fact the reality of inconsistency in relation to location, timing, and the actual roster of who can make the show as an actor means that no two performances are ever exactly alike.

I mention the Mummer's play because a few years ago, before I was involved with side as a dancer, I had attended a talk on the history of the play. The play can be traced back to the 13th century, although the tradition seems to have faltered at the onset of World War One before being revived mid twentieth century. The bit that really stands out for me from this presentation was the experience related by the speaker of being involved with a side performing the play and being observed by an academic researcher. In amongst the fieldnotes that went forward to publication was the observation that this troupe is unusual because instead of an Oss or a Dragon or some other recognisable mythical creature, the side had a kangaroo. Unusual enough to be noticed and written up, but not enough to be questioned directly, or they would have learnt that the regular beast costume was at the laundry and a bit of fancy dress had to be employed as a stand in. I have asked around at the start of this research project to see if I can verify this account, or to produce either the research text or the published history of the play, all to no avail. I cannot tell you whether this is anything more than a tall tale or amusing anecdote, but I feel it is worth including as an illustration of the need to be both professionally curious and somewhat sceptical of what we are shown.

Memories

A question of recollection

In my midsummer crisis, I found myself questioning my understanding of my own lived experience, spurred on in part by the conceptual evaluation, or the perceived need for this, by the research discussion around methodology and our understanding of experience, but also exacerbated by the sudden increase in volume of available time without direction. I mentioned earlier that there was a cliff edge of sorts, a sudden drop from full on activity at work to almost no directed anything, a side effect of the position of term time only staff, in effect a 60mph to nothing slowdown that left me far too much time on my hands, not enough to do, and lots of room to reconsider and contemplate my experiences.

And, as I had spent a significant amount of time considering my previous lived experiences within the education system, I found myself dwelling on and questioning my accounts of my schooling as presented in chapter 1.

On a positive note one effect of this summer wobble was that it prompted me to reach out in multiple directions for help, and in this instance I turned to a couple of school friends I was still in contact with, one of whom I hadn't talked directly with in some thirty-five years. I was looking for confirmation, hoping for some triangulation of the experience we shared decades ago. Where my memories right? Had I omitted something vital? What was their view of that time in our lives? These conversations were

recorded as part of my data gathering effort. However a recent encounter with a college friend reminded me of an experience I had in my second year of study.

I have already touched on the module choices I made for my arts degree, and that the fine art options were geared around contemporary conceptual arts practices. It was due to this that I found myself, along with my tutors and classmates, ushered into a well-lit and airy room at our college on a bright spring day. There were a few chairs laid out in rows facing into the room, pointed towards a large window, one door behind us and another in the right-hand side corner. Through this door entered Oz, carrying an open-faced crash helmet, the vintage style of headgear that is popular with scooter enthusiasts. Attached to the top of this helmet was some form of kerosene camping stove, the kind with a small pump to adjust the pressure. I can't remember whether the stove was glued on, bolted, or welded to the helmet, but it was securely fixed in place, as was the helmet when Oz put it on a moment later and fixed the straps.

By this point he was starting to explain his project, and if you hadn't already guessed, this was the performance piece he was putting forward as the culmination of his work for this module. As he talked through creative theory and thought processes in relation to this artwork, he added oil and corn to a pan. His flatmate Alfie wandered nonchalantly in from the back door, wearing a greasy boiler suit and carrying a small oiling can with a long nozzle. Oz sat briefly so that Alfie could prime and light the stove before setting the pan on the heat and stepping back.

Throughout all this activity Oz was still talking, presenting his thoughts on the nature of creative artwork. His timing was perfect, the climax of his presentation where we found him waxing lyrical about the explosion of exciting artistic ideas in his mind coinciding with the first few kernels of popcorn flying out of his headgear.

I have never laughed so much or so hard at a piece of artwork. I know I wasn't alone in this; I don't recall a dry eye in the house. I also can't tell you exactly who else was there, besides our module tutor, the performers, and one or two other friends. Critically I can't remember the friend who reminded me of this event being there. I don't think we properly recorded the event, even though we had consistently been encouraged to record our work by our tutor. I'm not even sure if the friend I discussed this with was there. I'm happy with the fuzziness of this memory. It brings me joy and I don't want to see it altered. Edmondson (*The Essay*, 2020) discusses a similarly treasured memory of a comedy performance that revolved around a comedian's inability to play a musical instrument. Edmondson dearly remembers the emotion of the event but cannot recall the actual musical instrument and doesn't want to have the recollection ruined through being corrected or amended.

Methods

What do we want?...

In the early days of this research project, enthused by the possibilities of improving what I offered in my teaching role and bolstered by a newfound interest in this area of research, I chanced upon an article that offered a big claim. Follow this secret formula and achieve success was my understanding and interpretation of the text.

The article itself claimed to draw upon research conducted with leading companies, successful enterprises that shared a common factor: this factor was 5.6 or rather 5.6:1. 5.6:1 is the answer. What was the question again?

Much like the super computer that offers up the answer 42 in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, (Adams, 1979) you need the right question in order to make any sense of the answer, and whereas part of the joke in Adams' sci-fi comedy classic is that the computer had been asked to find the answer to 'life, the universe, and everything' but hadn't been given the question, this specific ratio was offered up in answer to the question of positive and negative feedback offered within the work environment. So, the question here is what proportion of positive to negative feedback within a work context works best in terms of creating a successful company.

I must admit that I was drawn to this answer as if it was some form of magic bullet or alchemical potion, capable of slaying monsters with a single shot or transmuting base material into gold. All I had to do was to employ this equation in my teaching practice and everything would be rosy, my students would flourish, and my teaching practice would shine like the beacon of brilliance I hoped for. If only it were that simple.

I had long been aware of the concept of wrapping negative comments within positive ones. In terms of offering feedback on a project, event, or outcome the advice was to soften the blow of a what may be perceived as a negative critical observation by sandwiching it between more positive comments. The vulgar name for this is 'shit sandwich'. There may be several problems with this approach. It could be argued that by softening the critical blow you are infantilising the person you are offering feedback to when you could have been more direct with them. In discussion about this topic a colleague recalled how useful it was to be called 'lazy' by his degree level tutor, the event marking a turning point in his investment in his education, while another friend recalls having her photography called out as 'a bit shit' at the end of her second year of fine art studies, prompting an effort to improve her skills. Further to this there are some of us who get caught dwelling on any negativity, so that the negative element of any discussion is likely to be the key takeaway, outweighing the positive elements (probably by a factor of 5.6 to 1).

But there is more going on here than I first thought. The number 5.6 appeals to me as a photographer as it is also one of the core aperture settings for most cameras, a recognisable number that is embedded in my practice. So, maybe part of this appeal lies within the number itself as a 'known' number, in the same way that we would pick a lucky number like 7, or look for three examples to bolster our arguments, or even quote the legendary 10,000 hours practice needed to master a skill. 5.6 sounds specific, as if it has come from some exhaustive scientific study. Years ago, when researching and discussing plans for our photography business, we encountered a whole range of arguments on pricing, especially pricing using unusual numbers. The psychological argument goes that selling something for £100 is far harder than selling it for £99, the £1 drop making all the difference in whether it is perceived as a good deal or not. This is a very general take on what is a horrendously complex issue, the factors affecting why people purchase what they do is decided by far more that minor price changes, but it may be considered a factor. A deeper dive into these ideas brought up the notion of charging a weird figure, £97.65 for instance, not too far away from the original price to screw up the costings but oddly accurate to look as if it had been carefully considered and all factors taken into account.

And that's where this golden ratio of 5.6:1 started to fall down. Long before I started to investigate and question the research's credibility, the problem of how to employ this formula practically came up in discussion. I shared my discovery of this formula with a friend, excited by the possibilities it offered, and

was then stumped as to how to make it work. What would this look like? Do you measure all contact you have with a student or only the parts that directly relate to their studies? Do you include the cheery hello as you pass them in the corridor or is that excluded from the equation? If you've said 5 nice things to them then what does the remaining .6 of a sentence look like? Do I have to say 5.6 nice things before I can tell them they are using studio equipment incorrectly or dangerously?

The problem lies with the presentation of data as if it is magic.

It was following this conversation that I started to consider the presentation of data in this way as a problem. I also found myself pursuing articles and research that linked to this fanciful ratio, presented alternate ratios, and aimed to debunk the implementation of this concept as an absolute as 'voodoo science'.

One of the outcomes from this research rabbit hole was the conclusion that the data I needed to gather would need to be broad and that the interpretation of this would probably lean towards a fuzziness, aligning with Bassey's (2003, p.119) notion of 'fuzzy generalization'.

Once you know where you stand philosophically then you can determine the appropriate methods to employ in your research. If only it were this simple. Any research and researcher is likely to need to cover a number of bases, and just because you feel that the narrative element of a study is the important part doesn't exclude the need that others may have for empirical data to accompany it.

Logically, if you were following a linear pathway within a research project, then once you had identified the problem, understood the context and critical theories relating to it, and decided upon your methodological standpoint, then the next step in this process would be to identify suitable methods of enquiry. The reality of my experience within this research process is a bit messier and more circular in nature. Ideas and approaches surface, are examined, employed or discarded, re-examined and altered. My initial data capture method, using video to capture participants' reflection on their experiences, gave way to audio recordings. Individual feedback gave way to group discussion before turning to recorded online discussion, a shift entirely made as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and resulting lockdowns.

Methods were selected not only for the way that data could be captured but also based on my level of excitement and interest connected to those methods… so where did I start?

Essentially, I started with everything, everywhere, all at once. In terms of data collection, and as mentioned above, my first round of data collected with participating students was recorded as video. At the time I was excited by this opportunity, that the collected movies might offer an audio-visual insight into the context of the research or might potentially form the foundation for a visually interesting outcome.

Alongside this video capture I was accumulating notes, images, video and audio diary updates, snippets of ideas and conversations, piles of books to read for research, and stacks of notebooks. From a practical point of view, it is daunting to consider the volume of collected information, more so when I think about the somewhat chaotic nature of working through this research. In Chapter 4 I offer some notes on the method of data capture alongside discussion of the data sets generated.

Practicalities

Now that we've got it, what do we do with it?

Early in this research, I encountered a very practical research problem: I didn't have a dedicated space to write in. There was no set room, no study or spare room that could serve as an undisturbed retreat to gather notes or write in. Several years in and I may be finally fixing this, but only through negotiation. We live in a small cottage with our two children, and space is at a premium. Our living spaces often go through a redesign, a rearrangement of furniture to make better use of the available space. There is a patio door in the living room that we block off in winter with a sofa, which then has to be moved so we can open the house up in the warmer weather.

Over the course of this project I have set up camp in about six different spots in the cottage. I sometimes find myself taking my laptop up to my bedroom to write, where it is quiet, or reading theory and textbooks in the kitchen because I know I will be relatively undisturbed for an hour or so. When the first Covid lockdown hit, we found all four of us trying to work in the same room, a near impossible task.

This itinerant academic practice sometimes makes it difficult to gain a clear view of where you are with the work. Sometimes it makes it hard to see where the physical work is. Photographic practice has its own issues with the storage of images. Photographers using traditional, old school, analogue processes involving chemistry need a dedicated space to work in, an actual physical dark room. There is a question of storage, an issue relating to the safe archiving of materials produced, of the good treatment of negatives needed for the production of images. Digital photographers encounter a similar problem, in the choice of format and location for image storage. Is it necessary or wise to retain all original digital image files or can the unselected, nearly ran, images be deleted to free up hard drive storage capacity? How many copies of the files need to be generated, and where is safe to store them? In the early days of our photography business we settled on a dual backup system, copying a set of images to two hard drives and storing one drive at a family house over the road.

Good photographic practice dictates that photographers should take care to store their images correctly. Archival systems should be adopted, either in the form of a tried and tested solution commonly used within the industry or as a bespoke design to fit the specific needs of the individual. Decisions need to be made as to the way the archive operates, for instance does it allow multiple people to access the images independently or is it the sole domain of a single user. Can the images be accessed and retrieved easily? Are the files securely stored to prevent theft or damage? How many locations do the images sit within?

In the early days of our photography business we settled upon a system that involved multiple copies of our client work, wedding and portrait images, spread across three hard drives. These were the internal hard drive of our image processing pc and two external drives, one of which would be stored off site at the house of a family member. This setup came about through discussion with other photographers and in response to the available resources we had to hand. The untouched raw images were copied to multiple locations before we started processing them, and everything was kept on the flash cards until we were sure we had made said copies. We stuck with this system for over a decade.

The topic of how to store your images came up in one of my evening classes, prompting a round robin disclosure of the class's varied approach to this. Everyone had some form of system, a mixture of computer hard drive, external drive, and cloud-based data storage, but no two people had the exact same approach. The conversation threw up a few unconsidered issues, such as the safety of online storage, or the compression imposed on uploaded images by social media platforms that generally reduce the file size so much that the image can't be used for anything else.

A photographer's images are a valuable resource. The images we created for our wedding clients had a set of potential uses beyond the initial client's needs. They formed the basis of our portfolio, held a marketing value for us and for other allied wedding suppliers such as florists, venues, caterers, and dress makers.

Our cruise ship photography experience was a different setup entirely. Shooting souvenir photographs using 35mm film cameras involved a degree of precision in the generation, processing, and storage of our working negatives, usually to be seen hanging against the wall from L shaped hooks, swaying with the movement of the ship. The timeframe for the care of these negs diminished rapidly over course of the cruise. Rolls of unprocessed film hot from a shoot were treated with care, heaven forbid you lose one and all the hard work involved in getting those images. Once processed and printed the negatives were relegated to their space on the wall, needed in case an image was to be reprinted. At the end of the cruise they would be rolled into a round and bagged, labelled with the dates of the cruise, and set aside, stored just in case we needed to print from them again. Post-holiday reprint requests were unusual, although we did occasionally receive a hopeful (hopeless) request to print another photo of previous passengers, often with a description that would make it practically impossible to locate the original image. I once witnessed my manager take several cruises worth of negatives, roll them into a big round cake somewhat in appearance like a celluloid movie reel, before wrapping it all over in the hard yellow tape used to hold films to the leader card as they went through our film processor. "Good luck getting any reprints out of that" he muttered as he smoked. A month or so later we used another set of negatives to decorate the crew bar for a party. Once the passengers had left the ship there didn't seem to be any further use for the images onboard, and at the time no easy solution to digitising the images and offering them online either. Within a week or two they would have been unceremoniously binned.

At the other end of this spectrum I put Cloggy and his archival practice. He maintains his personal work, a documentary project focussing on local life, that began in the early 70's. His negatives are housed in acid free holders, neatly ordered in date order alongside their respective contact prints. The folders fill a corner of his studio, several decades of work carefully kept and arranged to make it easy to navigate. When I visited him recently, he was in the process of revisiting this library of images, scanning the original negatives to create digital versions. In some cases this process revealed new opportunities to work with photographs previously passed over as less than optimum from a dark room point of view, now rendered usable and of interest thanks to newer technology.

I find myself in the midst of this practice, often having to reorientate my archiving methods to suit current demands or new opportunities posed by technological advances. The problem I find here in relation to this research is how to record the data and store it safely without falling into an overcomplicated system.

Fortunately, the digital curation of this research has been a lot simpler. All the recorded data have been uploaded to a Google Drive folder. Having a centralised and accessible resource has removed the worry I might have had regarding loss or security of the data. The account is password protected.

Now that we've addressed salient issues in relation to methodology, and the methodological understanding that informs this research, it's time to turn to the data itself. In the next chapter I begin to analyse the data that I have recorded in discussion with participating staff and students. I then look to offer some analysis and a preliminary synthesis of this data in terms of units, categories, and themes which I hope will coalesce into the identification of emerging findings from this study and carry these forward into their critical discussion in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Investigating the Data

A thematic analysis

In Chapter 1, I set out the problem and context for this research. Here, in this chapter, I also explain when, where, and how the research question arose. In this same chapter, I introduce some important contributions from literature relating to this field of study. Chapter 2 then discusses these contributions in some depth. In Chapter 3, I outline and justify the methodology and methods underpinning this research. In this Chapter, I turn to the analysis of the data. Working from a pragmatic constructivist perspective, I build upon research conducted by Nowell *et al.* (2017) and Byrne (2021) where they provide a framework and practical examples of their use of thematic analysis. In this chapter, I describe how their work has framed and guided my approach to examining the data I have collected.

Nowell *et al*., discuss the value of a thematic analysis approach in a way that is both terrific and terrifying. For those of us who found ourselves turning to qualitative methods of research, data gathering, and evaluation their text offers a clear insight into the pros and cons of using this approach. It also raises wider areas of concern, in relation to rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research regarding the systematic analysis of the research material, and by extension the qualitative research project itself.

Earlier in this thesis, with reference to the work of Hunt (1987), I discuss the difference between the planning and execution of a project conceived outside of or away from the actual activity, practice, or form of life in which it is embodied. We can be sure of a clear success when dreaming of an ideal situation and progression, something that is likely to exist only within our heads, and unlikely to survive in the light and heat of actual reality. In addition to this, we can add the complication of learning about the research process while conducting research, and the further complications of variable timetables, other demands on our time, and a global pandemic, all of which have contributed to shifts within the original research pattern envisaged at the outset of this study. Further changes in the arc of this thesis are brought about through research and discussion, through tutorials and revisions to written texts. At some point, let's call it 'here and now', I find myself looking with some trepidation at the data I've collected over the last few years and wondering what to do with it.

To start, I describe the processes through which I have collected the data over the course of this project, the sense that I have made from the data analysed to date, and what the next steps may be.

My original starting point for this research was to look at what I could do to support the development of photographic practice within a body of degree level students. My participants were to be the first year Artist Blacksmithing students. The data relating to this question is collected in three phases. In Phase One data was collected in the form of a set of video feedback recordings immediately following an introductory lesson related to DSLR camera use. Phase Two data consists of field notes, observations made during and immediately following a set of group discussions alongside the discussions themselves. Data collection in Phase Three are derived from a round of one-to-one discussions conducted online during the first Covid-19 lockdown. In this chapter, I discuss each of these phases in turn. Alongside, or rather around, above,

and below these sets of conversations and feedback sessions, a number of recorded discussions and informal interviews were held with other members of staff, creative practitioners, and friends and family that I felt would be able to shed some light on their (and sometimes my) experiences of learning a craft. As I note earlier, although planned in a logical format, my research journey took a number of diversions and trajectories.

Where did it begin (again)?

Presenting the research project to my potential participants

It's early Monday morning in the first couple of weeks of October, right at the start of the academic year for degree students, and I've ducked into a colleague's introductory seminar. A wave of cold sweat hits me as I survey the audience, some 25 or more first year students seated in three long rows. They get a brief introduction to the plan for their day from their tutor, and then I get a quick introduction and a chance to speak. I'm on.

I introduce myself, my role at the college, and what my research is about. I explain that I'll be bringing cameras to the teaching forge in the next few days and that I'll introduce them to aspects of photographic practice that might help them to chronicle their own journeys in the development of their practice. I talk about the importance of keeping a visual record of their experience at college. I explain how we are keen to encourage the keeping of visual records of the development of their practice early in their studies so that it doesn't get left to the last minute (as has been the case with other years). I tell them that this research is part of a master's project run by Sunderland University in partnership with the ETF, and that it is not compulsory for them to take part. I pass the consent forms to the person seated on the far-right end of the front row and my heart sinks as he passes the entire lot on without taking one for himself. 'What if no one wants to be involved with the research?' I wonder. My panic subsides when I see everybody else taking a form. I'm later relieved to find out that this 'student' who did not take a consent form was an unfamiliar member of staff who was sitting in on the talk. I ask if anyone has questions about the research but there are no takers at this point. And with that we're off. I exit stage right, leaving the students and staff to return to their morning program. Two days later I load up my car with as many camera kits as I can muster from the college media store and head off to the forge.

At this point I am running a second version of this approach. I had previously identified an issue with the level of photographic practice encouraged within degree level courses for creative craft students, to wit that the introduction to photographic practice, delivered in the form of a DSLR camera induction at the college, was happening far too late in their degree program for it to be of use to students in capturing their progress toward the successful completion of their degrees. Students on Artist Blacksmithing, Contemporary Design Craft, and Jewellery programs were getting this introduction in the second semester of their final year, usually around the time that they were about to hand in their dissertations. With only a couple of months to go before they finished their degree studies, they were encouraged to borrow camera kits and document their creative practice and final major projects.

This didn't seem fair to me. We were, as a college, missing an opportunity to encourage the development of a creative craft that could support the documentation of their learning journey over the three years of their course, as well as overlooking the potential of keeping visual records of their practice to support the development of students' professional careers after they left college. This seems to me to be especially important when considered against the possibilities offered by social media platforms to showcase

creative craftwork and practice. It seems absurd to ask students to capture practice only in the last few weeks of their studies when we could have helped them to get this started years before, from the outset of the development of their craft.

This question had been the original focus of the research I undertook on the SUNCETT MA short course program. Subsequently it developed to form the starting point of this thesis.

Figure 41 Student blacksmiths using DSLR cameras in the forge.

The First Intervention

A day in the forge with cameras

Two days after I had introduced my research project to the students, I loaded up my car with cameras and set off to the Teaching Forge. The plan was similar to the first time I had run this introduction with a couple of tweaks. I bought cameras that were all the same make and model, instead of the mix and match variety I used the first-time round. I bought enough to run six cameras at a go, figuring that I could run four sets of six students within the afternoon, and that if I planned for 30 minutes activity for each group, that would allow enough time to run through the basics of camera use, check on students while they were taking pictures, and collect data in the form of video at the end of the sessions. I pre-empted the need for a personal introduction to camera settings by creating a 'how to' video, (something that was far more work than I expected it to be). This also turned out to be an almost total waste of time as none of my participants bothered to watch it before the forge session despite being sent a link via email.

It is also worth noting that I had intended this introductory session to form the first part of a longer conversation about the activity of photography and photographic practice. In this first instance I was on hand while the students were making images, to offer guidance, encouragement, and advice on the results they were generating. I don't want you to think that I loaded each group up with unfamiliar equipment and sent them off into the forge with no further support. Secondly, I had hoped to run a follow-on session that looked at image editing, and to enable this asked all participants to take a photo of their college ID card at the start of the shoot. My thinking here was that I would be able to upload the images created by each participant to a folder on the college's OneDrive system, and we would be able to access these as a resource for further discussion. This secondary follow up session has proved harder to manifest than I had anticipated, a problem I attribute to scheduling issues in the early days of this research, (being a single technical demonstrator involved supporting staff and students across multiple courses and year groups, combined with the disruption of covid-19). In turning to write this chapter I see this as an issue revolving around the notion of critique and lack thereof.

Figure 42 A technical session on process in the teaching space at the forge.

As with any plan there were hiccups. The Forge Manager had been told I was coming to run a session but hadn't understood that the students were to be the ones taking the pictures, and there was an element of disruption in the execution of the camera induction as it took them away from their blacksmithing activities (if only briefly). Something else I hadn't accounted for was that there would be a lengthy technical demonstration (fig 42) of forging technique mid-afternoon that would cut into my available time, and that this, coupled with the official safety and tea breaks built into the forging sessions, meant that I had to leave for another engagement before I had got to all of the students.

This introduction to photographic practice built upon the changes I had made in my previous round of research. There was a move away from the technically heavy overview that concentrated on camera settings towards a more user-friendly option that encouraged participants to actively make photographs, and a shift from the focus on understanding and controlling camera settings to using the camera in an easier 'point and press' setup. My overall intention was to encourage our students to pick up on the habit of taking photos, and anything that seemed to hamper that as an intended outcome could be removed from the experience.

And as it was this experience that I was interested in capturing, the feedback collected at the end of each session focused on the lived experiences of the participants. It's worth noting a couple of contextual points here. This group would know no difference to other previous camera inductions, most student groups would only ever get one introduction anyway, so there is no alternative experience delivered at the college for them to compare it to. In a similar way the location of the Forge Workshop as a change in site for the induction would be an unknown difference. Previous camera inductions usually took place in the photo studio at the main college building. There is an element of disruption within this approach to the camera inductions: here we're moving the site from one over which I have some control to one outside of my control. In addition to this I am attempting to bring the two crafts into closer proximity.

So, the outcome of this first round of data collection is as follows:

20 students completed a DSLR camera induction within the Forge environment and gave video feedback. Returning to this section of the research I must question my use of video as the ideal vehicle to record data, or rather my overly complicated approach to video capture. Aiming for the best possible quality available with the camera kit that I owned, and probably riding on a wave of technical instruction that informed my daily practice as a technical demonstrator, I set out with a midrange DSLR that offered a decent video feature. I added an extra (shotgun) microphone to improve the sound quality, a tripod to offer a stabilised frame, and set the camera to the highest quality video option. With hindsight this may be considered overkill, and certainly adds steps that I could have avoided had I chosen a simpler DSLR set up or used a smartphone. That said there may be something of value in demonstrating what forms of good practice might look like. But using my primary DSLR as a static video camera did mean that my opportunities to document the event were limited. An additional camera might have made the whole enterprise a little bit easier.

4 students were able to have the induction and give audio feedback in a different workshop environment three weeks later. This catch-up session took place in the 3D workshop at the main college site, an option far easier for me to accommodate than a return to the Forge.

Of the 24 students all but two worked to the same pattern as the participants on my previous study. The majority of participants downed smithing tools, banked their fires, and stepped away from the forge, opting to concentrate on the photographic activity, looking to explore the environment and activity of the workshop (fig 41). Of the two who didn't fit this pattern I note the following:

1. Krynoid had injured their thumb prior to the session and was in no fit state to forge, therefore they were already active in the forge as something of an observer.

2. The Master opted to attempt to integrate the two crafts, continuing to work on their material and attempting to document their progress as they went along.

The duration of everyone's feedback is varied. There are not many who talk for more than a minute, and looking back to this moment in the research I can see that my research question is open, a variation on the key question of what their immediate thoughts/feelings are after the photography session.

A first pass of the data

Following recommendations from the work of Nowell *et al.* (2017) my plan is to listen to and make notes from each piece of feedback, and to see what issues and ideas emerge, and how these may be categorised. Repeated listening is the order of the day, a frequent return to the data with time off to deepen my understanding of what the data might mean. This repeated pattern of analysis allowed a number of themes to emerge, even from these brief data sets of feedback.

The initial theme relates to enjoyment. Had this introductory photography experience been fun, had the students seen this as a positive experience? Overall my initial evaluation of the responses from students are positive, with only one of the 24 participants noting a sense of frustration with the disruption I've added to the time available to them in engaging in the act of forging. A win then, from the point of view of offering a good introductory experience to photographic practice. I got excited by this and found myself trying to work out percentage results, thematic labelling, and potential illustrative graphs to show the results. I got as far as creating a single pie chart to illustrate the positive reaction results. It looks like this.

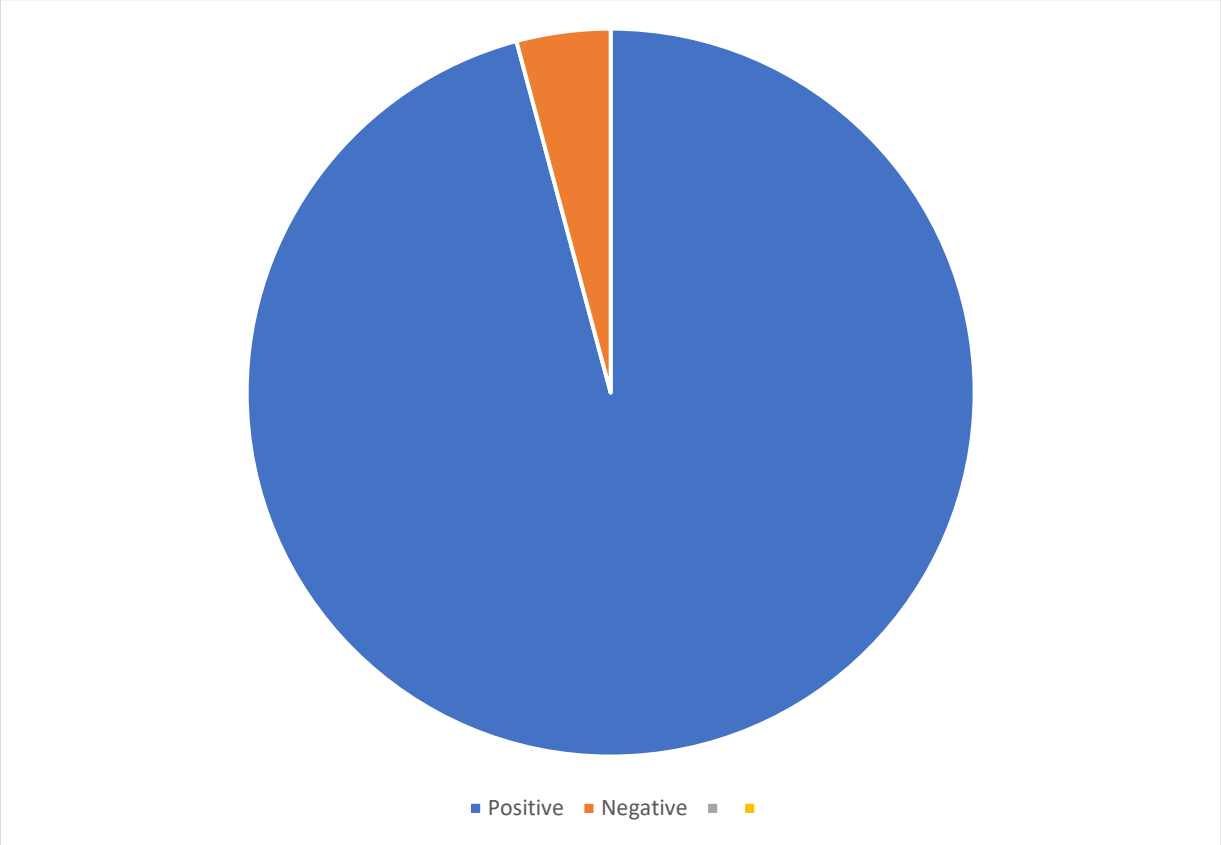


Figure 43 A positive but binary pie chart.

Then I realise that I may be falling into a trap. I find myself in danger of reducing the data towards binary analysis, yes/no results that don't reflect the complexity of the responses, because the responses are complex, even if they were only expressed in a few short sentences.

So, beyond the initial overly simplistic positive vs negative reaction, I then asked myself what finer-grained themes are present in the feedback data? It's worth noting that not all participants touch on all these issues, and that some may refer to all of them while others don't move beyond their response to whether the camera introduction was fun or not. Not all responses are deep and meaningful. Within this data set, some participants may touch upon a theme in passing but offer little in the way of deeper insights into their thinking.

Subsequently, I identified the following seven headings from my first sweep of this data set:

Heading	Responses out of 24
Positive experience	23
Documenting	11
Photography	13
Equipment	7
Play	3
Blacksmithing	7
Community	5

Let's start with the positives. Most of the responses to the experience were positive (95.83333%, "Get in!", I know how to let people enjoy using a camera). But the reasons for that positive result are broad and varied, and there are interesting things to note in the responses that do not reflect 100% enthusiasm. My single negative response centred on the way that this introductory session had got in the way of the primary planned activity, of the actual practice of forging, while two other responses noted that it was difficult to handle or combine both practices (smithing and photography) at once. I'm not sure that I can really claim that this single negative response is a properly negative one, more that the participant was feeling frustrated with a loss or interruption of available time in the Forge, however my first thoughts are that 100% success rates might not be credible anyway and that the expression of dissent by someone might actually indicate a level of honesty that suggests this participant trusted me to respect their response. A few years ago I spent a couple of months working for a web-based review platform. Buy something from one of their client companies and you would be invited to submit a review of your experience. Every company wanted to show a high percentage of positive feedback, often aiming for a perfect score of 100% positive reviews. Occasionally we would have to deal with clients who wanted to remove their negative reviews, concerned that poor feedback would hurt their business. However, the official line on positive versus negative feedback was twofold: firstly that the poor review should stay, and that the client should view this as an opportunity to respond to the customer and turn this negative into a positive, and secondly that their feedback should naturally be mixed because nothing is ever completely perfect. You can't please everyone all the time. One hundred percent five-star reviews are unbelievable, compared to a less perfect score that could be considered credible and still be 'good'.

None of this analysis is simple. While I found several responses that seemed to touch upon the same heading or key point, the variety of insight is broad, deep, and varied. For example, those that mention photography are responding to it in a variety of ways, from those who perceive it as a useful tool,

necessary for documenting craft processes and outcomes, to those who see it as a good idea if it's part of the course.

Stand out phrases:

"It'd be nice to have something to show for the steps you went through, and then sometimes even the mistakes you made, sometimes it's nice to document the mistakes as well because you know, I think it's tempting to kind of hide that stuff, I think, to be able to show that so you can see how far you've come and improved and stop making those kind of mistakes," Foamasi (DS1:B24).

"I've used cameras before, but it's nice to be shown how to use a camera properly, and then have a chance to play around with it," Ogron (DS1:B23).

"I think bringing the cameras into the forge is a really good idea because blacksmithing is a dying art. We should stop it from dying. I think by taking pictures and showing people what we actually do is really good opportunity to get the word out about how great it is and get more people interested," Slitheen (DS1:B19).

"I've never had the chance to take pictures in the forge, and like with that kind of extreme light differences, and that it's great fun and be very happy to do it again," Weeping Angel (DS1:B23).

"It is really nice to have cameras getting around because it's the most difficult part of this is documenting your work as you go along. That is one massive bonus I think of having the cameras here, it is a bit difficult trying to take the photos of your work without burning the material. That's the one main issue that I've had is I've nearly burned my material a few times to sort of kind of snap a photo," The Master (DS1:B16).

"It's good that you can use a good camera because it actually like shows how beautiful it is really, cos obviously it is to us, we love it, so having a good picture is a good way of communicating that," Ice Warrior (DS1:B2).

Second time around

A second pass over this data, conducted some weeks after the first, offers the potential for new insight. This time around I'm listening to see if my initial impression is correct. Did I miss anything of importance or value?

Again I'm listening for units of interest in each piece of feedback and for ways that these might be organised. My first pass generated seven broad headings or categories. This time around I'm looking for something deeper. Following the examples set out by Nowell *et al.* (2017) I should be looking for these headings and units of interest to suggest some of the themes that may be found within the data.

In this second round of listening six areas of interest have emerged. These are craft, tools, practice, time, critique, and activity. Sometimes they overlap and interlink.

Activity

I'll start with activity as this has the busiest page of notes attached to it, and there are three distinct categories or subheadings within them. As this is feedback on the activity of making photographic images

then this part of the feedback is concerned with that as the activity, distinct from the smithing and the forge environment. The views expressed locate the activity within three areas of classification: permitted, prescribed, and playful.

Permitted

Offering a camera induction to the participating students explicitly indicates to them that we, as a college, want them to engage with this documentary practice and that they can expect support from the college in this respect. Locating the induction at the forge environment:

1. Brings the art college into closer contact with the forge, encouraging creative arts related practice within what may be seen as a technical teaching space, sandwiched between the farriery and fabrication departments.
2. Jump starts the participants' photographic practice by bringing the activity into the correct context.

Prescribed

Feedback under this category relates to the perception of the activity and the participants understanding as to its place within their practice and studies. Is this seen as a necessary activity as part of the course? What value does it hold for the students? Within the college context is it valuable because it leads to a better experience, a better grade (in an 'am I being marked on this?' way), or because it may be of use for a future creative career?

Playful

Feedback expressed here relates to the activity being fun. A five-minute easy camera controls intro and fifteen or so minutes of taking pictures in a lightly supervised / supported environment.

Craft

Here the feedback revolves around the perception of blacksmithing as a craft and can again be divided into three key areas: developing an eye for, sharing, and the vitality of a craft.

Developing an eye

Here the feedback touches upon the notion of the development of a sense for what can be seen as good practice, in both the sense of activity and outcome, and relates to the crafts of blacksmithing and photography. There is a balance in documenting practice: are the photographs generated by the students in this session throw away snaps of practice smithing pieces, a rehearsal for both activities, or an important element in documenting a craft? The photos from this session could be viewed in the same way as the smith's process test pieces. They are not expected to be good, perfect, or usable in a high-end context such as a brochure production but are part of a learning process.

Sharing

Here the feedback touches upon the desire to share an insight into the student's chosen craft. They want to offer that insider's view into a craft that has attracted them, a counter to the tradition that Kemmis experienced in his training as a psychologist, of the necessity of an external view to understand human behaviour (1995, p.3).

Vitality

Here a concern is raised for the vitality of the blacksmithing craft, that the craft is generally (un)popularly viewed as a dying craft, and that any effort that can be made to dispel this myth is worthwhile.

Tools

There are two clear areas that relate to tools within this data: the experience of using the tool and the effect the tool has on the user. Within this context the tool being discussed is the camera.

In this instance the camera is an entry level Nikon DSLR. For some participants this is the first or best camera they have ever used, and the comments echo Sennett's (2008, p.195) discussion of how the tool feels in the hand, that it may feel good and work well or present a challenge. For others it is a less comfortable experience, a result of brand loyalty to other manufacturers who produce cameras in a differing layout or because the financial value of the camera causes some anxiety. There is some mention of the quality of the results generated, but no clear discussion of where the root of the quality lies, within the kit or the operator.

The effect the camera has upon the user is also touched on briefly: the camera offers an altered vision of the world, actually changing your view of the subject matter.

Practice

Here the recorded responses turn to the combination of the two activities, photography and smithing, essentially discussing the issues created by trying to engage with two distinct practices at the same time and in the same space. There is a notion of the photography as an alien practice for those who haven't experienced or invested time in making photographs before, therefore a separate practice rather than an element of a combined practice.

Roberto Giordani, in a presentation to the smithing students about his professional practice during a masterclass week, showed a video that clearly indicated his ability to move between a variety of creative activities, from drawing to modelling to smithing to photography.

There is something else in this section, relating to the idea of making in a flow state of creativity or concentration. Some participants noted how hard it is to switch out of the smithing process in order to document the work, and that an unfamiliar additional practice (taking pictures) can be disruptive to the core activity: turn your attention away from the metal you're working on to grapple with an unfamiliar process and you risk burning your material.

Time

Here the feedback turns to concerns of the use of time available for learning. Some participants voice a worry about losing forging time to another activity.

Critique

Mostly manifesting with the discussion of mistakes, here the discussion turns to the importance of critique, and a critical understanding of the work that is being made. There is a contention between two approaches, the desire for perfect work, unachievable as discussed by Aristotle (384-322 BC), and the quest for learning through mistakes. Some students are reticent to record their false steps, that they want to show only good work, others are aware of the value of documenting mistakes and improvements from a learner's perspective. Mistakes have value in the documentation of progress.

Data Set 2 Disrupted

"Use the corridor", they said, "it'll be fine…"

A few weeks after the first round of data collection I ran a follow up session. I found myself sinking into a formidable bean bag set in the corner of what could generously be described as a social space next to the participants' design studio. In reality we were sat in the corridor, arranged across a couple of bean bags and a sofa. That the environment for this session, set up as a group discussion, was less than ideal is evident in the audio recordings gathered. There is continuous interruption, from people moving through the college or accessing the design studio itself, and at least one body who seemed to be making a considerable meal out of making a coffee in the room round the corner.

The plan for this round was to hold a set of four informal discussions, with up to six students in each group. A focus group approach was chosen for this round of data, following advice laid out by Gibbs (2017, p.190-196). We pencilled this in for a Wednesday morning, the only spot of free time in their calendar amongst a busy schedule of seminars, tutorials, and workshop time. Anyone who thinks that students are lazy or don't have to work hard for their qualifications are way off the mark here. The course is demanding, with participants expected to engage with a full working week to get through, and more if they are aiming for a high grade. I know that I have hijacked a small window of what could be considered free time in an otherwise busy schedule, and I'm not surprised that not everyone turns up. Of the 24 students involved in the camera sessions 10 make it to this second round.

The recorded audio is also not ideal. Designed to gather responses from groups of up to six students across four meetings, I have managed to set things up so that my voice is clearly audible while others are sometimes indistinct or muffled. This, allied with the general level of noise in the area, makes the information harder to extract, and I wonder if my question for this round is not as clear as it should be. Despite the poor choice (or lack thereof) of location and the issues with sound quality the recorded conversations offer some new insights into the experience and expectation of the participating students.

Each session is opened with a refresher on the purpose of the research and an opportunity for clarification of anything that isn't clear or hasn't been explained properly, then followed with the key question for this round: where do we go next? Writing this up now I can see that I'll need to clarify this here. Having hopefully encouraged the participating students to engage with photography and the idea of documenting their creative craft and process, if only in a small introductory way, I'm looking to see what planning or framework they want next to support the development of this practice.

It's worth noting the contrast between this data set and data collected in the first round. These recordings are more conversational in tone and content, offering a greater insight into the character of the participants and opening discussion within the group on a variety of important points. Practical elements are touched upon, to include areas of concern such as access to college kit and photographic studio spaces. Allied to this are concerns about the amount of time needed to make a decent record of work in progress outside of making the work itself.

There is also some discussion of the need for a basic introduction to photography in a neutral environment, without the distraction of the activity in the forge. Alongside this there is interest in collaborating with other student groups within the college, beyond just asking photographers to engage with the blacksmiths.

Some notable comments from my first round of listening to this feedback:
"If I'm honest I don't think my work's in a place where I'm like 'yeah, record it for posterity, it might be useful later'… by the end of the third year I don't think I'll be looking to display any of my first-year work… it's so new and slapdash," Sontaran (DS2:D57).

"Do I really have skills that I want to showcase to others?" Sontaran (DS2:D58).

"Most blacksmiths… don't actually record the process, they'll show the final outcome, its only recently that people have started recording this stuff and photographing this stuff," Sycorax (DS2:D59).

"When you are doing creative stuff, it is really good to step back… looking around, looking at what everyone else is doing," Silurian (DS2:D17).

"If we're wanting to use this in a serious manner, we're going to need to have it down to a fine art," Sontaran (DS2:D70).

"What we do I suppose is a bit like painting a canvas, you cover up your work all the time… and you can burn it at any point," Missy (DS2:D16).

"When I'm in the forge it's the last thing on my mind, I try to focus on the making and then remember to take a step back to document… I'm not thinking about it," Missy (DS2:D20).

One thing to consider with this type of data is how we assess it as researchers. When I really started to engage with critical texts, inspired by advice from colleagues and bolstered by McGuire's (2018, p.40-58) recommended program of activity, I found myself working stolidly through articles and papers paragraph by paragraph, rewriting text, and researching phrases as I went. I also found myself highlighting and underlining text as I went, first on my notes, then on printed handouts, and finally in the books themselves, much to the disapproval of friends and family. But 'these are working textbooks' was my counter, and I wanted to highlight the parts I thought were important. Returning to these texts for a second (or third or fourth) read through I found the uncoded text to be as good as the marked sections. Some articles appear to be pure gold throughout. Either that or my perception of what was important has shifted over time.

And time is the issue here with this type of data. Qualitative data, in the form of short feedback, focus group discussion, or interview, takes time. In its initial generation and assessment there is an element of

allowing enough time to record and collect the data, which for my first round of data was about a minute per participant and for my second set had expanded to about fifteen minutes per group discussion. That's all well and good, and it can feel positive to collect a reasonable amount of data quite easily, lots of information to work with, all safely tucked away within an audio or video file. Unfortunately these data sets take longer to assess. A single pass is not usually enough, and the recordings benefit from being allowed to rest or 'steep' before being subjected to another round of scrutiny. But this is where the issues of finding a balance between making the time to listen to a recording properly, allow yourself space to digest and assess what you are hearing, and write your conclusions up appears. Rush this process and there is a risk of missing something vital within the feedback you have collected, take too long and you may lose momentum and have to start again. Neither option is good for the time-pressed researcher.

A pass of data set 2 with the four key themes identified in my third analysis of data set 1 indicates a clear inclination within these discussions to focus on ideas of practice as a primary concern, with the comments regarding the generation of visual evidence a distant second.

Data Set 3

The arrival of Covid-19

I felt that I was on a roll with my research and data collection towards the end of 2019. I was two solid rounds into my plan and beginning to draw up ideas for the next steps in terms of what could be offered or supported at the college. Things were looking rosy. Then the coronavirus hit, and everything planned was thrown up in the air. As the first lockdown took effect, and amid a frantic restructuring of our private and professional lives, everything we were attempting to do within a teaching environment had to be adjusted to fit a different set of circumstances. Our students were encouraged to clear their college work spaces, taking research notes, maquette building materials, and images home to be reinstalled in whatever space they had available. Everything we did was about to go online.

An additional factor to be considered in the process of data analysis is the temporal focus attached to each data set. Now who sounds like they've stepped out of a *Doctor Who* story? The first set is concerned with the immediate events prior to the recording of the feedback, as close to the intervention as possible. It is concerned with the immediate past, the thing that has only just happened, with little or no time for reflection on the part of researcher or participant. The second set, although it may occasionally draw on past experiences from within the focus group, revolve around possibilities offered by future enterprises. Its direction of travel is turned toward future horizons. The third set (I think) turns to individual's personal past experiences, and in this respect, it most closely resembles the steppingstones introduced in Chapter 1. Here are the narratives attached to individual experience, presented by a single voice. For the most part they are entirely untouched by alternative accounts. I had an issue with this when I was considering my own experience of school, encountering a feeling that I needed to verify my memories through a form of triangulation, a fact checking discussion with others who had been present in that part of my history.

Wax (2018, p.89) describes the mind as elastic, and there is something of mutability in our ability to remember events, people, and places accurately. I had a chance to revisit my old prep school recently and found a number of surprises. Some spaces had changed in scale, growing or shrinking in comparison to my recollection of them. This was not the case for all these spaces however, so it was not as if some form of Alice in Wonderland magic had been worked on everything. One thing that remained completely unchanged was the distinct smell in the first dining room, something unlike any other smell I've

encountered, and so embedded in the room that it still persists after more than 35 years. Oddly, some spaces I had no recollection of at all. Memory can be a fickle thing, omitting details that others find important, or hanging onto things others would find irrelevant.

Something that characterises the third set of data is the shift in the background noise. All the conversations were recorded online, under the lockdown conditions during that first full-scale lockdown in the spring of 2020. There is almost constant birdsong in the background, coupled with the efforts and interruptions of my family as we attempt to coordinate work, research, and schooling within the confines of a small cottage. Here I can hear my youngest son calling for our dog before his voice broke and deepened (my son that is, not the dog), there are the traces of my wife's attempt to unload the dishwasher quietly so as not to interrupt before being drawn into the conversation by the student. Looking back on this time it almost feels unreal to consider that we had suddenly had to shift everything from the personal, shared real world experience that the college offers, to a virtual online experience.

And again, as before, the question for this round of enquiry has changed. How has your photography practice changed over the last few months? What difference have we made?

Opening these discussions with an open-ended question and inviting a reflective view of where participants believe they are in relation to their understanding of photographic practice and how it relates to their studies reveals some interesting ideas and avenues of thought, not all of which touch on or are concerned with photography itself. We turn to social media, community, and the documentation of lived experience. We touch on the importance of critical engagement and the understanding of what we are looking at in both the sense of image specifically and in the wider context of human activity.

Data set 3 comprises 13 conversations. The recordings vary in length, ranging between a few minutes to almost an hour. A few key quotes are presented below.

"I do find myself looking at things in a different way when I take a photograph," Zygon (DS3:E37).

"I did 29 years in the fire service, and I think I must have taken about 10 photographs," Zygon (DS3:E43).

"If you go out with a DSLR camera, you're going out with a purpose, whereas if you take a phone, it's not the main purpose," Rutan (DS3:E93).

"I've taken more landscapes than I have of hot metal," Kroll (DS3:E97).

"There's no point putting up terrible photos of things," Kroll (DS3:E100).

"You're not like a normal blacksmith; you can take a photograph that doesn't involve holding it in your hand and going click." Kroll (DS3:E101).

"There was a certain style, certainly in the photographs from the years above us, of literally point and shoot," Kroll (DS3:E102).

"I can play with it more and it's more playful. I don't think we have enough play in us lives. I feel like being English and being in an English kind of set for education, we don't have enough play," Aggedor (DS3:E112).

"If you're not having fun, it's not worth doing in my opinion," Aggedor (DS3:E113).

“Maybe the reason I felt lazy is because it didn’t feel like work, I put it in my head that I was actually trying to pitch something for someone to buy, and it became really playful, and I actually really enjoyed it,” Aggedor (DS3:E116).

“I will not let a bad photo slip through,” Sontaran (DS3:E148).

“Being able to frame your work properly and being able to take good photos opens you up to clients so much more… I think one of the biggest differences between an amateur blacksmith and a professional blacksmith is how well they can take photos of their work…” The Master (DS3:E68).

“I’d say photography is a really important skill to have, which I never thought I’d say because I was never into photography,” The Master (DS3:E69).

“The intervention, like even though it is so minute really, like the thing at the forge really barely took any time, it was just an interesting have a little play about, the fact that it was that made it interesting, then sort of rooted the idea of wanting to be able to take good photos so taking the time to learn how to, more of a subconscious thing than like actively “learn this”… put me into a place where I’ve gone “ah, that photo looks better than that photo, you can see what’s going on in that photo, I want to take more photos like that” and then subconsciously taken the time to learn things that would make that a better photo,” The Master (DS3:E86).

The standout themes in this data are as follows, in no particular order:

Agency/ownership of activity.

Some of the participants refer to gaining a sense of ownership over their practice, not only in the sense of developing a photography practice but also the way in which the practice is employed, specifically an ownership over the primary research material gathered. This marks a shift from collecting images generated by other parties via Google or library searches to the creation of the images themselves. This also taps into ways learners with conditions such as dyslexia can benefit from other forms of research than those that rely solely upon the written word.

Developing an eye.

Within these conversations there is a growing sense of appreciation for good photographic work. Where participants had little or no interest before, there was now a sense of seeing where an image was better than another, a desire to develop the capacity to create better images, and the notion of how valuable good image making could be in relation to the improvement of a practice and career development.

Lost in the making.

This idea surfaces several times over the data sets. Essentially, and originally phrased as a difficulty in attempting to operate two practices at once, participants were aware that they were liable to lose themselves in the primary activity of making and that they would forget to document their process. This is sometimes referred to as a flow state of creative activity.

Community.

Many of the participants refer to a sense of missing their community. A sudden intense shift to isolation under lockdown conditions, the replacement of shared physical creative spaces, the move to virtual delivery of education.

Third times a charm

At this stage I am encouraged to look beyond my own (solo) interpretation of the data. So far I have assessed data set 1, 2, & 3 several times over a number of months, but only by myself, and I am struggling to identify a clear path through this process. Each new pass of the data reveals another seemingly important element and I find it harder to offer a coherent interpretation of what I am finding. I will admit to some trepidation bought on by the scale of the study described by Nowell *et al.* (2017). Here is a complex mixed methods case study involving multiple researchers working with nine Canadian SCNs over a planned five-year period. The resulting data set would be massive, and the proposed activity of creating transcripts, identifying initial codes and units of interest within the data before generating the overarching themes, looked overwhelming, especially so when I considered that my research had a team of one (me). Plus, I had been immersed in this research for the last few years and felt that I had an innate understanding of the key themes and their links to the literary and practical side of the research. Little wonder that I was experiencing some resistance to transcription and coding at this stage, having felt that I had already identified the key themes. But the question remained in how to be sure that I was finding what was there and not only what I was expecting or hoping to find. Nowell *et al.* (2017, p.7) state that the credibility of the research will be enhanced if there are more than one researcher involved in assessing and analysing the data. Further to this Byrne (2021, p.1393) argues that analysis generated by multiple researchers working collaboratively and reflexively should produce a richer interpretation of the data without aiming to produce a single, consensual, or correct answer.

To this end I enlisted the help of three others to act as additional / external coders and to assess this first data set. My three coders approach the data with differing degrees of related experience. MC1 is actively involved with the Artist Blacksmithing course and has direct insight into the degree program. MC2 has no direct connection to either the smithing course or the college. MC3 is a retired teacher with a long history of involvement with the art college. Incidentally MC3 is also the friend that got me involved with the college as a tutor back in 2013.

I generated a transcript of all twenty-four sets of feedback and encouraged my coders to watch/listen to the files, marking items of interest and adding notes to each. Marked items where then considered as units of interest and added to a frequency spreadsheet, given a code and the frequency of repetition added into the table, along with a note of the source. I have included a sample section of this data analysis below (fig 44).

	MC1	15/10/23			
Code	Word / Phrases	Frequency	Theme	Location / Source	Number of sources
C1	Kit, camera - piece of kit, - piece of equipment, - being in that environment with the camera, - don't know how to use the camera, - good place to take a camera, - nice to have cameras getting around, - using that specific camera - get used to the controls of the camera - understanding that as a tool, how it works - nice to be shown how to use a camera properly	IIIII IIIII IIIII I 16	7	Sontaran, Ice Warrior, The Rani, Missy, Mechanoid, The Master, Judoon, Weeping Angel, Zygon, Rutan, Ogron,	11
C2	Quality of images - a good picture that tells you a lot, - our standard when you're doing like portfolios, - opportunity to use different shutter speeds	IIIII I 6	1	Ice Warrior, Dalek, Davros, Yeti,	4
C3	Environment - how dark the forge is, - a tough environment, lighting, - being in that environment with the camera, - a difficult environment, they have studios in their workshop,	IIIII IIII 9	3	Ice Warrior, The Rani, Missy, Dalek, Cyberman, Mechanoid, Krynoid, Weeping Angel,	8

Figure 44 Sample section of frequency table generated as part of data analysis with multiple coders.

From here I was able to return with the annotated transcripts to each coder and discuss their notes. From these discussions we were able to agree a general set of themes from each coder. These themes were written up as theme and sub-theme. I Have included the themes from MC1 below.

Themes from MC1

Photography: technique, visual aesthetic, quality of images
Documenting: Sharing a craft, promoting, window into activity, vital as part of professional career, of own & other's work and progress, documenting for learning or promotion
Environment: learning environment, permitted activities within designated spaces, difficult lighting conditions,
Camera as developmental tool: art school way of learning, developing across two crafts, hands on experience & instruction in how to use, recording mistakes.
Gaining a new skillset: useful, insight into photographic practice, new craft/operating outside of comfort zone, a heads up on future imaging demands, is this an expected element of the course/do I have to do this?
Community: helping other students, observing activity within this community of practice
Kit: nice, scale of tool, complicated nature of camera, permission to use, expensive, risky
Balancing Activity: smithing vs/& photography, interesting but not easy, stepping out of smithing workflow.
A fixed idea of photography: this type of photography should be done in a studio.

Having generated themes I then worked my way through the frequency table, assigning a theme to each code, and using the resulting numbers to generate frequency bar graphs (fig 45).

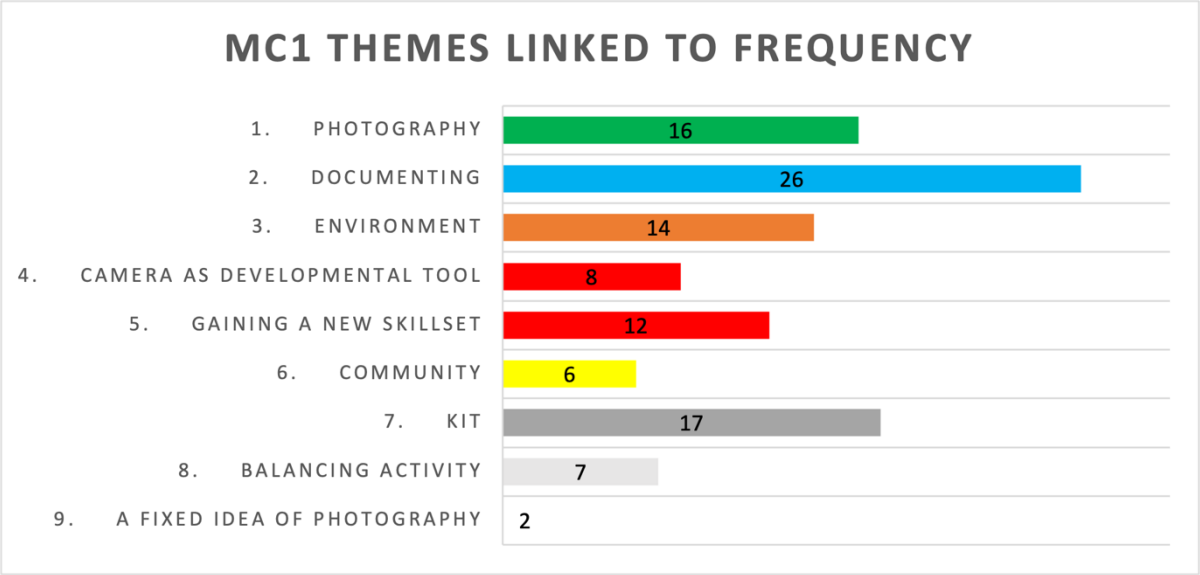


Figure 45 Frequency chart.

Finally, from this analysis of the data I took the thematic interpretation generated by my coders and used it to populate individual thematic maps for each set (fig 46).

Figure 46 Sample thematic spider diagram.

I say finally but once again there is a further step or two required to bring this analysis of the data together and hopefully add some clarity. Armed with all three sets of results from my coders (and the promise of tea and cake) I set up a meeting to discuss the results so far. We pour over the themes and sub themes listed and mapped out on spider diagrams for each coder, discussing where the ideas can be linked and grouped together. The diagrams begin to be colour coded, with themes and sub themes being placed under agreed headings. All of this is recorded on a large sheet of paper, with five key themes agreed upon by the group and all sub themes attached to a parent theme.

From here I can filter the sub themes into distinct categories, looking to collate phrases that appear to belong together or are alternate versions saying the same thing. With this analysis I am able to generate a combined spider diagram.

Figure 47 Spider diagram showing combined themes identified in discussion with my external coders.

From here, and in discussion with my tutor, I am able to identify that the two themes of skill and tools probably belong together under one theme, and that they can be collapsed into a single theme titled Practice. I am not entirely sure that the theme titled Site is correct yet either, and wonder if a more accurate word to use would be Location.

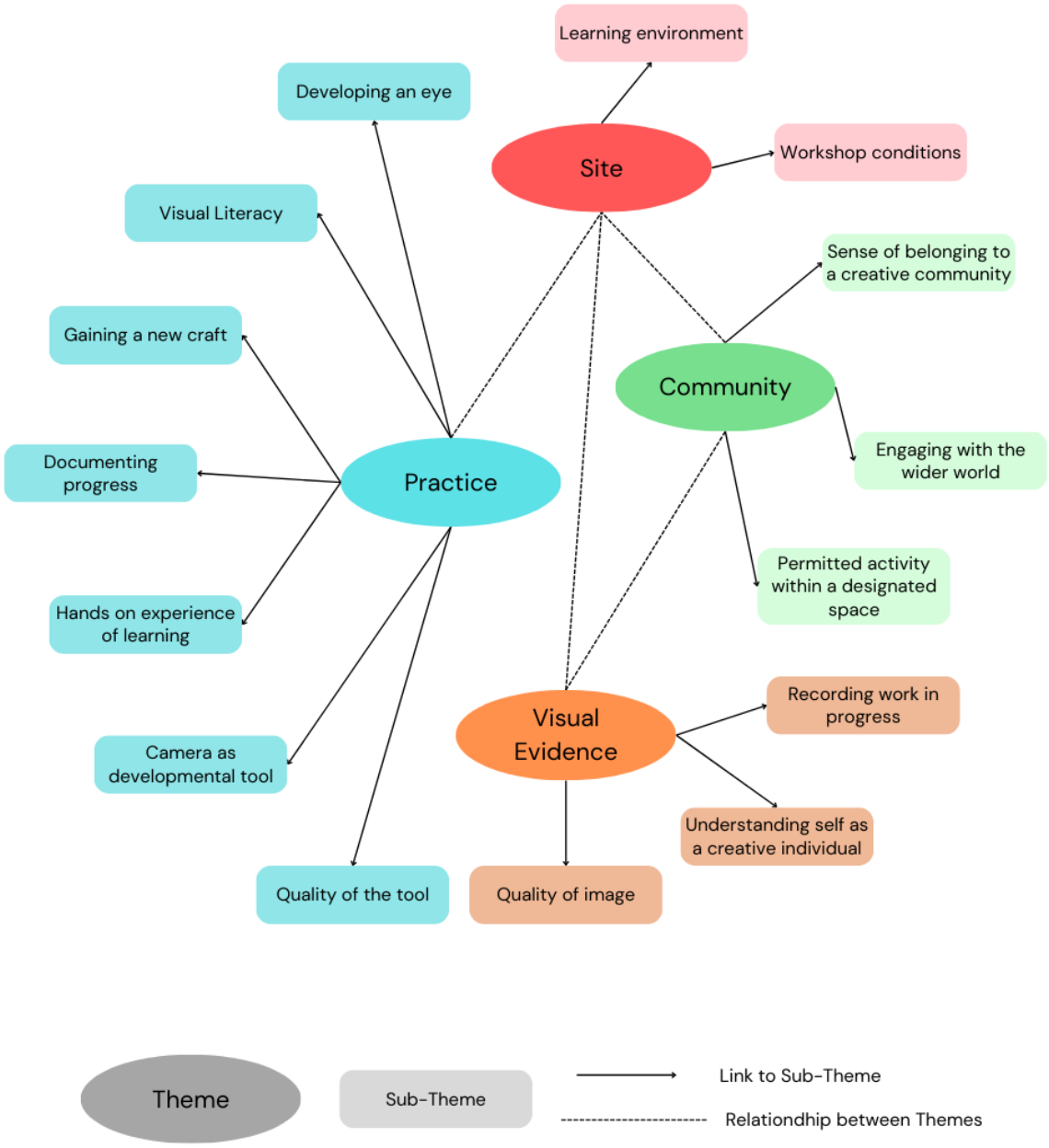


Figure 48 Amended thematic diagram.

Now that I'm armed with what feels like a solid set of themes, I turn to look at my other data sets again. It's worth noting that there is no intended hierarchy within the placement or discussion of these themes, an issue that came up when working with my multiple coders.

Data Set 4

In Conversation

Data set 4 consists of a series of conversations conducted with a variety of people. I wanted to engage with people who could offer some insight into issues relating to the research. While all data collected in sets 1, 2, and 3 were gathered from students, this set contains a mix of graduate and professional individuals. Some have long term experience of working with the college, others offer insight into the importance of photographic practice from postgraduate or industry perspectives. This data set has been assessed following the identification of the four key themes. To offer some insight into these individuals I present them as a cast list with a brief resume.

Brigadier: A BA fine art graduate.
Harry: A craft tutor and maker.
Peri: A craft tutor and maker.
Nyssa: A blacksmith and tutor.
Sarah-Jane: A former technical demonstrator and photographer.
Ace: A photographer.
Jamie: A photographer and artist.
Zoe: An artist and retired tutor.
Adric: A retired technical department manager.
Tegan: A retired college principal and craft maker.

Scanning the horizon

I have already mentioned the reassurance I received from a friend that a PhD was only a small part of a much larger body of work. From a wide horizon of interest we select a point of importance, then find that this point soon expands to offer another broad horizon. When represented as a graphic process we generally end up with an unending inverted Christmas tree, a series of triangles stacked point down one atop another forever. Assessing my research with a view to conference presentations I found several horizons in my work, from the importance of the workshop in craft process, to the use of space within a creative college environment, and on to community. There is possibility for this process to carry on *ad infinitum*, a little like the concept underpinning Brancusi's Endless Column (1918) (fig 49).

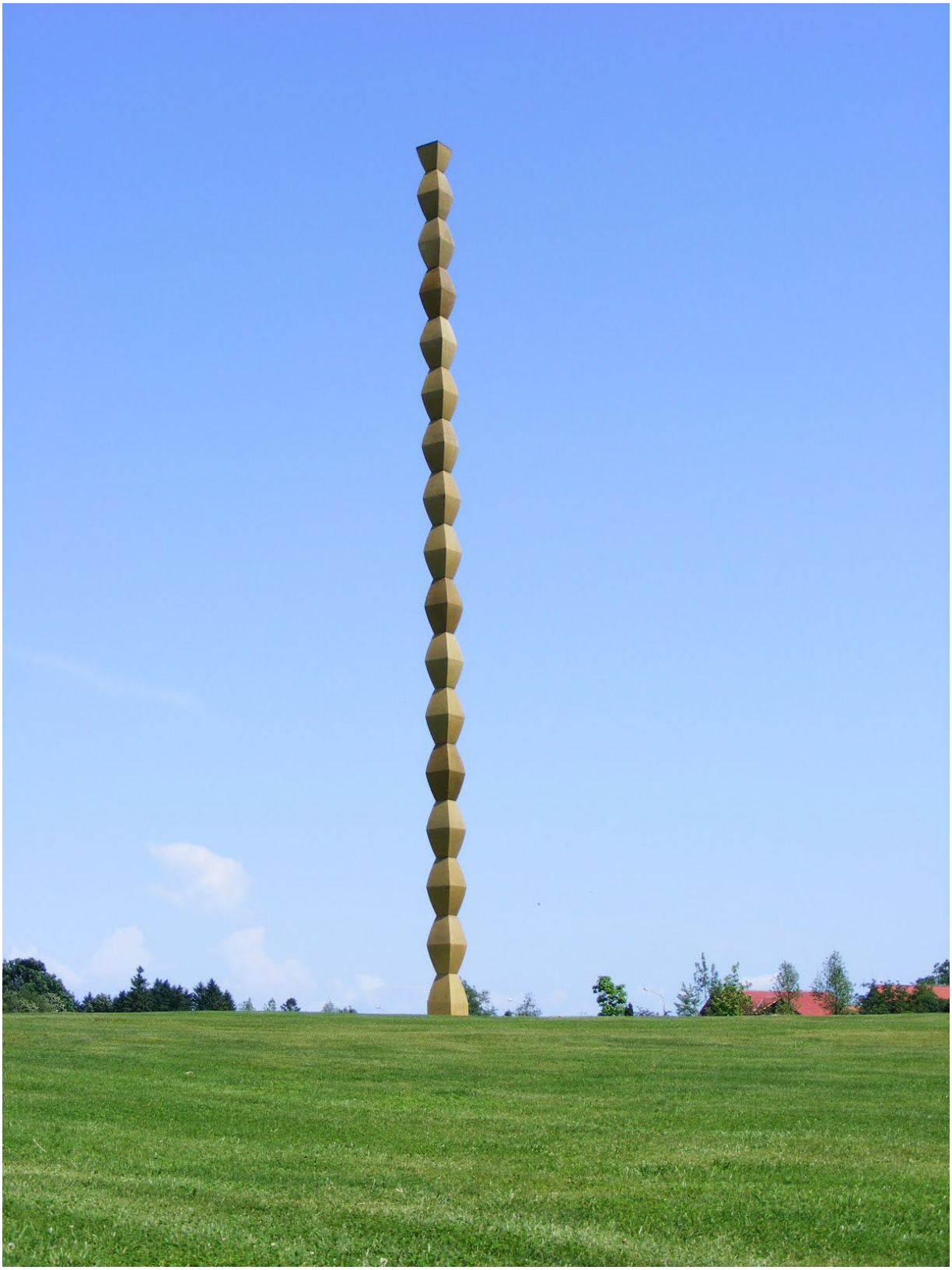


Figure 49 Brancusi's Endless Column (1918), photographer unknown.

This possibility of an extending journey is present in both the literature collected and assessed for research purposes, as demonstrated by an enormous stack of peer-reviewed published work, and in the data collected during the course of the study. Because the focus of the research changed tack a couple of times, so the emphasis of the data changed too. In and around the recordings of the participating students, there were reflections on my own experiences, and a broader set of conversations with family, friends, and colleagues, all of which are linked to the research in their own ways.

Figure 50 Sisyphus by Titian, 1548-1549.

At some point we have to draw a line under this gathering of data. If we don't stop somewhere we could travel forever, a little like Sisyphus eternally rolling his boulder uphill (fig 50). I don't want to imply that I have found this process punishing, tiresome, or pointless, quite the contrary, the research has been fascinating and rewarding, but there must be an endpoint to the collection of data before the data becomes overwhelming and unmanageable, or worse yet unrefined and dilute in its focus.

Chapter 5: Themes & Findings

The data analysis process described in the Chapter 4 allowed me, along with my external coders and in discussion with my tutor, to identify four key themes evident in my recorded data. In this chapter, I turn to examine each theme, reflect on and discuss their allied sub-themes, and look to link each theme back to theories and theorists engaged with in Chapter 2. Although this discussion is primarily concerned with the data collected from participants as discussed in chapter 4 it does occasionally draw on my own personal experience. Findings will be addressed at the end of each theme.

There are four key themes identified in the data analysis. From my discussions with my multiple coders these were identified as Practice, Community, Site, and Visual Evidence. It's worth noting that, although these themes could be seen as discrete areas of data for discussion and analysis, there is sometimes overlap between the themes. A unit of data initially positioned as referring to the theme of Practice will spark, in its discussion, a link to the themes of Site or Community, or a participants comment on critique will open up an idea about the sub theme of aesthetic experience. This analysis and discussion is presented as a 'good' interpretation of complicated data. There is also some shift over the course of the discussions in the headline relating to each theme. Practice would appear to involve elements relating to critique, Community has a link to being in the presence of others, and so on. As the discussions within this chapter have developed the definition of the themes has shifted: Practice has become reframed as Critique, Community has become Presence, Site has found a better definition as Sense of Place, and Visual Evidence has turned to consider ideas of Perception.

Practice: A return to Aristotle's forms of knowledge and the development of critique.

Practice appears to be the dominant theme within this research. As noted in Chapter 4 this is a combined theme that covers discussions of both skill and tools. Data set 1 leant heavily into practice, and coding of the data produced seven distinct sub themes. These discussions range from the acquisition of skill and the development of an eye for good work to the nature of the camera as a tool.

A deeper analysis of the data linked to this theme highlights how notions of critique include a pedagogical approach, starting from the point of problem finding and problem solving, and leading to the development of critique.

Skill: what's your problem?

Analysis of data set 1 produced a collated set of four sub-themes that link to the process of skill development. These are:

1. Gaining a new craft
2. Developing an eye
3. Documenting progress
4. Visual literacy

The first of these revolves around the processes surrounding the acquisition and development of skill, or more specifically gaining a new skillset in the form of insights into photographic practice.

1: Gaining a new craft. "it's nice to be shown how to use a camera properly"

This section deals with the analysis of data collected in the course of this study that touch on notions of skill. Phrases such as 'gaining a new skillset', 'useful', and 'interesting but not easy' emerged in the analysis and discussion of the data with my Multiple Coders (MCs), alongside the identification of the activity as a way to encourage students in 'developing (practice?) across two crafts.' For some participants photography is encountered as a 'new' or 'alien' craft, and there is some discussion of the balancing act required to maintain both activities (smithing and photographing) in the creative moment in the forge, where there is 'risk' of damaging both camera kit and forged work. This balancing act can be found throughout the duration of the course as students look to maintain progress in their craft while responding to other demands within the course curriculum.

As noted earlier, in chapter 4, the general initial response to bringing the camera induction activity to the forge appears to be a positive one. Feedback collected from students at this point indicates that participating students enjoy the introduction, identifying the session as 'good' or 'fun', stating that they would be happy to repeat the activity. Sennett (2008, p.38) identifies repetition as a key element in the refinement of skill development, arguing that we need organised repetition to improve our skills, and that by improving our technique we are able to sustain our activity for longer without getting bored or frustrated. I can identify with this from my experience as a photographer, the volume of repetition in creating images or editing them in software reduced my working time as my technique improved. So too with my recent Morris dancing experiences. Time spent practicing on a regular basis with other dancers, if only once a week for a couple of hours, has allowed me to identify areas for improvement within my practice and to improvise when things go off track. Engaged repetition, as discussed by Sennett, appears be the key here. Disengaged or unmotivated activity would be a poor frame of mind to operate in. However, at this stage as a technical demonstrator working to support numerous courses across the college, there was little opportunity for me to repeat this activity with students.

With regard to this research these comments highlight a problem that provided the impetus at the start of this research, to wit a lack of repetition within the induction process. At the time of starting this research most of the student groups who would have had a photography induction would have experienced this as a one hit wonder early in their studies, usually early in the first semester if not within the first few weeks of their course. Considered alongside a barrage of other introductions (health and safety, IT, etc.) I think it's fair to say that this introduction could feel a little lost in the system. Adding to this was a feeling of a job half done, of an introduction that only looked at a small part of the craft, concentrating on the technical aspect of making images and not getting near the editing or sharing stages of the process, as discussed in chapter 1. These stages would have formed the basis for further sessions with this group had covid-19 not knocked all our planning out of the water. A revised version of this induction, tailored to suit the 'A' Level equivalent FE Art and Design program was introduced in the autumn of 2020. This program offered students the opportunity, over the course of three sessions, to make images out on location and in the photo studio environment, and to edit their images in the IT suite, offering a more rounded experience of the process. Eisner (2002, p.6) identifies the process of editing, in all art forms, as 'critically important', noting that the act of editing allows us to pay attention and attend to the finer details, to remove the rough edges from our work. Hurn (Jay & Hurn, 2009, p.84) voices the presupposition that if photographers load their cameras with film, it is so that they can share their images. I feel that there is an element of a job half done with regard to the processing of these images after the session at the forge, that we didn't extend the activity into the editing and sharing areas of the process.

Some identify the activity as having value in relation to their future activities: “Understanding that as a tool, how it works, it’s gonna be really useful,” Rutan (DS1:B22). This is certainly the intention behind this research, to encourage the early adoption of photographic practice within this group of degree level students. If participants feel that this activity will be of value to them as a useful addition to their skillset then this indicates a step in the right direction. As an educator, regardless of the designated role title (technical demonstrator, lecturer, teacher, *etc.*), I would always hope that the students with whom I interact perceive value in the information and activity that is being shared. For me, this resonates closely with Dewey’s (1902, p.17) notion of teaching as being the drive to share experience. I am also aware that I am motivated in some way by the deficits I feel that I experienced within my own education, a feeling that resonates with Bassey’s (2003, p.112) identification of his motivations for tackling worthwhile research as topics that have issues that excite or concern him, that light a fire in his belly.

Others offer a similarly positive response, while identifying that the lack of photographic practice in their creative activities creates a deficit in their practice, that a lack of images of their work is detrimental to them personally: “I think it’s really good because I never take any pictures whatsoever, and that is to my detriment completely,” Silurian (DS1:B7). Silurian’s comment about never taking photos could be viewed as surprising considering the ubiquity of recording media, the introduction and rise of the smartphone having led to a surge in the volume of photographic images generated on a daily basis, but it serves to remind us that just because the technology is available not everyone is engaging with it. These responses suggest that, by offering an induction in this format (instruction/action/discussion) a conversation on the value of the activity can be opened, in addition to the production of a genuinely useful artefacts in the form of the recorded image.

Some respondents describe the activity as being “alien” to them (K-9, DS1:B11), and my Multiple Coders detect a level of anxiety and discomfort present in the feedback. Sennett (2008, p.6), in reference to Arendt, defines the ‘great teacher’ as one who unsettles and invites argument. For me this chimes with my experience of fine art education at degree level, and most of the teacher training I’ve had has included a direction to ‘push’ students out of their comfort zone to encourage their learning. Silurian and K-9’s comments suggest an awareness of their own practice, and an idea of what sits within their practice and what may be missing.

The playful nature of the activity is addressed in some of the feedback. My intent here was to offer a technical introduction to photographic practice that retained an element of play and experimentation that didn’t get stuck in a dry discussion of camera settings. “I’ve used cameras before but it’s nice to be shown how to use a camera properly and then have a chance to play around with it,” Ogron (DS1:B23). There is an echo here of Sennett’s (2008, p.269) discussion of the open space for play in childhood and the beginning of a dialogue with material objects and a nod to Daniel’s (2001, p.162) discussion of Bernstein’s ‘collected’ and ‘integrated’ approaches to the curriculum. The framing within this induction could be considered as operating within a ‘productive aesthetic code’ with a view to seeing what creative photographic imagery the participating students might produce before moving on to address important elements that may be missing in the results. Undirected there is the opportunity for some students to surprise with the quality of the images produced, however others will struggle to create usable images as they don’t know what they are looking for. This in turn raises the question of how do participating students get to know what to look for? Hurn (Jay, 2009, p.85) identifies a handful of key elements integral to the creation of photographic stories, images that offer scene setting, activity, relationships, details, and portraiture. Future iterations of this induction activity could look to include a more guided approach to the type of images generated, with explicit instruction to look for images that set the scene or record an activity. Either way, regardless of whether the intended outcomes from the activity are going to be

prescribed or open to interpretation the real-world experience of implementing this activity is likely to involve a compromise between the two theoretical standpoints (Dewey, 1902, p.15).

I'm looking to pitch this introduction at an easily accessible level. As a technical demonstrator all I want from this session is to see the students engage with the camera kit and to start making photographs. As a rule, if they turn up for the induction, pick up a camera and generate even one image, then that session could be considered a success, albeit in a very thin form. Induction sessions become more interesting for all involved the larger the number of images created and the deeper the discussion relating to how these images can be altered and improved, especially if participating students get involved with the process and generate images in volume. Uelsmann's (Clear, 2018, p.141-142, & Bayles & Orland, 1993, p.29) story of the value of quantity vs quality in photographic production is relevant here, and a similar experience was recounted by an apprentice/journeyman blacksmith at a masterclass, of being tasked to forge a hundred spoons, of which only the best one was retained, and being sent back to forge another hundred with the aim of producing ten acceptable spoons. The activity is repeated until the smith is capable of producing a level of consistently good quality with each item produced, a development of technical skill and the ability to critique the work produced. I encountered a similar ethos with the demands of the souvenir photography I was involved with on the cruise ships and at schools: the results should be consistent across the board with no deviation except for the change of subject; lighting, exposure, framing should all be the same from one image to the next. Sennett (2008) devotes an entire chapter of *The Craftsman* to a discussion of quality driven work and the qualities of character needed by the practitioner to pursue a 'vocation'. Importantly Sennett identifies that practice cannot be static, that for craftsmen to improve their routines and patterns must evolve. For me personally I found moments where I felt stuck within my practice. The top-down demand for consistent image production moved from being a challenge, a puzzle to figure out, towards a chore as its novelty wore off. There wasn't enough variety within the activity. Towards the end of my career as a cruise ship photographer I felt creatively flat.

I'm happy even if someone takes a single image, announces that they hate the activity or the kit and hands the camera back. Identifying that you don't like the process is ok, but there is a demand for a documentary process within the degree level programs. If you, as a student, can't get on with this photographic process then enlisting the help of others who are capable would be a wise move. Having a go is the important thing here, and removing the barriers in the way of that go is an essential part of the educator's role in this process. I want to make this easy. I am reminded here of Kessell-Holland's statement "a rising tide lifts all boats" (IPFREC, 2023), in my opinion a call to make technical education interesting, accessible, and above all meaningful and worthwhile.

Time appears as a concern with regard to the acquisition and development of skills and in relation to the demands of the course. I touch briefly on the issue in chapter 1, in relation to how some of our students struggle to accommodate the volume and variety of work they encounter on the degree level programs. Anyone expecting to spend three years of study 'just making things' in the workshops will be in for a surprise. First year students are expected to engage with research, both theoretical and practical, and to attend introductory technical sessions aimed at broadening their exposure to a range of skillsets, materials, and processes. Somewhere in this mix sits this photography program. Zygon voices their frustration with the photo session at the forge as being a "bit time consuming" (DS1:B21), an activity that takes up some of their valuable time in the forge, and that the camera adds an extra element of unnecessary or unwanted work as it involves "more of a process" (DS2:D56), especially when employed in the workshop environment. Stepping out of one workflow to engage with another can be difficult, as some of the participants acknowledge, "it's a bit difficult trying to take the photos of your work without

burning the material," The Master (DS1:B16). I would expect this to be especially true when participants are actively trying to learn two new skills at the same time.

The acquisition and development of skills were the intended focus of discussion. More explicitly the question I asked myself was, what can I as a photographic technical demonstrator offer in the way of workshops and technical sessions to help the students develop their photographic practice. In relation to the acquisition and development of skill some participants in the study express a desire for more in the way of "basic skills… a photography lesson would be good," Rutan (DS2:D6). Others offer a response along the lines of "I don't know what I don't know," Silurian (DS2:D1). This isn't quite in the same ballpark as Donald Rumsfeld's, 'known unknowns' comment, although it indicates a degree of self-knowledge on the part of the student in relation to the extent of their practical knowledge. I don't however want to be the only one driving these learning activities forward. There are lots of exciting photographic projects and processes out there, identifying the ones that will be of genuine interest and use to this course group are what I'm looking for here. My motivation for offering this up in the form of a group discussion stems from Coffield's *All you ever wanted to know about learning and teaching…* (2009, p.40), that 'students want to be more active and involved' in their education. I understand some of the demands on their time and I don't want to add additional irrelevant factors. However, at this stage we have only scratched the surface of photographic practice and not really engaged with the latter stages of the processes involved.

There is a consensus in the expression of busyness and of finding enough time to cope with the course requirements alongside additional demands: "We're constantly busy…but when you get to the point where someone chucks something else on top of that and on top of that…how will I manage it, what can I do first," Sycorax (DS2:D69). Sycorax highlights an issue concerning available time and the demands of coursework. There may be a concern over a perceived increase in the volume of additional elements added to the core studies of the chosen subject area. Sennett (2008, p.265) highlights the unfortunate nature of the modern-day craftsman as beset by demands external to the craftsman's vocation. It is no longer enough to be or do just one thing. However these additional demands within the course are not there as filler, to keep the students busy. Dewey (1902, p.17) asserts the powerful drive within education to pass on hard won knowledge and experience. Thus there are strong motivating factors that lie behind the inclusion of contextual theoretical studies, modern art history, 3D CAD instruction, and in this research, an introduction to photographic process. We, as teaching staff, know the value of what we are teaching from our own experience and in relation to potential career demands for our students. The questions raised relate to how the students perceive these elements and how will they cope with the demands made on their time. A possible solution to this issue arrives in the form of requests for photography sessions that are offered "little and often" K-9 (DS2:D50) and "as long as it's like short sessions I think it should be fine," Silurian (DS2:D13). K-9 and Silurian's indication for short sessions is fine, but it may be harder to offer a repeat of introductions due to timetabling concerns, as noted earlier.

Concerns about balancing the activities in the forge resurface in the second set of discussions. Missy (DS2:D9) mentions a feeling of trepidation on taking a camera into the workshop environment despite prior photographic experience, stating that "going into the forge with a camera was a bit like 'oh Christ', I have to remember all this stuff and I kind of have knowledge of it already." Others return to the discussion of becoming distracted from their primary activity. "I'm worried about taking a picture while I'm forging a piece… is the photographing of it going to mess me up in the forging of it?" Sontaran (DS2:D67). The problem identified here is of finding a balance between the two crafts, a sweet spot of practical knowledge and practice where the craftsman may be able to move between the crafts without disruption to the production process. This may involve a practical knowledge of the smithing process involved that would allow the smith to identify key stages in their making process and be able to turn to

another craft to document these stages. This may also therefore involve a knowledge of the photographic process and technique that would enable an easy switch to this practice. All of this may be harder if the student involved is relatively new to both disciplines.

This raises a question for me: is this "worry" linked to the camera kit I am encouraging the students to use or to the practice of documenting work photographically? The camera kits are owned by the college and not cheap, and at least one participant was visibly relieved to return their camera intact at the end of the session. However, the college has invested in these cameras for the explicit use of the students, and it would be a shame to see the kit unused, gathering dust on a storeroom shelf.

An alternative option to the use of DSLR cameras is presented, a feeling from some respondents that the use of a mobile phone's camera feature would be "more work friendly… if you're busy forging and you need a photo you can just quickly take out, take a picture" Davros (DS2:D55) and that this would limit the disruption between the forging and photographic activity (figs 51 & 52). Within these conversations there is some discussion of using smartphones and a 'basic skills' workshop on phone use may be a good idea, something to dispel the notion that "although I can get some good photos on my phone, never gonna be able to adjust it properly," Ogron (DS1:B23). This isn't entirely accurate as there are apps that will allow the user to operate a smartphone like a camera, offering greater control over the phone's camera settings, however the two tools (smartphone and DSLR) are very different beasts in terms of capabilities, operation, and limitations. In addition to this, and from personal experience, the thought of running a technical session where every participant has a different make and model of machine gives me the jitters, assuming that everyone attending even has access to a suitable smartphone.

Sontaran offers an overview of the intended outcome from this encouragement to develop photographic skills, that "That's what we're aiming for, getting a like standard practice to take pictures of your work, pictures of the process, almost so that it becomes like second nature," Sontaran (DS2:D61). "Second nature" is very much the aim of these sessions, to encourage the adoption of a skill to the point where it passes into our muscle memory and no longer requires active concentration to perform (Sennett, 2008). Repetition is the key here, something touched on with warmth in the expression of interest in 'having another go with the cameras' and uncertainty: "I don't know if we're gonna repeat this or anything or if we just borrow cameras and we will get better. But I don't think I'm very good at the camera professionally yet so… but I want to become good at it," Yeti (DS1:B12). Yeti expresses a desire to improve their abilities, a sentiment that resonates with Sennett's (2008, p.28) discussion of the motivated craftsman's drive for quality in their activity and work.

Figure 51 A student documenting work in progress with their phone.

Figure 52 Students documenting their work with mobile phones.

From the varied conversations in data set 4, I find discussion of the value of employing good photographic practice to record progress, a counter to the concern that this initial camera induction was time consuming and a distraction. Reflecting on their fine art degree experience and the value of good photography, specifically the better documentation of their final year, Brigadier notes the record of the first two years as being sub-par: "I've wasted my time by not doing the photography properly," (DS4:F3). In reflecting on the notion of wasted time in this context I can see two ways this concern may impact a student's study. First, if they are craft makers and are considering the documentation of finished works, then this is a form of procrastination that pushes the activity of documentation, the representation of process, progress, and achievement, to the end of the making process. This could be considered in a positive light as an effective way of making the most of time spent in the photo studio with a photographer, if that's the route you're going down. However by doing this the craft maker misses out on the benefit of repeated activity and exposure to the studio process. Second, considered in light of documenting progress, representing practice, and recording experience, then the other problem here is of an opportunity missed or squandered. There is no simple 'going back' for a second go. The value of an image can change dramatically over time. Considered at the point of generation there may appear to be little value in a series of images, especially when we are still in that moment. The images can be seen as 'snapshots', easily replaced or superseded by another image taken in the next moment. The further away we get from those moments in time greater the potential value the images can have.

Also in this data set there are mentions of the balancing act involved in teaching a craft, that "the reality is… teaching a craft is completely different from doing it… you gotta really understand it to be able to teach it," Nyssa (DS4:F65). Nyssa's comment highlights the value of Aristotle's (384-322 BC) concept of *Phronesis* and the application of practical wisdom. To teach a craft you really benefit from a depth of experience and practice within that craft. This resonates for me with Sarason's (1999, p.2) and my own experience of starting to teach. Doing and teaching are two different practices, and assuming that someone can teach a craft because they have inside knowledge of the practice of that craft presupposes that they also have acquired, in some form, the abilities required to teach it. Teaching is a skilled practice in its own right. I'm reminded here of a divide within my Morris dancing group, between those who can dance a particular dance and those who can also explain and/or lead it. When I started learning with this group I would ask the more experienced dancers how a dance went. Often the reply came "I don't know until the music starts". Once the music starts embodied *Somatic* memory, discussed by Eisner (2002, p.19), takes over and the dancers (usually) follow the set pattern and calls for the dance. Leading/calling and teaching a dance calls for a level of observation and critique on the part the leader. When we practise, we are dancing in the presence of others. The experience and expertise within the group is shared. Sennett's (2008, p.54) master craftsman is embodied by the squire, a physical master and the authority within this space. There are rules that operate here. By tradition the squire's word is law, and the troupe dances the figures as called by the squire, however there are occasions where experience overrides the called instructions and the calls are questioned or ignored. Sennett, in reference to Deming, notes the value of collective craftsmanship (2008, p.31) and affirms the value to be found in an environment where people can talk frankly regardless of hierarchy.

Figure 53 Practical hands-on discussion and demonstration of making as part of a replication project.

The embodied element of teaching a skill is touched upon, specifically the value of manual touch: “when you touch something it's different in a way from when you just theorise. And the way you learn things, as we know, is by doing them,” Tegan (DS4:F102) (fig 53), a notion that resonates with Sennett’s discussion of touch and repetition, and with a comment made by a photography course leader, that “in photography learning happens with a camera in your hand.” While I agree with Tegan’s comments on the importance of learning through practical activity, their use of the phrase “just theorise” is problematic in that in that

it relegates theory to the position of a binary opposite to practice. Carr (1995, p.39) argues that theorising is a practice in itself, that in education 'theory is an indispensable dimension of practice.' Tegan's comment may be better understood if we were to replace the term 'theorise' with 'imagine' or 'fantasize'. The problem here isn't so much a lack of theoretical or practical knowledge, but rather an imagined understanding of how a process might work or an outcome could be achieved.

I find myself returning to an explanation of teaching and instruction as one that works in three phases: from the perspective of the tutor the sequence is 'I do, we do, you do,' a simple set of steps to ensure the acquisition and development of knowledge, and the observation of achievement. The key element here is of process and practice worked through together. Possible poor scenarios are linked here, Tegan noting that "if you don't open that door on skills, they're doing it blind and they're going to end up with… homemade solutions," (DS4:F105). These comments are from a conversation on the way the delivery of skill changed in art college workshops, a paradigm shift that saw long term technical staff resistant to 'skills workshops', viewed as the domain of technical colleges, move to a hands-on approach in delivering access to tools and processes. There are two potential outcomes to the "blind", or uninformed and unsupported, application of skill as noted above, the first a "homemade solution" that may be not good, or worse, not safe, the second a disengagement with the craft activity, especially when good results are not achieved immediately. Some processes move the work through an ugly phase where it is easy to be disheartened.

Finally, a word on skill from a respondent who is both educator and craftsman: "The skills on their own are worthless. It's how you use those skills that actually give them credence," Harry (DS4:F32). This is a clear indication from a craft maker and tutor of the importance and value of *phronesis* and *savoir être* in the context of arts education and can be linked directly to Sennett's discussion from the start of the Craftsman. As Rogers (1961, p.7) puts it, 'be the rifle, not the ammunition wagon.' Acquiring a raft of technical skills is all well and good, but what we do with them is what matters.

2: Developing an eye. Getting your eye in. "a good way of analysing what we're doing"

This section deals with feedback that appears to be concerned with the development of an eye for good work. It touches on discussions about the 'purpose of the activity', the 'recording of mistakes', 'making comparisons', and 'gaining confidence' within a practice. Here too the notion of 'skillset and professionalism' is touched upon. Also, within this theme there are links to observation and the knowledge of 'how to look'. In other words the primacy of perception coupled with the ability to notice.

From the forge session feedback some note that the introduction of the cameras opened up possibilities to "step back" and observe the work in progress, both their own and the work of others. "You're really often concentrating on what you're doing, you concentrate on the work as it happens, and so taking a step back and getting behind the camera lens and watching other people's work… It really made you focus down, I really enjoyed that," Krynoid (DS1:B15). Others identify that "being in that environment with the camera, helps you to look at it (the work) in another way," Missy (DS1:B4). Does this photographic opportunity offer the students a chance to engage with their practice, their community, and their environment in a critical observational fashion? These students are already part of the story (*David Hurn: A Life In Pictures*, 2017) and will have some insider knowledge of the practice (Dunne, 2005, p.152). The implication from the above quotes is that this specific activity introduces another way for them to engage and act within the forge. The question is as what? There is a possibility that the engagement comes in the form of acting as an active and critical observer, more than acting as a passive observer. Dewey (1934, p.22) notes that the transformative effect of fully engaging within an environment leads to 'participation

and communication'. The activity shifts from smithing to photography, and the participants have the opportunity to turn a critical eye on the practice of their fellow students, something they might not usually have time for in the normal run of things. Does this possibility also draw attention to the shared environment and community aspect, or *communitas*, of the learning environment?

Ways of working in relation to the forging activities are expressed explicitly by one participant, noting the timing of the camera session as being on a day where the activity focused on generating a set technical piece. By delivering the camera induction on the Wednesday I was coinciding with a technical exercise that focused on the process of making tongs, or to paraphrase the demonstrating tutor 'we teach process not product', adding that when you understand the processes involved you can apply them to anything you want to make, whereas 'if we only teach you how to make tongs you'll only be able to make tongs'. I was delighted to hear this acknowledgement of a problem within technical instruction, and I see a clear link to the concept of *praxis* here. Had I been able to deliver my session on the Friday I would have missed this moment, encountering instead the smiths working in "a creative way… an experimental way, as opposed to on set pieces" and that in addition to this they "were all part of what we were doing, like taking a step back, looking at what we were making, where we're going next, taking a photo… a good way of analysing what we're doing," Missy (DS2:D14). Missy's comment confirms that there is a level of photographic practice already present within this group of students. The value of a two-pronged approach to teaching a craft is notable here. The technical sessions are there to help build proficiency, the raw ability refined through repetition to form a skill (Sennett, 2008, p.37). The creative sessions are there to balance these technical sessions, offering room for playful engagement with materials and process and expanding the artistic horizons of the students. Lean too heavily towards the technical side and there is danger of everybody making the same proscribed work. Without the technical sessions there is no solid foundation of skill for the student to build on and the work becomes far harder to realise. The two approaches complement and support each other, an echo of Dewey's (1902, p.15) discussion of theoretical standpoints and compromise.

Figure 54 A series of attempts to replicate the twist at the base of a forged bottle opener.

This reflective and analytical approach, supported by photographic 'work in progress' images, appears in discussions that link to the evolution of a practice and the importance of assessing progress and mistakes (fig 54). "Take a look at what you've done the weeks before and how you can evolve those pieces… if you've got mistakes… look at what's bad about it, you can kind of adjust and learn from your mistakes and your successes," Foamasi (DS2:D25). Data from this study suggest that being able to turn a critical eye on work, both your own and that of others, is a key element to developing a practice, and the more you understand a craft or practice the greater your appreciation for 'good' work (Sennett, 2008). One caveat with this increased knowledge would be the focus on good work that is perceived through a negative filter. We may be so involved with the making of a thing that we only see its faults and imperfections. Ice Warrior recounts a conversation with a friend regarding a pair of scissors that they (Ice Warrior) had made. "While he was like getting really excited about them, I was like there's so much wrong with them… people don't notice them things… because they don't know about blacksmithing," Ice Warrior (DS2:D48). Creative craft makers may be very finely attuned to imperfection in the objects they create, and this is an ongoing area of concern and argument regarding notions of good versus perfect work, as well as Sennett's (2008, p.20) assertion that 'as skill progresses, it becomes more problem attuned.' Further to this each imperfection may be regarded as a 'failure' by the craftsman (2008, p.46). We need to make mistakes in order to learn. Fear of failure may stop us from attempting to learn in the first place, and an aversion to recognising and acknowledging our mistakes would inhibit the development of that critical engagement. Ultimately Sennett identifies characteristics belonging to the good craftsman as including the ability to avoid perfectionism (2008, p.262).

Questioned overtly about their photographic practice towards the end of the summer term the participants take a more reflective stance in their responses. Time spent "reflecting on some of the coursework" brings the realisation that "the whole thing is to change our perception of everything, isn't it? And I think a lot more people have taken the time out to maybe reflect more on what they're doing," Zygon (DS3:E38 & E39). Zygon's response here is aimed at the course as a whole and resonates with Eisner's (1993) discussion of education as a mind making process. Also of note is their assertion that "I do find myself looking at things in a different way... when I take a photograph," Zygon (DS3:E37). For me this comment chimes with my experience of degree level fine art education, a drive or indication to broaden our thinking about the activities we were involved in, to engage with the world in a way that is, as Eisner (2002, p.19) puts it, more complex and subtle, or as Biesta (2018, p.13) argues as 'a human being with an altered outlook'.

This difference in perception is also noted by another, that their interest in lighting had been the main focus for them recently, exploring how to apply light to their three-dimensional work to improve "image clarity" and "create shadow and contrast," Vervoid (DS3:E1). "That was another element that was really interesting to look at… (what) lighting brings is the shadows. The object itself casts… negative space. I suppose you'd call it… that something you… wouldn't usually look at unless you've got that inquisitive mind that wants to… try and do something with that space that's created," Vervoid (DS3:E4). Vervoid identifies an aesthetic change in their perception. This open, inquisitive, and purposeful way of looking resonates with Fox's (*The Art of Japanese Life*, 2017) discussion of the Japanese arts of ikebana and calligraphy, that there's a considered approach to the act of observation that informs a practice.

Part of this increased reflection can be attributed to the restrictions imposed upon us by the first national coronavirus lockdown of 2020. Everything that would have been experienced in person at college had to be shifted online. Practical making and critique sessions, as mentioned earlier, had to be presented in a virtual format, a situation that emphasised "the need to photograph and take better photographs of my

work… and some of the work that you've done with taking photographs and how to take photographs in different lighting conditions and better photographs has really helped and become important to my practise, not only in photography but as part of my wider craft," Krynoid (DS3:E121). This understanding of a "wider craft" and its component parts is elaborated on by Krynoid, their discussion turning from their growing awareness of the limit of their photographic knowledge, that they'd "seen other people doing it, but hadn't understood it… I have naive notions about you just make beautiful things and then you take pictures on your phone and it all works out," (DS3:E123), to a concern regarding the time involved in their studies in pursuit of developing a practice "because we get three years of this and then we're out… three years is not enough time to make a smith," (DS3:E132). This temporal concern is touched on by Sennett (2008, p.58) in his discussion of time spent in learning a craft, in the context of the medieval workshop and the craftsman's journey from apprentice to master. The figures quoted by Sennett indicate a journey that requires seven years for an apprenticeship, with a further five to ten years to reach the level of Master. It would be hard to draw a distinct boundary as to where Krynoid's three years sit within this timescale. The smithing course draws students from the age of eighteen years up and accepts applications from those who are treading both academic and vocational routes, alongside mature students looking for a career change. The key requirement here is that students are expected to engage with the activity, materials, and processes (Sennett, 2008, p.20).

There is something else of value beyond the discussion of time spent in learning a craft in Krynoid's comments above, their "naive notions" of creating good images and developing a craft. Much of Krynoid's discussion from data set 3 touches on the disintegration of naive and ill-informed notions regarding smithing, creative practice, and community. I think there is something of value here, of recognising the intellectual journey that occurs as students move from a state of enchantment with a practice or type of work to a deeper appreciation of the craft. This, for want of a better word, 'enlightenment' happens as we engage with a craft, through practical experimentation or theoretical interest. From the starting point of an enchanted viewer with no insight or insider knowledge of the making of the thing we may move over a sequence of very rocky stepping stones before we reach a point of informed delight. An example from my own experience: *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope* (1997) is possibly the very first film I saw at the cinema. I was enthralled. The story lived on in my head, through comics, books, toys, and play with friends. For a long time I was completely enchanted, with no understanding of how this film came to be made or why it was so successful. Fast forward to my degree level film studies and a period of unease as this film and its sequels were analysed and discussed. I was concerned as to the representation of the bad guys as being British. Curiously this is the only film where I am not bothered by the inclusion of the Wilhelm Scream, possibly because I heard it here first. None of these opinions are set in stone however, and I recently find myself in a place of appreciation once again, enjoying the craft that went into the production of this movie and the mythology that surrounds its production. Considered as a journey, this process of understanding resonates for me with Kessell-Holland's theory of the craft line, as presented in conference (IPFREC, 2023). Inspired by Kessell-Holland's presentation, I offer this illustration of the journey from enchantment to delight (fig 55).

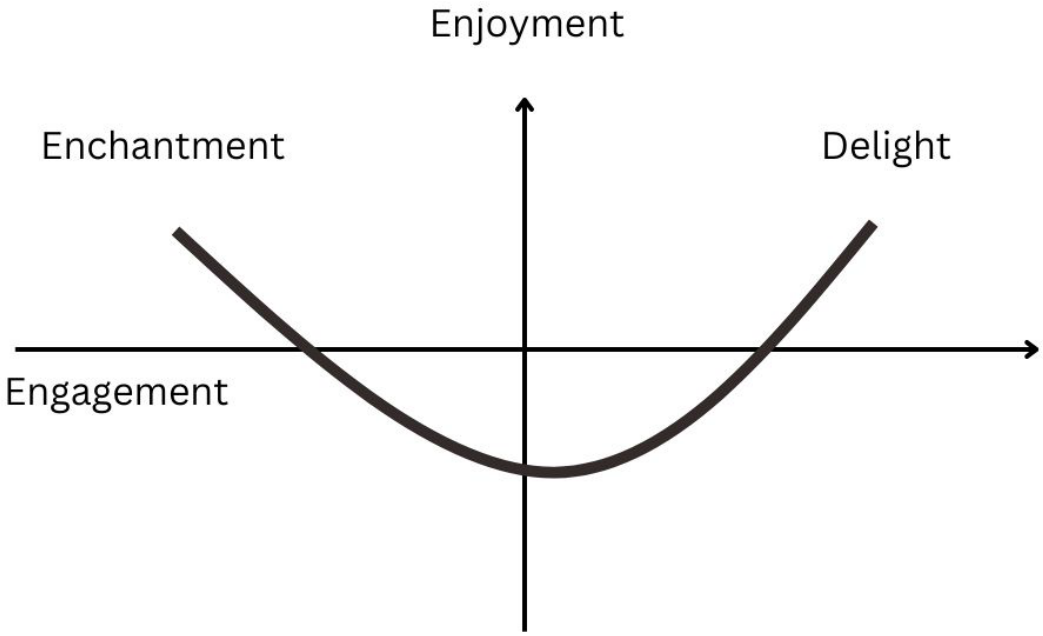


Figure 55 From enchantment to delight.

From the conversations in data set 4 there is insight into teaching practice. From the viewpoint of an arts graduate, Brigadier expresses the notion that "no one wants a tutor who's just telling them like, 'oh, I love what you've done'… that's useless to me… How can I improve from being told I'm doing well?" (DS4:F8). There is a need for constructive criticism, for critique, for critical help in identifying gaps and weaknesses in a practice or craft. From a teaching perspective and faced with students who exhibit an overconfidence in their practical abilities, Nyssa notes that "it's difficult because you've got to let them crash… it's quite hard to… watch because, you know… it's just gonna be a nightmare where it's completely crashing and… completely melting down. And then… it's building them back up," (DS4:F71). There are two things at play in these conversations. The desire on the part of Brigadier to see their practice improve, and the acknowledgement that there may need to be difficult conversations ahead to see those improvements take root in their practice. This same desire for improvement is evident in the discussion with Nyssa, but here the focus is on seeing improvement in the practice of others coupled with the recognition that this may be an unsettling and uncomfortable experience for their students. There is something here that reminds me again of Sennett's discussion of the unsettling nature of education (2008, p.6). If we are to improve our skills and practice, then here is a recognition that we may need to get comfortable in uncomfortable spaces, a practical and pragmatic approach to difficult situations.

Also in these discussions we find an insight into the constant nature of practice, that "there's congested times of making and there's long periods of time where I'm not making but I would say on a regular basis what I am doing is thinking… I am thinking about practise. I am researching or collecting images or being aware or making a note of things in between those making periods," Peri (DS4:F42). Peri notes an immersion in their practice, that it is a constant element in their day-to-day activity even though it may not appear so from outside.

3. Documenting Progress "That's gonna be brilliant because I want to document my work."

The initial reaction to ideas of documentation, specifically representing creative activity, 'movement in materials', and progress within a craft appears to be generally positive. "That's gonna be brilliant because I want to document my work." Ogron (DS1:B23). I would expect here that most participants are considering documentation in the form of photographic evidence and not so much in the wider remit of image, text, audio, and video collection that could be used to build a stronger account of their progress.
"I think it's a good idea that… you can see your progress, you can see everyone else's progress which is cooler." K-9 (DS1:B11). K-9 is the only participant within this group who talks overtly about preferring to document other people's practice, although within each of the year groups that I have worked with there tends to be one or two keen photographers who take images of their friends working when the opportunity arises.

Although documenting work is referred to as an essential part of the coursework by teaching staff the use of camera kit in the forge environment is described by some participants as an additional option, something out of the ordinary either because of opportunity: "It's nice being able to record stuff in the forge, I didn't think I'd have the opportunity to do that sort of thing," Sycorax (DS1:B14), or finding time within the working day: "So we can capture the moments while we're working because we don't normally get a chance to while we're working because, wells, heads down," Auton (DS1:B20). Auton and Sycorax raise an interesting point in their evaluation of the expected activity within the forging environment. Their comments imply an understanding of the activity within the forge to revolve exclusively around the production of work at a pace that leaves little room for anything else. These comments suggest an immersion in the practice of smithing within the forge, and I wonder if this immersion is deepened through an understanding of the forge as a space dedicated to this as its primary activity. Do the students feel that there is little room for other creative activities within this workshop because they are so focused on one craft?

Critically the importance and value of "mistakes" starts to be mentioned in the feedback. "It'd be nice to have something to show for the steps you went through, and then sometimes even the mistakes you've made… I think it's tempting to kind of hide that stuff. I think it's better to be able to show that so you can see how far you've come and improved and stop making those kind of mistakes," Foamasi (DS1:B24). Foamasi highlights a recurring concern within the collected data, of work not being good or 'pretty' enough to be recorded. "If I'm honest I don't think my work's in a place where I'm like 'yeah, record it for posterity, it might be useful later'… by the end of the third year I don't think I'll be looking to display any of my first-year work…. It's so new and slapdash and I'm still learning, and I've got so much to learn, and my time on the anvils is limited," Sontaran (DS2:D57). This idea of usefulness touches on a key question in the generation of images and the intended purpose or target audience for said images. Within the context of a creative arts education you could argue that there are two main desirable outcomes for images created by or for students:

1. images of work in progress (WIP), functional photographs that can be used as evidence of the development of a practice (processes engaged with, material characteristics explored, ideas tested, *etc.*). Critically mistakes should be recorded as part of this process. These images could be viewed as a form of ongoing formative assessment, allowing participating students the opportunity to record and critique their work, and to open up possibilities for reflection and discussion with tutors and peers.

2. portfolio images that serve to showcase the students and their craft in the best light. Within the context of the blacksmithing course these images fall into two distinct categories: glossy studio photographs that aim to show the detail of the object in a clear setting without any distractions and images of the work employed in a real-world environment. In both cases the images created here may serve as part of a summative assessment, and in many instances the visual representation of an object will be the dominant form in which the artefact is experienced.

Adding to the confusion in this mix is the possibility that some images may fall into either camp, for instance an image of a midway point that shows the smith working in the forge may be an excellent addition to a portfolio if it serves to inform the viewer of something about the smith and their craft. Further to this there are two possible destinations for images of work in progress, either in the student's creative sketchbook and journals as part of their creative artistic process (figs 32 & 33), or as illustrations of stages and outcomes within a process in their technical notebooks (figs 56 & 57).

Figure 56 is notable as it demonstrates an engagement with documentation that touches upon the embodied experience of the forging process (Sennett, 2008, p.152). This student has included sound effects with their drawings and written annotations that indicate the strength of the hammer strikes along with movement lines. The images and sound effects offer a deeper insight into the tactile making experience. Eisner (2002, p.2) identifies the human sensory system as a 'means through which we pursue our own development.'

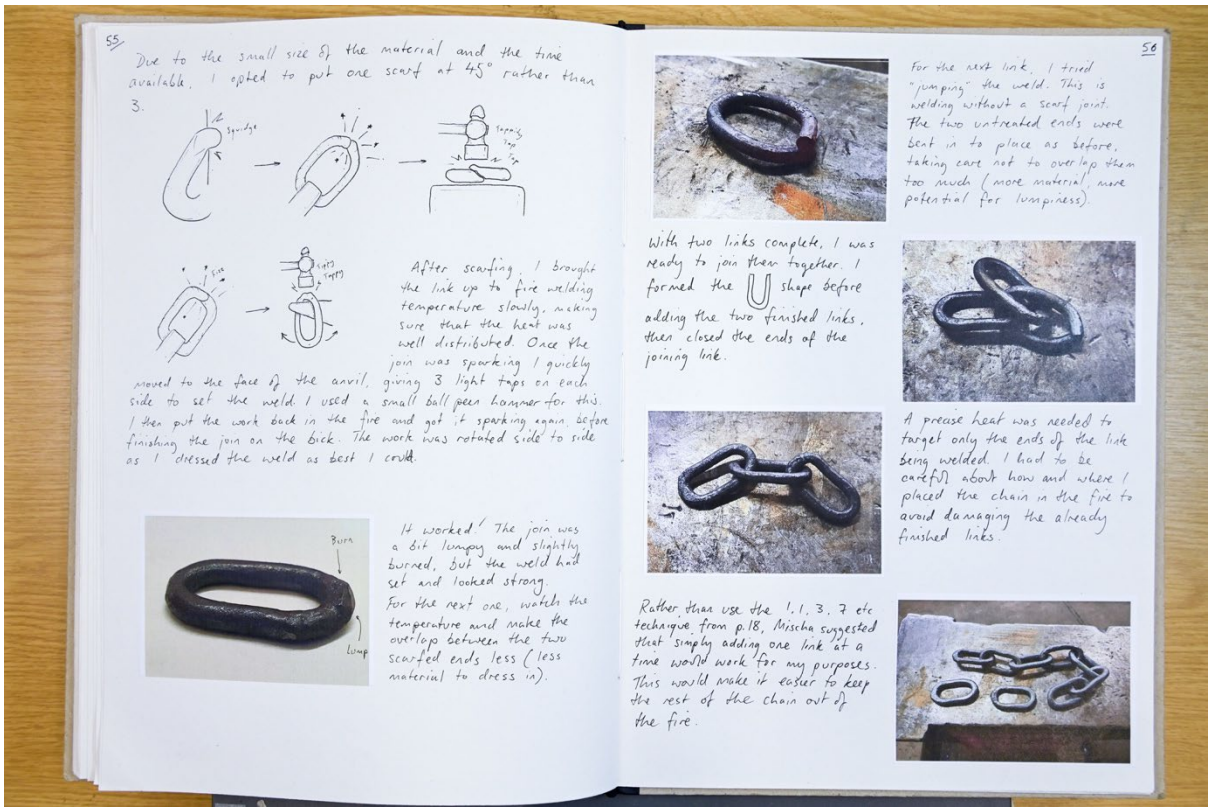


Figure 56 Example pages from a technical journal.

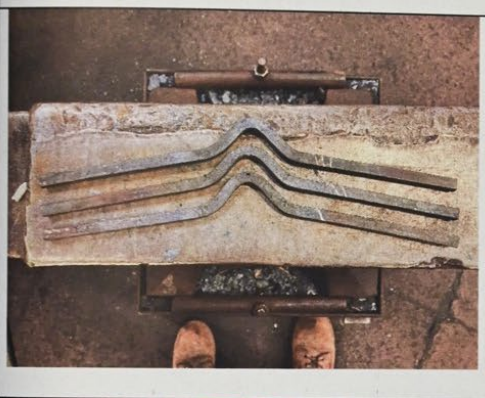
	Each of the three lengths was initially bent at 90 degrees on a centre mark.
	Further bends were added either side of the central bend.
	To hold the sections in place during fire welding, I made and used a simple clamp as shown in the photo on the left.
	After fire welding the three sections together, the final step was to bend over the welded sections to form the legs, and finally bend the end of each leg to form the feet.

Figure 57 Example page from a technical journal.

Regardless of where an image may be of use, the direction from teaching staff to students leans toward an instruction to produce work in volume. If arts education is about testing ideas, processes, and materials then the evidence of that testing should be abundant in the amount of writing, drawing, maquette building, and photographs the student creates (figs 58, 59, & 60). As a friend puts it, when it comes to looking for evidence in assessing the progress you've made in a project 'you want to be looking at it, not for it', a sentiment that resonates with Uelsmann's experimental approach to encouraging his photography students to generate work in quantity as a way to ultimately improve quality (Bayles and Orland, 1993, & Clear, 2018).

Figure 58 Contact sheets of images recording practice in the forge.

Figure 59 A technical journal mid-way through production.

Figure 60 A technical journal mid-way through production.

Within these discussions of documentation we also find the desire to open a dialogue between the smiths and a wider audience. “A lot of people don’t have a great idea of what we do here, so it’s a great opportunity to do that from the inside and really focus and pinpoint on what it’s like for us to work here every day,” Kroton (DS1:B9). Kroton’s comments echo Dunne’s discussion of insider knowledge (2005, p.152).

4. Visual Literacy “if you can get a good picture of sommat then, you know, it tells you a lot,”

From my discussions of the data with my multiple coders and the analysis of the data presented in set 1 we find a robust interpretation of the photographic image that touches on several concepts. These include the understanding of images as ‘functional’ versus ‘aesthetic’, and ‘candid’ versus ‘created’. There is consideration of the image as a way of ‘interpreting’ smithed work and ‘abstracting’ from it, alongside the use of photography to ‘isolate and enhance creative work’. Work ‘made’ for a photoshoot, ‘faked’ or created by ‘manipulating process to meet a desired outcome or external demand’ is touched on, as is ‘visual jazz’. In writing up these definitions I am aware that I run the risk of using a binary and oppositional framework where one doesn’t exist. Candid images don’t happen by chance, they are created. Functional images can be aesthetically refined. Essentially it all boils down to the idea that “if you can get a good picture of sommat then, you know, it tells you a lot,” Ice Warrior (DS1:B2). Ice Warrior’s comment is reminiscent of the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words, a notional ‘magic’ number that can be aligned with the ten thousand hours practice figure often incorrectly attributed to Sennett (2008, p.20). A good picture should tell you much more than “a lot”.

There are some clear links in the conversations between this sub-theme and the discussion of documenting progress, the ‘functional’ images touched on briefly above. Where the discussions become interesting for me is the expression of understanding in relation to the process of making an image and the intent and purpose attached to the photographs created. ‘Functional’ images may be well and good in the context of technical journal, the sole purpose here to show stages in a process or record outcomes from experiments, ‘’a quick snap, no thought in it or process… no care or attention given to it,” K-9 (DS2:D29). No one is worried about being marked on the quality of the images here.

Figure 61 An example of controlling shutter speed and exposure time to create drama in an image.

However an understanding of how interesting and arresting images can be generated appears in the data. Students recognise the potential for exciting images of them and their work. “I think it’s interesting because obviously you've got sparks flying everywhere so it kind of gives you an opportunity to use different shutter speeds to get the sparks in,” Davros (DS1:B6). From here there is the chance to explore camera settings and setups that will allow aesthetic experimentation, and this I found to be a two-way discussion. I know the photographic techniques we could employ to capture images with lots of sparks (fig 61), I must rely on the smith’s knowledge of their craft to identify processes that will generate the volume of sparks we want for the image. Not all smithing processes will look this exciting in real life. In a similar vein, while photographing Silurian at work in the forge for a promotional poster, we talked about the balance between documenting the work as it happens and manufacturing an image with more excitement to sell the event. Viewed with the trained eye of either a smith or photographer you may detect the artifice that goes into the making of the image, those who don’t have a deeper understanding of what they are looking at won’t be aware of it. The demands for visually exciting images for promotional purposes butt up against the desire to maintain good practice on the part of the craftsman. The sparks in figure 61 are for effect only and not an indicator of a successful fire weld. We return to the question of whether we should do something because we can ‘technically’ as opposed to whether we should do it because it is the right thing to do.

Figure 62 Frances Griffiths with the fairies, taken by Elsie Wright in 1917.

This idea of artifice reoccurs in the discussion of practice with Movellan. “Public trust the picture above everything else because the picture is just the picture, right? It's what you have in front of you. Whereas I think young people are a lot more aware that photos can be modified and photoshopped in a photo realistic way. Which means that pictures don't mean absolute truths anymore,” Movellan (DS3:E51). I question Movellan’s distinction of the understanding of modified images as the exclusive domain of the “young”. For me this understanding of visual literacy comes from the desire to know more about how we are being presented to, and is influenced by our active inquisitive quest for knowledge as opposed to passive consumption (my Media Studies ‘A’ level has a lot to answer for, as does my arts education). Anyone, of any age, who is looking to improve their photographic practice should come up against this increased awareness of the way visual images are constructed. From a historical perspective we could turn to any number of constructed or altered images as an example of this form of modification. In this instance I’ve included an image from the *Cottingley Fairy* photographs as an example (fig 62). There are five images created that belong to this set, all of which show fairies in various poses and activities, located in the back garden of Elsie Wright. The images were made between 1917 and 1920, becoming well known after they were used to illustrate an article written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Captured as single frames on a plate camera, the photographs divided public opinion as to their truth. We could return here to an earlier comment from Yeti (DS1:B12) about wanting to become ‘good at it’, a drive to improve practice and deepen knowledge. In this instance a deeper understanding of what you are looking at, in terms of photographs, goes hand in hand with a deeper insight into the process of image making, and a question arises in the form of how the practical application and engagement with a process informs the theoretical understanding of the craft.

Tools

The second half of this theme revolves around the discussion of tools, primarily the DSLR camera. Analysis of data set 1 produced three related sub-themes. These are:

1. Hands on experience of learning
2. Quality of tool
3. Camera as developmental tool

1. Hands on experience of learning

This sub-theme deals with the feedback that noted the 'hands on experience of learning' as an important part of the induction experience. Key phrases that occur here include the observation of 'activity' in the forge, the value in receiving 'instructions in the use of the camera' alongside 'permission' to use the kit in the forge, and discussions regarding 'access to the kit'.

The initial feedback from some participants, and one that I feel sits in parallel with the earlier sub-theme of gaining a new craft, relates to the experience of a practical physical introduction to the camera kits. The cameras are physically put in the hands of the participants as the first stage of this induction, the introduction to camera settings occurring at the same time as their initial exploration of the camera as a tool. Feedback from data set 1 indicates that this move has a positive impact. "It's good to… get to try out rather than just being told that we're allowed to book them out because then we get an idea of… what the tools are actually like," Judoon (DS1:B17). Sontaran's response is even more effusive: "Wouldn't that be awesome if I got one from the course while I was on the course and I could use this piece of kit that I really enjoy using because…it's great," Sontaran (DS1:B1). Sennett notes that 'touch delivers invasive, "unbounded" data', a far stronger experience than sight, and that the inquisitive and curious activity of touching something 'stimulates the brain to start thinking' (2008, p.152).

Critically this hands-on experience of being allowed or 'permitted' is held up as a key "confidence" booster in later discussions: "I wouldn't have taken… the time to start trying. Well, honestly… if it hadn't have been mentioned and I hadn't have had the play at the forge, which was the biggest sort of point for me… I feel like I would have messed up the camera. I would have dropped it. You know? I would have ruined it. I would have got it, like, damaged at the forge and be in trouble. Well, having them at the forge and like that first introduction gave me that extra bit of confidence to… be comfortable with the tool," The Master (DS3:E73). I'm reminded here of my experiences within the woodworking class at my primary school, of the freedom afforded to us to move about the workshop, selecting tools and offcuts from the bins to experiment with. Sennett (2008, p.269-272) notes that play exists in two 'domains', one relating to games and rules, the other to a more open space of sensory exploration. Sennett argues that 'play inaugurates practicing,' that the repetitive and modifiable nature of play allows us to develop a foundation for practice. Further to this play offers an opportunity to 'increase complexity' in a practice.

2. Quality of the tool

The 'quality of the tool' emerged in analysis of data set 1. The phrases linked to this sub-theme describe the handling of the cameras as 'nice' but 'complicated', a recognition or discussion of the benefits offered by the use of DSLRs in relation to image quality and experience, and a cautionary note on the 'expensive' nature of the kit.

The value of the tool emerges in two senses in the data. On the one hand participants note the benefits offered by using a DSLR, the value of improved image quality and the handling experience, especially when

compared to alternative options such as smartphones. In addition to this there is an enhanced sense of "purpose" when using the DSLRs: "You go out with the DSLR camera you're going out with the purpose. If you just take a phone… it's not the main purpose," Rutan (DS3:E93). Rutan's insight reminds me of Hurn's (2009) discussion of loading a camera with film as a purposeful act, an intent to record and communicate. The multifunctional nature of smartphones can complicate their use as a recording device, adding distracting elements and the possibility of interruption.

On the other hand the quality and value of the tool is registered in a financial sense, that these are good, and therefore not cheap, cameras that need to be used with respect. Some participants are keen to hand their cameras back at the end of the induction session, noting that they have never used anything so expensive to take pictures before. "One thing I'm quite wary of having the cameras you're supplying are obviously quite high tech and quite delicate aren't they, to have them in the forge environment with sparks flying and dust and that kind of thing, especially with other people's cameras I'm thinking 'oh God'… protectively… because it belongs to someone else I've got to be careful here," Zygon (DS2:D54). This wariness is notable in relation to Abell's (2018, p.156) definition of higher education students' perception of themselves as 'customers', and could be considered as an indication of a deeper understanding of cost linked to education. Rather than feeling entitled to use the college camera kits the participating students are wary of damaging them and incurring an additional financial strain. This runs counter to some of my experiences as a technical demonstrator, with numerous students who were unaware of the financial value of the equipment they were borrowing, the difficulties the department might have had in getting the funding to invest in the kit, or that they may be personally liable for loss or damages to said cameras. Zygon's comment on needing to be careful with the kit could also be viewed as an example of *praxis* in action, that of a wider concern for the needs of others. A damaged camera could mean that there is less equipment for others to use.

This sense of expense rears its head in a positive fashion later in a discussion with a participant who was making an inroad into broadening their practice. Having quizzed staff for recommendations on good, professional kit, they invested in a camera system to support their craft, noting that "I reckon taking that step… it was a bit of an expensive step, but it was definitely needed. And I'm glad I did it," Aggedor (DS3:E115). This chimes for me with Mosley's imperative to aspiring craft makers and artists to get a decent camera and learn how to use it well (2011, p.14).

3. Camera as developmental tool

Here the data analysis indicates an understanding of the camera as a 'developmental tool' and the practice of using the camera as a way of responding to or interrogating the world while conducting primary research. This is linked in conversation to the 'visual aesthetic' that some students are looking to develop and marks a departure from the use of the camera as a purely documentary tool. K-9 notes that while they rarely or never take photos of their own work they are happy to capture "things to inspire me," (DS2:D46). This is echoed elsewhere by other participants, and evident in the way that some students' studio desk spaces become filled with inspirational images that they have created, collected, and curated (figures 63 & 64). This drive to create photographic reference material or collect images for inspiration is echoed by Nimon, who expresses this growing interest in photography as having a knock-on effect: "getting interest in… film photography has started me using it as or trying to use it more as a primary research tool," (DS3:E27). The definition of primary and secondary research in the context of arts education is sometimes a little hard for some students to grasp. Some interpret primary research as little more than collecting interesting images by searching the web, browsing platforms like Pinterest, or employing generative AI programs such as Midjourney, missing the point that primary research should

involve your own personal experience. A preference for personal experience is touched on by Nimon: “I hate to look for pictures and try different keywords because I know what I want… with the taking the pictures… feel like I've got a lot more agency of my own research... I remember the day of being out and knowing what I wanted,” (DS3:E30) and “when I go out with the camera around the neck I feel like I'm out there to look at that and record stuff. It just sets you up in the right way. Don't touch on the phones… I've got the keywords in my head. You don't have to put into Google,” (DS3:E34). Sennett touches on the importance of first-hand experience in his discussion of unsuccessful architectural design, noting that ‘simulation can be a poor substitute for tactile experience’ (2008, p.43). Personal interaction with a location, item, or process offers a far broader and deeper experience, far stronger than the ‘framed’ images the eye can supply alone. This personalised and embodied experience is missed or neglected by students whose focus is on visual research collected through a computer screen.

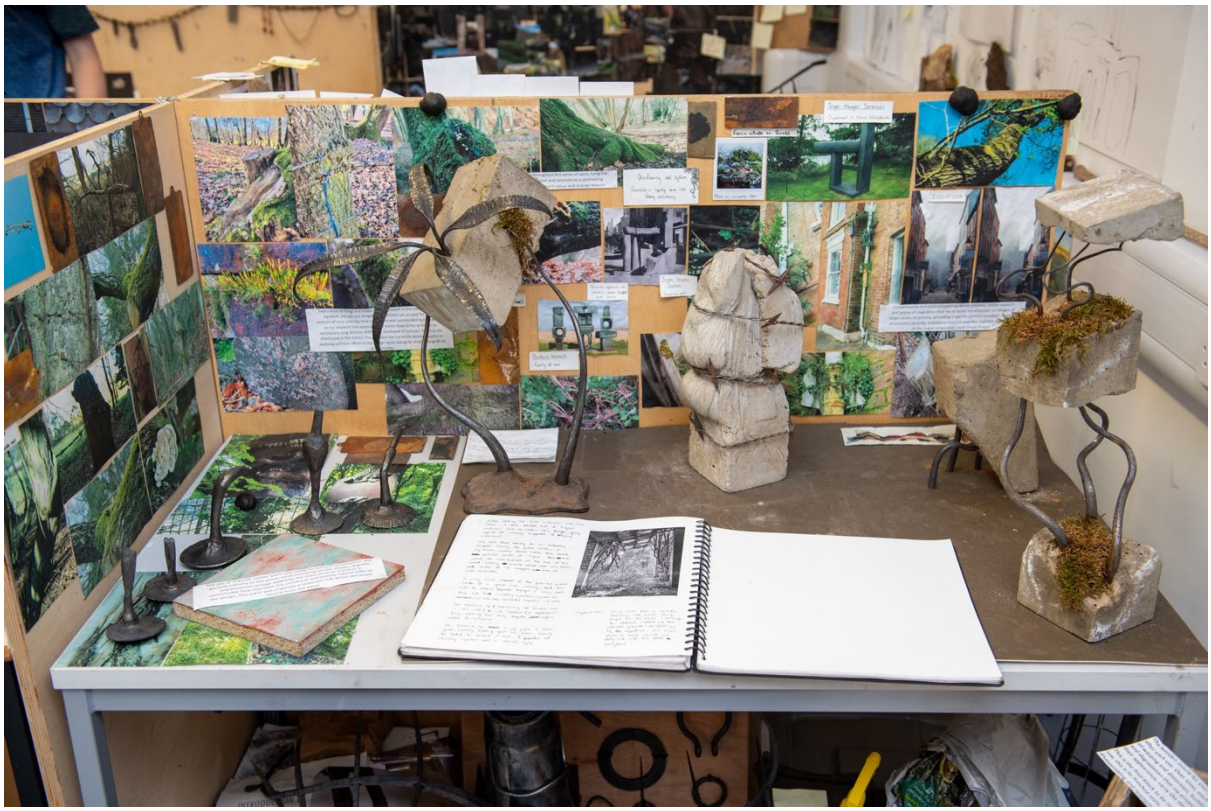


Figure 63 A first year desk space laid out for assessment.

Figure 64 An example of the use of desk and studio space at the college.

From my discussions in data set 4 Peri touches on the value of the camera and photographing work in aiding the design process, that "I'm almost sort of so involved in it I can't see it, but when it's photographed and I walk away from it and I see… that option in terms of the design composition, then… the decision is made easier. Because its slightly removed from my immersion into the piece itself… It becomes another eye here," Peri (DS4:F52). This description of being immersed in the work reminds me of a student who asked me to photograph a piece of their work, stating that they needed the images but had been so involved in the making of the piece they were too 'angry' to look at it. Within this process there needs to be time for separation, to step away from and reflect on the work being made.

Developing critique

1. A finding of this thesis is that an introduction to photographic practice can help in the development of critique. Photographic practice allows the participant an opportunity to engage with the observation of their practical work in a way that encourages active 'seeing' and assessment (Eisner, 2002).

A sensory experience

2. A finding of this thesis is that hands-on tactile experience of the camera as a tool is vital in the development of a photographic practice. Physical sensation has a direct impact on our ability to learn (Sennett, 2008, and Eisner, 2002). Theory and practice need to be brought closer together within the remit of practical education. (Dewey, 1902).

Community.

This section deals with data that touches on ideas of a community and is divided into three sub-themes:

1. Permitted activity within a designated space.
2. Sense of belonging to a creative community
3. Engaging with the wider world

1. Permitted activity within a designated space

Here the discussion with my multiple coders touches upon two ideas, namely 'permitted activity within a designated space' and 'stepping out of smithing workflow'. Both deal with the concept of activity within the workshop space.

The forge is a very specific workshop with its own set of rules, regulations, and expectations. By bringing the camera induction to the forge I am encouraging students to consider photography as a permitted activity within the workshop environment, and that the college will support this practice by lending them cameras. From my experience I note two things: the first relates to territory, the second to ideas of presence.

By entering the forging environment to teach photography I am stepping into someone else's territory. I'm working away from my home turf, and there is a necessity to develop a good working relationship with the staff who run this site. Within data set 4 there is some discussion of the territorial nature of workshops, and an uncompromising view of who is allowed to do what within these spaces is voiced by Tegan. The spaces are controlled and the activity is the sole domain of the resident technician or tutor, somewhat akin to Sennett's master craftsman (2008, p.54). The figure of the master craftsman as a dominant authority and the incarnate embodiment of skilled practice is to be found within this territory. One of the ways in which they can assert their dominance is through practical demonstration. When I first visited the forge in the early days of this research I coincided with a technical exercise in chain making. Students were instructed to produce a set of three links within a set amount of time. At the end of the session the chains would be stress tested to see what load bearing potential each student had achieved. Due to the competitive nature of the activity there was a small pot of money that would go to the body who made the strongest chain. Everybody gathered in the fabrication workshop next door to the forge to test their chains, staff and students competing together. Unusually, and possibly for the first time ever, a student's chain won the stress test, beating the chain made by the workshop manager. The manager then shot off to retrieve a chain made on a previous occasion to prove that he was still the best, although I believe the sweepstake went to the student.

Within this small event I find the importance of being in the presence of others. Assuming that this technical challenge may have been a first for many of the smiths in the forge, I expect that the pattern of work would have been a discussion and demonstration of the processes involved by the workshop manager in the teaching forge, following which students would have had a set amount of time to work on their links within the presence of each other and the teaching staff. Sennett's 'archipelago of workshops' would be alive with activity and interaction, with discussion of good practice and pitfalls to be avoided between staff and students. There would be a movement within the workshop as individuals connect briefly to form groups that critique and support each other before returning to work on their own chains. From my perspective, the clearest terms I can use to describe the scene is a lively, shared experience, of a sense of *communitas* within the workshop.

From data set 3 The Master voices a clear identification of the benefits of practical learning in the presence of others. Having started forging on their own for a year or two prior to joining the blacksmith course, it was only when they had a chance to be observed at work that the minor errors they were making could be picked up on. From a pedagogical perspective time spent observing another in their making allows the parties involved to identify practical mistakes. For The Master it was the angle at which they used their hammer that needed correcting to produce a smoother finish in their work. From my experience as a technical demonstrator I can cite numerous moments of small corrections to photographic practice, whether it is an adjustment of a camera setting, the way the student holds the camera, or a question of timing, that make a difference to the results generated. I'm reminded here of my first experience of taking images of holidaying couples in the restaurant on cruise ships. Observed to be struggling to get the desired results by my manager, he stepped in to photograph the next few tables in my section, demonstrating a practiced and effective approach that I was able to adopt. I'm also reminded of my disappointment on another ship when, dressed as a pirate for a themed shoot, I was chided by my partnered photographer for not being as dynamic or expressive as they had been when they'd been the pirate. They had been, according to them, 'brilliant' although they refused to back this statement up with any form of actual demonstration.

By demonstrating the camera kits and the practice of taking images within the forge I am (hopefully) legitimising and encouraging the adoption of this activity by the students. It is one thing to put the tools into the hands of the participating students, demonstrating good photographic practice within the environment and in the presence of these students should add credibility to the activity being promoted. This demonstration needs to be tempered with a change in the position of the demonstrator. These sessions would not work if I stayed in the centre ground taking all the images. From my experiences within the photography studio I recognised an improved involvement with my student groups if I moved away from the camera and lighting setups to allow them room to explore and play with the kit. Sometimes we need to give or be given the space and the permission to explore, so that in turn we may give ourselves permission to explore existing opportunities and imagine future possibilities.

Also within this discussion there is a mention of course related ownership of facilities, that the photo studios and darkrooms were the property of the photographic department and not to be used by anyone else. The forge can be viewed in a similar way as a specific facility dedicated for the use of blacksmithing students, and I have touched upon the notion that it may be seen as a space only for this purpose earlier. This view is not entirely accurate as the forge is used by blacksmith and farriery students on other courses, and is occasionally visited by art students from other degree programs, notably photography and illustration. This notion brings Eisner's (2002, p.12-13) discussion of seeing as an achievement to mind, that in reference to Dewey, we stop actively seeing once we have recognized and labelled something. It might not help that these spaces come predefined by their titles. I wonder if the problem here is more to do with the perception of what is allowed within a space rather than what may be possible. Daniels (2001, p.162-170), in reference to Bernstein (1977) and Gearhart & Newman (1980), offers an insight into two differing approaches to arts education within a school environment, linking the style of teaching to Bernstein's 'integrated' and 'collected' types of teaching. Daniels presents the two styles as opposites, but within the context of the forge and as discussed elsewhere in relation to 'technical' and 'creative' forging sessions, these approaches can be used in a complimentary fashion.

2. Sense of belonging to a creative community

Analysis of the data identifies a sense of community as an important sub-theme. Discussion of this with my multiple coders indicates the importance of belonging to and being aware of 'a creative community', especially the value perceived in the opportunity offered by 'learning alongside others', 'observing activity within a community of practice', and 'helping other students' with their craft. A 'candid view of the activity of others' is notable as a valuable element of the potential for supportive critique within the community's activities. Participants refer to the importance of 'understanding process as an insider', and the manner in which an 'art school way of learning' may affect their craft.

Figure 65 A visiting speaker demonstrating practice at the forge.

Some of the responses in the initial data set indicate a 'love' or 'passion' for the craft of blacksmithing, expressed in the desire of the participating students to maintain the health of the craft and its community. This desire to maintain the vitality of their chosen area of study is articulated as a concern for the future welfare of the craft, "because blacksmithing is a dying art. We need to stop it from dying. I think by taking pictures and showing people what we actually do is really good opportunity to get the word out about how great it is and get more people interested," Slitheen (DS1:B19). This sentiment resonates strongly with Dunne's (1995, p.152-153) definition of a practice where he describes how practice develops 'collaboratively and cumulatively over time' and how it is kept alive by its insiders, its genuine practitioners who care enough about the practice to develop it into the future, sometimes by challenges which may at the time seen 'dramatic or even subversive'.

This positive take on sharing the craft is balanced somewhat by a concern raised in the third data set regarding "hobby blacksmith crafters hurting the profession as a whole, because when you make something for a hobby you aren't doing it for money, so you can pull your heart into it and sell it for much less than it's worth which is the thing that's happening in blacksmithing," Krynoid (DS3:E144). Krynoid raises the spectre of varied levels of integration with and commitment to a creative community, similar to concerns I encountered while running my photography business. Time and energy spent acquiring skill in the pursuit of a financially viable career can feel undermined if the entry point to a craft is lowered, or those entering the industry as hobbyists and 'weekend warriors' simply do not need to rely on income from the craft in question.

Figure 66 Students assess progress in a replication project.

Other respondents note the value of working alongside others (figs 65, 66, & 67), of “having other people to talk to about what makes it good… which is the same for any kind of craft, isn't it? You know, when you're working within a group of blacksmiths… you pick up on what's good practise and you share good practise within your group. And so that having that community is really important,” Aggedor (DS3:E110). Aggedor’s comments offer a positive view of working with and alongside others. However they fail to specify whether this is a “community’ populated exclusively with blacksmiths or whether their net is cast wider to include other disciplines. A corridor conversation with Silurian, towards the end of their time at the college, highlighted the value they saw in a community comprising a mixed composition of practices, in this case within the teaching staff attached to the course. Elsewhere the benefit of having an external view offered of work in progress is noted: “You can’t always see what you’re doing in a piece of work whereas an outside perspective sometimes is one of the biggest key things,” K-9 (DS2:D47).

This external critical view is also touched on in the discussion of photographic practice, as is the dynamic role of the student turning to teach and being taught by their peers: “I think having someone there to kind of bounce back and forth… It really helps, be that tutor or someone that's good at taking pictures and you're not. So I've become more aware of my imagery when it comes to photography,” Aggedor (DS3:E109).

What may constitute good practice in relation to the development of community within a learning environment is touched upon in data set 4. Harry recalls an example of an “enhanced learning experience” where second and third year architecture students work together, noting that, “informally they've like built a structure where there's… a support from the third years down to the second years… So, in a sense… they're getting the teaching obviously from the normal conduit… but equally they build these relationships… with third years and then third years kind of showing them how to do stuff,” (DS4:F36). This community of practice, similar in in its operation to medieval guilds, offers benefits to both groups, serving to offer insight into potential future experience for those in the second year looking ahead, to reinforcing the practice and knowledge of participating third years, something that resonates with McGuire’s (2018, p.27) take on the value of teaching, that learning to teach a subject broadens and deepens the teacher’s knowledge of the material, and that therefore students should consider this approach in their studies. Brigadier makes a similar point in this regard, that it’s “like having two brains working on the same idea… instead of having that conversation in your head about that idea, you're constantly having a conversation with someone else, meaning you're kind of talking to the work in a way because you're talking to that person about it,” (DS4:F23). This also brings us to ideas on perception and idealised ‘perfect’ works. The *phantasia* or fantasy of an idea may need testing against another person’s critical perception.

Figure 67 Students across all three year groups engaging at a visiting speaker's masterclass.

It's not all roses in these discussions. The fluid nature of community within an educational setting is touched on briefly but critically by Brigadier, noting that "every year we changed tutor… you didn't build up a relationship... every year's a new person," Brigadier (DS4:F10). Contrast this with Sennett's discussion of the medieval workshop as an environment that would see craftsmen working, learning, and living together for years, or my somewhat nervous flight out to join a team on my next cruise ship, hoping that I would be working alongside a group that shared my values for the next few months. Sennett (2008, p.73) identifies the workshop as a valuable social space worthy of maintenance, noting that shared experience, ritual, and mentoring are all factors in creating cohesion with a community.

3. Engaging with the wider world

This section deals with data that indicate an interest on the part of the students to engage with photographic practice to offer a 'window into activity', touching on the value of 'sharing a craft' and 'showcasing work' for a wider audience. Interaction with 'social media' is mentioned, alongside 'promotional opportunities outside of the course' and therefore not purely for internal college related demands, and the notion that making images for these purposes may involve 'creating a spectacle for an audience', an audience in the wider public who may carry a 'perceived lack of knowledge about the craft'.

Feedback from the first session of data collection indicates a willingness on the part of some students to share an insight into their craft, offering "a blacksmith perspective of the workshop and stuff… a lot of people don't have a great idea of what we do here," Kroton (DS1:B9). This willingness to share extends to the promotion of the course itself, by raising awareness of the existence of the program, "because not

many people know about blacksmithing so I can help to boost the course" and to offer a glimpse of the activities offered to "give people a taste of what sort of things you'll be doing and what it will be like in the forge," Davros (DS1:B6).

The data relating to this drive to connect with a wider audience is split between educating and informing, a response to the 'perceived' lack of knowledge regarding blacksmithing in the wider world, and an articulation on the part of some participants of the need for self-promotion and necessity of imagery for this purpose. Silurian's comment, "we should be learning how to promote ourselves as well," (DS1:B7) is echoed in later discussions during the second set of data collection, with a suggestion that web design would be a useful addition to the topics covered on the course, and Krynoid's declaration that "it's not just enough to be a maker in one particular way, you have to be able to market yourself," (DS3:E122). There's an echo of Mosley's (2011, p.14) discussion of self-promotion here, coupled with Sennett's dismay that 'careers' have fallen by the wayside, pushed out by a skills-based economy that encourages the movement from one 'job' to another.

Others note the importance of the visual representation of a blacksmith and their practice, stating that "when I was doing… research at blacksmiths that I like, any the ones that didn't have like a picture immediately on their website… I would just turn off," Rassilon (DS1:B10). Rassilon's comment brings two issues to mind for me. First the need for promotional imagery to support the smith's career. Second the need for visual stimulation on the part of the learner. I'm reminded of my first encounters with art theory books crammed with dense text but devoid of images. I found them almost impossible to navigate.

Recognising the importance of imagery for self-promotion raises two further areas of consideration. The first links to the core activity of this research, the adoption of photographic practice to document a craft practice. By bringing the camera kits to the forge I hope to encourage the degree level students to start recording their craft, but I have to concede that they can't always be the ones taking the photos and may need to rely on others to assist them. Sycorax raises some of the issues inherent in working with others, stating that "there's a wariness of sharing a work in progress… When you're taking the pictures yourself you know everything about the work and you know when you're ready to show it… You know where you are on that journey, whereas if you were to present it to someone else… it's the confidence in how much you've done… I wouldn't let them take photos until I feel like I've done enough" and notes a "fear of being judged" when showing or sharing work with others (DS3:E23). These comments highlight an element of discomfort within community interaction and learning. Sennett (2008, p.57) in his discussion of the medieval workshop identifies the master craftsman as an authority figure who inspires fear, awe, and submission. While Brigadier might look for critical appraisal from their tutors and peers, others find a harsher level of response demoralising. Nimon touched on this in a discussion about connecting with a wider community through the use of social media, opting not to share their work as they felt too exposed to unfair or unwarranted criticism from people they barely knew.

Figure 68 A Country Blacksmith disputing upon the Price of Iron, and the Price charged to the Butcher for shoeing his Poney, JMW Turner, 1807.

The second area of consideration links to a 'perceived' external perception of the smiths and their craft. My initial impression of the blacksmiths I encountered when I started working at the college was of a predominantly 'lively' and 'excitable' masculine group. My first foray into looking for historical images representing the blacksmith produced a flurry of examples, all very similar to Turner's painting (Turner, 1807) (fig 68) and sharing common themes: the darkness of the forge and the intensity of the light from the fire, the inclusion of livestock and of horses waiting to be shod, a stereotypical view of the smith and their craft that proves difficult for some to shake off. Blacksmithing and farriery are two distinct crafts that are often misunderstood as the same thing. I found other misunderstandings after I completed my first round of research, on the SUNCETT MA short course program, when I had a chance to catch up with the participating students to discuss my findings. What I didn't expect was a discussion of the adverse stereotyping the students felt they were subject to, a general feeling of an unfair and inaccurate identification of their cohort as 'sweaty, hairy, macho biker blokes' who liked nothing more than hitting hot metal with hammers. This stereotypical view fails to accommodate any members of the group who identified as female, trans, non-binary, gay, or unbearded. The last of these identifiers, the lack of facial hair, was brought up by one student who remained clean shaven and slight of build, complaining of constantly being mistaken for a student from another course because they 'didn't look like' a blacksmith. I'm reminded here of Berger's (2013) discussion of Sander's (1914) photograph, and it's titling as *Young Farmers*. Research around the provenance and history of this image indicate that two of the men in the image were workers in an iron ore mine, while the third worked in its office (Green, 2019). I am also reminded of the invitation from a gang member to Patrick (2013, p.1) to come out with him on the weekend and see for himself what their life was like. If much of the preceding discussion in this chapter has revolved around the changing perceptions of the parties involved in this research, then here the

discussion turns to what may be known about external perception of the craft and its communities. Any stereotypical view of a group reduces and removes its complexity, deepening binary oppositions and divides in its perception. For something to be understood as complex it may need to be seen, represented, or experienced.

If creative crafts people are to retain some control of their identity they may need to actively engage in their own representation, hoping to broaden that wider understanding and insight into what it means to be a blacksmith, artist, photographer, *etc*. The *{Queer} + {Metals}* exhibition (2021-2023) sought to open up the view of smithing, showcasing a set of works from LGBTQ+ blacksmiths and looking to open discussion about queer identity and metal working, and included exhibits from "blacksmiths, sculptors, jewellers, farriers, welders, machinists, activists and performers". In some cases, all of these descriptors could be applied to individual exhibitors. Moore's work *Pagoda II* (2022), exhibited as part of this show, is included here as an example high quality craftwork coupled with good presentational photography (fig 69).

Figure 69 Pagoda II by John Moore, exhibited at {Queer} + {Metals}.

From the conversations recorded for data set 4 there is one very clear discussion of the hazards of engaging with social media while looking for other artists as sources of inspiration. I'm including the whole quote because it feels important within the context of a creative career and practice. "I followed someone on social media who is absolutely amazing and they've had a career in fine art photography for over 10 years and they're just really successful in what they're doing, and I've learned a lot through their tutorials as well about how and what and when to do with self-portraiture and self-portrait photography and it's invaluable and I'll be forever grateful, but I had to unfollow them because I felt like I was competing with them, and I'd never ever be able to catch up because obviously they started much earlier than I had and I realised that if I was following in their footsteps, I'll never find my own path and finding my own path is so important to me because that's fulfilment. You know, that's what gives me pleasure. Not copying someone else but being my own person," Jamie (DS4:F90). This statement indicates a difficulty experienced by Jamie in their desire to reach out for connection within a creative community, a loss of confidence in their own practice in comparison to the perceived successes of others. Social media platforms, especially Instagram, can offer a rich source of creative visual activity. The downside of this source comes when interacting with the platform tips from a positive inspirational activity into an overwhelming experience that prevents the very activity it aims to showcase. Jamie's account is echoed by Brigadier: "you look at Instagram or wherever, there's just a constant stream of other people's creativity… I mean obviously it can be influential, but it's almost like… you actually get too much and… it puts me off doing stuff… they're doing it so much better," (DS4:F18). Copying other's work has its place in the development of a practice, as does repetition and rigour, but it is in knowing when to alter course and make changes in that practice that makes a difference to the craftsman (*The Art of Japanese Life*, 2017).

Learning in the presence of others

3 A finding of this thesis is that the opportunity to learn in the presence of others is a vital element within skills based vocational education. Learning is strengthened and reinforced through observation of and collaboration and cooperation with others.

Site / A sense of place

This section deals with the data that touches on the importance of the environment in which the learning activities are located. The analysis of the data point to two sub-themes that fall within this theme:

1. Learning environment
2. Workshop conditions

1 Learning Environment

Analysis of the data and discussion with my multiple coders helped to identify the importance of the 'learning environment'. The dedicated forge workshop space is referred to as the main 'location of activity' by some of the respondents, the core focus of their studies. This view is softened somewhat by the observation "we're in the visual arts, it's easy to forget that in there because you've got farriers one side, you've got fabrication engineering workshop the other side, doesn't feel like an art college… whereas when you start taking photos in there it does," Missy (DS1:B4). Missy's comment does much to connect the art college spaces with the forge workshop. It's interesting to note how little the art college studio spaces are mentioned in the data collected. The college offers these students a personal desk space in a shared studio environment, as mentioned earlier, somewhere to work alongside others on project work,

to present and reflect on ideas and research. When the first lockdown of 2020 began we encouraged all these students to strip their college spaces and reset them at home.

This slight disconnection between the two workspaces is reinforced by some other participants, with comments like “when you bring the cameras into the forge it allows us to get used to taking photographs in the space in which we work,” The Rani (DS1:B3). Work is the key word here; it suggests that the activity engaged with elsewhere is not work. Sennett (2008, p.53) describes the workshop as the craftsman’s home, within the context of a vocational arts education we may need to consider this home as being present in several locations (workshop, studio space, lecture hall, *etc.*).

A recurring issue within the data is the suitability of the workshop as a setting for photography, some participants noting that “the anvil is a nice background but when there’s forged steel it blends in with it… so if we had just even just a little area in there that’s just painted white so you can get the correct photos and your work would stand out,” Cyberman (DS1:B8). Cyberman has a point, as illustrated in fig.54, and the idea of accessible studio space is worth considering. The art college offers dedicated photography studios at each main site, and these spaces are available for use by all students, provided they have attended the relevant induction session or can enlist the help of someone else who has. This doesn’t solve the problem of a photo space for work in progress at the location where the work is made. These studios come with other attendant issues. Bailey (1990, p.97) notes that one historical issue with technical schools was the ‘heavy expenditure’ required in their setup. Photography studios come with similar issues. A professional studio setup is usually expensive to equip, complicated to use, and could be considered overwhelming by the uninitiated. Photography studios require regular maintenance, attention, and qualified support. However a decent insight into photographic process should highlight the fact that you don’t always need a fancy studio setup to generate the images you want but that you do need to pay attention to what you are doing. For studio style images we can make do with little more than a piece of paper, a camera, and some good lighting. The difference is in being able to turn a critical eye on the results we are getting.

There are two moments from data set 4 that I feel belong here. Brigadier touches on the creative social element presented by ‘owned’ studio space, noting that “that's something university really does give is the library space and studio space too, which is obviously great… having access to that because it means you have somewhere to go, even if you don't work, you're sitting in your studio talking to other artists,” (DS4:F20). There is a link to notions of creative community here, allied to a sense of space that belongs to the students. If, as Sennett states, ‘the workshop is the craftsman’s home’, then the definition of the workshop in this context needs to be expanded to include shared studio spaces and other areas, such as libraries, that offer potential for productive dialogue. Dedicated studio space that is set aside for a specific course can be immensely valuable as a site for informal learning, something not lost on keen students who can identify a hot spot of exciting discussions within their shared studio spaces and look to move to a closer desk as soon as possible.

The second moment comes from a discussion of how the studio space is shared and used. From the perspective of a creative crafts tutor, talking about their studio space within their home, Peri states “I just love the like the non-preciousness of it… the kids think of my room as a creative space, so if they are making, they will use my room… It's a creative space as opposed to it belongs to me,” Peri (DS4:F43). This idea of a “non-precious” creative space reminds me of my experience at degree level, where the contemporary fine art program was shipped out of the shiny new showcase college building and into a serviceable but somewhat unloved property, where college management could turn a blind eye to whatever messy projects we were working on.

2 Workshop Conditions

In this section the data analysis identified issues relating to working within the forge environment, specifically issues attached to the attempt to make photographs in this space. The feedback touches on 'difficult lighting conditions' and 'distractions' as part of the 'workshop conditions.'

Blacksmithing forges have, in a broad sense, one key function: to enable the smith to work effectively. They can be expensive to set up, depending on the level of business and the scale of the work a smith intends to make. From what I have seen they also tend to be "quite a dark place," Mechanoid (DS1:B13). This darkness can make the forge "a difficult environment to photoshoot in," Dalek (DS1:B5). There's good reason for this low level of illumination, a need for the smiths to be able to see the degree of heat within the material they are working with. This in turn poses a problem for anyone trying to photograph this as a record of work in progress, and it relates to balancing the contrast between highlights and shadows within the image. The trick here is how to retain detail in the brightest part of the image, the hot metal in question, without losing too much information in the darker areas of the picture. The good news is that this problem has a technical solution, and that the correct use of the camera's key settings will produce a good result. The bad news is that to achieve this result you need some insight into the technical processes involved, both at the stage of image capture and post processing. If you are a newcomer to photography, are out of practice, or simply relying on the cameras automatic settings then you may not get the result you hope for.

A second consideration within this sub-theme was identified as 'distractions', something touched on by Mechanoid, noting that "it's definitely a good place to be like taking pictures because there's so much going on," Mechanoid (DS1:B13). This concern is clarified in a later discussion: "I think the biggest problem when it comes to documenting forged work is being able to… when you're placing your work and you want to take a photo of it you're worried… is there someone to the left of me, is there someone forging, is there someone behind me, is there going to be a piece of coke," Sycorax (DS2:D65). A discussion with the blacksmithing course leader about the forge environment highlighted the importance of community practice and awareness of the working environment. The forge carries an element of risk that everybody working within it needs to be aware of.

A sense of place

4 A finding of this thesis is that a sense of place contributes to the experience of learning. This finding is closely linked to ideas of presence and greatly informed by Sennett's thoughts on the nature of the workshop (2008). This idea of shared learning spaces needs to extend beyond the workshop to include other allied areas, such as studios, in order to create a more cohesive idea of educational spaces and how they may be used.

Visual Evidence/perception

This theme revolves around the data that touches on the value of the image. It touches upon what students are being asked to produce in terms of representing their learning, the quality of the images created, and where this photographic practice may impact them as creative craft makers. The three sub-themes are:

1. Recording work in progress

2. Quality of image
3. Understanding self as creative individual

1 Recording work in progress

This sub-theme could be considered to be the main *raison d'être* behind this research. Within the discussion of the data the phrases 'capturing making' and recording 'work in progress' appeared to be the catch all phrases for this documentary practice, while some participants identify 'recording mistakes' as an important part of this learning activity.

Several participants comment on the difficulty they find in engaging with this documentary practice, noting that "the most difficult part of this (blacksmithing) is documenting your work as you go along," The Master (DS1:B16), and that "when I'm in the forge it's the last thing on my mind, I try to focus on the making and then remember to take a step back to document… I'm not thinking about it," Missy (DS2:D20). These comments shouldn't come as a surprise considering that many of these students are contending with new processes and locations, and that the primary focus of their studies is on the physical act of smithing. These sentiments are evident in comments like these made by Sontaran: "If I'm honest I don't think my work's in a place where I'm like 'yeah, record it for posterity, it might be useful later'… by the end of the third year I don't think I'll be looking to display any of my first-year work…. It's so new and slapdash and I'm still learning, and I've got so much to learn and my time on the anvils is limited," (DS2:D57). To my mind this shows a lack of confidence and a feeling of unease about the work they are producing, coupled with a concern regarding the target use for the images created. However the value of starting a record of progress is touched upon by some: "I have so many pieces I've made and just get lost to time. But a picture as long as you don't lose the camera or whatever, that stays, you know, and things move along," Silurian (DS1:B7). This sentiment chimes for me with the discussion of creating images and their value over time. Hannan, in his introduction to Hurn's *Land of my Father* (2000), describes how the country he knew as Wales in 1975 had changed over the course of nineteen years, to the extent that it was necessary to hunt for clues that could a form a 'picture of a lost civilization'. Hurn's images form a visual basis for this archaeological expedition, the value of the captured images changing the further they travel in time from the point of their making.

From the discussions in the second round of data collection the notion that "most blacksmiths… don't actually record the process, they'll show the final outcome, it's only recently that people have started recording this stuff and photographing this stuff," Sycorax (DS2:D59) is voiced. I'm not so sure of the truth of this, and Sycorax does not qualify the term "recently" with a specific date. I feel a more likely account would be that although documentation of processes existed, it would be in a much smaller volume and far harder to access. The truth was out there but you really had to look for it.

Something that has become increasingly evident while assessing the recorded data for this research is the level of ownership students express over their practice and the work they produce. The terms used are almost always possessive, mostly 'my' rather than 'the' work. The work belongs to the student, is brought into being through their actions, in a form of *poesis*, and can be viewed as a reflection of them and their personality. Sennett (2008, p.69) recognises this in his assertion of Cellini's salt cellar as a representation of the man himself.

A differentiation in the value of the work being made is also evident in the data, in a similar vein to the earlier discussion of 'experimental' versus 'set' pieces. Here the discussion touches on 'practice' pieces in comparison to personal projects, or as Ogron puts it "I want to document my work. Especially when I get

into like actual project work," (DS1:B23). The level of documentation is also commented on and a perception among some participants that "obviously, we're just practising, but later on when we're actually making things we're properly designing and hoping to move forward, it'd be really useful to… document step by step," Foamasi (DS1:B24), is evident in the data. These comments suggests that some students may not feel the need to document their work to the same degree throughout their course, that larger more 'important' project works deserve or require a greater amount of attention, and that the documentation of smaller practice pieces is not so vital. For me this raises the question of how we assign importance to the activities and projects students engage in. Is the value of the work made derived from the amount of artefacts created, the quality of the finished piece, or the implied value attached via the module credits? And does this perception of value impact on the quality of the documentation produced, itself evidence of practice and progress?

The opportunity to improve a creative practice through the recording of work in progress is evident in some of the feedback and discussions: "Sometimes you can get halfway through what you're making, and you get a picture of that and later look back and it gives you a new idea," Rutan (DS2:D15). Sennett (2008, p.120), in his discussion of material consciousness, indicates metamorphosis as one of three key elements involved with change. Within this discussion Sennett identifies the challenge of how to combat decay and create durability. Photographic images offer a recorded moment, durable in its static representation of a place, an event, a person, or a thing. The importance of these midpoint images is also commented on by Missy, who notes that the craft of smithing an object "is a bit like painting a canvas, you cover up your work all the time and you can burn it at any point," Missy (DS2:D16). Without some form of documentation of the practical stages a piece goes through, whether in the form of drawings, photographs, videos, *etc.*, the process remains hidden. The only alternative option I can think of would be to make multiple versions of the same thing, stopping the process of making at key stages on different pieces. This isn't too far from the practical process some of our students go through on a replication project, usually with the smallest object to be copied, a bottle opener (fig 70). The multiple copies made are the result of individuals getting to grips with the practical techniques involved, and they'll often submit a couple of handfuls of replicas that demonstrate improvement in technique (fig 71). To consider this route for large scale work would be far too costly in terms of time and energy, let alone the cost of materials.

While I'm on the subject of the replication project it is also worth noting the importance of tactile access to the objects to be copied. Within the first year of study three objects are offered up as targets for copying: the bottle opener in figs 70 and 71, the trivet under appraisal in figs 53, 57, 58, 59, and 66, and a set of tongs as documented in fig 60. All three objects are available for handling within the forge, a chance to physically assess their construction and the processes involved. In their second year of study the students are introduced to a historical resource centre, a tactile museum that offers hands on experience of a wide range of objects. In this instance access to the objects is only available at the centre so careful note taking and observation is the order of the day if they are to copy their chosen objects successfully.

Figure 70 The forged bottle opener used as one of the objects for a replication project.

Figure 71 Pages from a technical journal showing progress in the replication of a bottle opener.

Rutan's notion of the documentary practice as an opportunity for new ideas is echoed in data set 4 by Peri: "when we're documenting practise, if we think of photography as a documentation process then it is at the end and it's static, it's just a record… Whereas if we think of photography as a dialogue with the object, with the photographer, or with somebody else in the space… it can spark other ideas, other ways of looking at practise, and objects, and what we've done," (DS4:F50). This reflection on the value of photography as a tool to "spark ideas" resonates with Sennett's (2008, p.9) definition of the 'good' craftsman as one who maintains a personal dialogue between 'concrete practices and thinking,' and Eisner's (2002, p.7) discussion of 'embarkation points' within a creative process. The photographic image can open up a new perception of the work.

Lockdown conditions imposed in 2020 changed the emphasis on recording work. Bereft of the physical workspaces to interact in and attempting to continue studying via remote digital platforms brought the need to digitise and share work into sharp relief. Some note that they "recorded everything I've drawn photographically as well, because I needed to upload this," Kroll (DS3:E98). For The Rani it changed the way they created their images, becoming "much more… like presentational photography as opposed to… photography in its own right… more than physical objects we are presenting photos and descriptions of our work, so it's definitely become a more important part… kind of not being able to show anything physically for assessment or anything," (DS3:E119). This shift to a digital platform brought an element of presentation to the course interactions and a demand for an improved use of visual imagery. This demand

was constrained by the level of knowledge regarding video interaction and the varied access to technology each student had.

2 Quality of image

This section of the analysis draws on ideas of image quality and feels like the next natural step on from the discussions of recording work in progress. Discussions with my coders indicate 'quality of image' as a key concern for the participating students. The data also touches on the relationship between 'arts, crafts, and technology' and the use of 'dedicated space' in generating imagery.

Within the first round of data there is some discussion of a level of good practice in terms of image making, articulated by Dalek as "it's nice for us to get used to that being our standard for when we're doing like portfolios and things like that, setting up a website," (DS1:B5). This "standard" is touched on in later discussions, with a direct request for training on photographic style from Rutan: "It would be cool if we had some sessions on learning how to take better pictures rather than how to use the camera… lighting tips, just to get a better image generally," (DS2:D4). This request highlights a need to see an improvement in the aesthetic quality of the images produced, for insight into and instruction in composition, timing, angle, and all the other things that go into making an image 'good' beyond correct exposure and focus. There is a recognition that "being able to take a really good picture of that tiny thing, doesn't have to be a lot, it can be quite simple, if you're doing it right it looks really good," and that there is value in having "really good" images of your own work, Ice Warrior (DS2:D42).

This need to understand what constitutes good photography resurfaces in the discussions from data set 3. Some participants identify a "need to learn… how to compose my image? How to light it properly? Because otherwise I'm not going to get the most from my work… When you're intending to learn how to make things so that you can eventually create a business on it and sell it, you need to put your best foot forward, as it were," Vervoid (DS3:E9). The value of this insight, of getting the 'most from the work' is echoed in The Master's comments on learning to "frame the photos properly and be able to… keep, for example, the thing that I like about that scroll… and be able to look at it in the year from now and go 'Oh yeah, I really liked that bit', because it's still visible. It's framed properly in the photo," The Master (DS3:E66). The Master goes on to draw a direct line between the quality of the image of a smith's work and their professionalism: "I think one of the biggest differences between an amateur blacksmith and a professional blacksmith is how well they could take photos of their work. Because that's going to be one of the main ways that you portray your work and get your work out there. In today's society, everything's online," (DS3:E68). This perceived link between the professionalism of the craftsman and the representation of their work is an interesting one to unpick: how closely related are these two concerns? In discussion with the blacksmithing course leader a clear demand for good, high-quality images seems to be the order of the day, that the course 'survives' on the visual quality of what it shows. In contrast to this and discussing this idea with a visiting speaker who builds automata, a different view is offered, where they note that the viewing statistics for the video content on their website are better for the less polished videos of works in action on location compared to glossy studio set presentations. This resonates with my experience of wedding photography, especially fig 14 discussed in chapter 1, that we don't always know what is going to work before we test it, but by testing we can become better informed and it's interesting to try.

This need for 'good' images is expressed in another way by Sontaran, highlighting the value of images that can offer insight into a piece of smithed work. "I think it's kind of hard to understand if you're not there, you know, and you can pick it up and look at. It's 3D. If you're just looking at a picture it's not always as

simple… let's say I had a piece of armour… and I've just got the one forward straight shot… doesn't tell you an awful lot of stuff… you can't see the back, you can't see how it's joined, you can't see what's on the inside… these are the problems that I'm finding… I'm trying to extrapolate back from that and think what? How was that made… What techniques was used through that to… get to that… finished piece," (DS3:E154). Sontaran is right here, it can be hard to interrogate an image to inform your understanding of a work if you only have one photo to go on. This clear demand for imagery that can help a crafts maker understand how an object is created is echoed elsewhere, such as the requirement for jewellers to submit images that show the fastenings on brooches when entering competitions.

Testing photographic practice is touched on in the third round of discussions, as pointed out by Vervoid, who "made a makeshift photo studio in my bedroom… blank white paper background and a desk light… and took photos of my work using that. Which was actually quite beneficial because it gave me relatively professional looking images that I could then post on my Instagram. You know to show off my work in the best light, if you excuse the pun," (DS3:E2). Something that makes me happy, as photographic educator, is to see that Vervoid tested this idea with basic materials they had to hand, avoiding the potential trap of feeling stuck because they didn't have access to studio kit or facilities, an example of *praxis* in action.

3 Understanding self as creative individual

The final sub-theme that emerged from the discussion of the data relates to understanding that some participants express regarding themselves and their work, an understanding of themselves as creative individuals, their 'career focus', and the 'archiving' of their work.

It would be easy to assume that anyone studying a craft at degree level would want to pursue a career in that area of practice and be known as a maker or craftsman. Certainly this was my misconception when starting to work at the college supporting photography students. I was confused by the number of people I worked with who had little or no interest in pursuing a career as a photographer. Some expressed interest in using the practice to support other career choices, others admitted to being on the course out of an interest to learn the practice for the sake of it. While the smithing degree is geared towards individual practice, and students are expected to present themselves and their work as if they are intending to set up their own business or studio, not everyone on the course has this intention. Some don't want to be in the spotlight, as expressed by K-9: "I'm always the person in the background, I make it, I don't have anything to do with the forefront of it. Everywhere I've worked so far, I've always been in the background," (DS2:D40). This recognition that K-9 is happy to be a part of a team extends to their photographic practice, that when it comes to documenting work it is, "never my work, always someone else's" that they turn the camera towards, (DS2:D30). I don't interpret K-9's comments as an attempt to be difficult or push back against the photography induction that's being offered, but rather a very clear understanding of where they want to be as a craftsman.

The need for promotional imagery has been discussed earlier, Rassilon's (DS1:B10) identification of the need for visual representation of a smith's work as a critical element to their website. Under this sub-theme the issue of creative control over the generation of images is evident. This need for control is expressed in a couple of ways:

1. First the need to control how the smithed work is presented: "It's my work. I'm taking a photo of it… to show you how I want to show you… if somebody else came and took a photo of it, they might take a completely different photo and you might… hate it from the angle… they take," Vervoid (DS3:E12).

2. Second the recognition that students could manage this element of representation themselves: “I didn't really do much of my own photography… I'll get someone else to do it for me. I never really understood the value of taking my own photos… but like with this year and then taking my own photographs and seeing like… what perspective I do want with my own images”, “I'm the one choosing these angles and… I can adjust it... I could fine tune it to what I want,” Sycorax (DS3:E20 & E22).

There is a counter to this need for control, offered by Peri in data set 4. In discussion regarding the experience of having their craft work photographed, Peri relates a critical event which initially left them “horrified at the disorder” imposed upon their work by the photographer. Peri notes that “there were these images which were not as I would have displayed them… which threw new light on the meaning and significance of the work that I hadn't acknowledged prior… they were just so powerful and arresting and encapsulated some of the… ideas that I'd had about the piece, but I hadn't ever viewed or seen them or put them in that shape or form. And I felt that some of the photos… actually moved on my thinking about my own practise by the photographing of them… if the maker is only dictating how that work is to be seen, there's no dialogue… for me that was absolutely magical… I haven't had that experience with any other photographs… there's something happened in there which I'm not sure about, so there's… the photograph in terms of documentation of the work… which can be technical, isn't it? And then I've got, as a maker, I've got a document of that work… But also, there's this dialogue that potentially can actually move practice forward in working alongside the photographer,” (DS4:F47). Peri notes the unexpected value in seeing work professionally documented and interpreted by another, a sentiment that echoes Rutan’s (DS2:D15) point about new ideas earlier and Eisner’s (2002, p.7) notion of embarkation points within a creative journey. This account also connects to ideas of community, of the benefit of external viewpoints and expertise that offer different interpretations and perceptions of the work. It may also be worth noting that the person operating the camera in this instance is a professional photographer and artist in their own right.

Peri offers another point of interest from this discussion, a note on the importance of documentation and archiving: “as a maker, I think that's quite exciting… for the work to exist both digitally and in the drawer, as it were, or in the box or in the attic, because you know, even as a maker, the access to… that imagery can be difficult, or if work is out in an exhibition, you haven't got any access to that. So, accessing it in terms of… knowing where you are in terms of your practice… revisiting work, looking at connections between work and what's next… having that digital archive is really interesting and important,” Peri (DS4:F45). In this instance the images operate as a creative resource for the craft maker.

I’m leaving the last word in this section for one of the students: “I remember last year some of the MA students said, ‘you’re not like a normal blacksmith, you can take a photograph that doesn’t involve holding it (the work) up in your hand and going click… and you use grammar in your posts’… so I'm not quite sure how to take that,” Kroll (DS3:E101). I would encourage Kroll to view this as a compliment. From my experience of running a business, and the constant demands for marketing and self-promotion, I think there is a great deal of value in belonging to a craft, practice, and community while managing to stand out among the crowd. As a friend put it ‘you want to be one in a million, not one of a million’. As Sennett (2008, p.71) asserts any person who stands out within a craft still has to prove themselves.

A question of perception

5 A finding of this thesis is that perception can be altered by an introduction to photographic process and practice. In this instance perception is used to refer to the engagement of the human senses and our sense making processes that may ultimately lead to a change in our understanding of the world we experience (Eisner, 2002, and Biesta, 2018).

Chapter 6: Recommendations & Conclusions

Within this final chapter, I discuss the findings of this research and consider what conclusions might be drawn and what recommendations might be made including the implications of these in practice. I also reflect on this research journey, the limitations of the research, where there might be contributions to knowledge, and areas for possible future investigation.

Findings & Recommendations

Finding 1: Developing an Eye for Good Practice and Engaging in Critique

A finding of this thesis is that an introduction to photographic practice within vocational education settings can contribute to enabling students to develop an 'eye' for good practice in their vocational area as well as their abilities and willingness to engage in problem-finding, problem-solving, and critique. Sennett (2012, p.170) describes this as "the craftsman ethos, to want and to do good work."

As discussed earlier in this thesis, with reference to the works of Aristotle (384 - 322 BC) the ability to do good work resides in the interplay of different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. From a slightly different conceptual perspective, these forms of knowledge and ways of knowing include *savoir,* normally based upon a body of scientific and/or technological knowledge; *savoir-faire* having a command of the techniques (*techné*), knowing how to make something (*poiesis*) including knowing how to respond to and repair breakdowns and malfunctions; and (*savoir être)* knowing how to be and how to behave in the presence of others in order to do good work in practice (*praxis*). All of these forms of knowledge are acquired through experience and developed in practice

The deeper point here regarding standards of vocational practice, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 through the work of Sennett (2008), is that doing good work in any walk of life means being curious about, investigating, and learning from ambiguities encountered in practice. Craft development therefore involves navigating the liminal zone between problem-finding and problem-solving, looking carefully at what has happened as a result of your actions and being able to 'see' what you might have done differently and/or better (critique). Critique is a key element here, and when coupled with problem-finding and problem-solving activities within an educational context provides students with opportunities to 'see' where their practice might be improved and how. This involves encouraging students to find problems in practice, identify potential solutions, decide which solution might be best in context, put that solution into practice, and then to see and imagine how things might be done better. Data generated in this thesis suggest that the development of perception in vocational educational can be sharpened and refined through the introduction to photographic practice. Here the term perception is used to refer to the engagement of all of the human senses and that the sense-making processes can lead to a change in our understanding of the world we experience (Eisner, 2002, Biesta, 2018, and Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Perceptive practice in vocational education therefore means not only knowing how to look, but also knowing what to look out for (listen for/feel for/smell/taste), what to pay attention to, what to notice, and what to do when it is not immediately clear what to do for the best. The primacy of perception in photographic practice provides learners in vocational education settings with opportunities to engage in the perception and observation of their practical work in a way that encourages active ways of 'seeing' and multi-sensory/multi-modal assessment (Eisner, 2002).

Recommendation 1:1 A Question of Perception

This finding has important implications for assessment theory and practice in vocational education. Assessment of different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing demand a movement away from approaches to assessment which rely on pen and paper tests of recall and cognition. If we accept the importance of Aristotle's (384-322 BC) forms of knowledge above, including *techné, poiesis, theoria, phronesis, praxis, etc*., alongside concepts of *savoir, savoir-faire,* and *savoir être,* then it is obvious that new multi-modal and multisensory assessment regimes will need to be developed that are capable of assessing the development of these forms of knowledge in action and which look to engage with a broader range of sensory options. For practical work this may include images of or physical access to the artefacts created, or a range of representational approaches that include audio/visual options to show the work. In addition, this will involve the creative and imaginative use of different ways of expressing and representing lived experience through technology, and/or narrative accounts of experience and the arts (Barone and Eisner, 2012, and Greene, 1995). For example, tutors may be able to access how and what students are thinking as they make or do something in order to assess where students have grasped a technique, or a series of complex tasks and activities involved in making something good in practice. This recommendation clearly has implications for programmes of teacher CPD.

Recommendation 1:2 Curriculum, Design, Pedagogy, Problem and Project Based-Learning

Finding 1 also has important implications for curriculum design and pedagogy in vocational education. For example, if we expect students to develop problem-finding, problem-solving, and critique individually and cooperatively/collaboratively, then they will need to be provided with opportunities to experience these in practice in programmes of vocational education. This will involve a more imaginative understanding of integrated curriculum design and a much deeper understanding of embedding and assessing meaningful and engaging problem and project-based learning. This recommendation also has implications for programmes of teacher CPD.

Finding 2: Sensory Experience and the Integration of Theory and Practice

A finding of this thesis is that hands-on tactile experience of working with the camera as an instrument to support the development of perception and to encourage different ways of seeing, alongside ways of expressing, representing, and assessing lived experience in practice, is vital in the development of vocational practice. Embodied lived experience and physical sensation have a direct impact on our ability to learn (Sennett, 2008, and Eisner, 2002). One of the key problems I encountered at the start of this research, in relation to photographic technical inductions, was the inclusion of either too much technical information delivered before any practical activity, or the complete absence of any physical access to the camera kits being discussed. A deeper problem at play here may be the delivery of too much information, be it technical or theoretical, delivered prior to actual activity. If we accept that practice is the precursor of theory, as argued by Carr (2005), as well as the arena in which theory is tested out, then it is the responsibility of those of us involved in technical, creative, and vocational education to examine our practice. Are we adapting and updating our practice to encourage an improved level of interaction between students, materials, and processes, or are we stuck within a 'sabretooth' curriculum that needs updating (Benjamin, 1975)? This finding has important implications for curriculum in vocational education contexts.

Recommendation 2:1 Embodied Experience

Practical, physical, embodied experience and hands-on learning need to be embedded early within the curriculum. Further to this the value of first-hand sensory experience should not be discounted or underestimated. For instance, if we can recognise whether a camera is working correctly through the sounds of its shutter or autofocus systems, then including this information in our teaching and approaches to learning and its assessment will deepen the experience for our students, increasing their confidence in expressing, making sense of, and learning from their experiences of making, as well as increasing their ways of representing these experiences and the problems (including breakdowns and malfunctions) found and overcome in the making process, alongside their individual and collective critiques of the artefacts produced.

Finding 3: Learning in the Presence of Others (*Savoir Faire* and *Savoir Être*)

A finding of this thesis is that the opportunity to learn in the presence of others is a vital element within skills based vocational education. Learning is strengthened and reinforced through observation of and collaboration and cooperation with others. Sennett (2008, 2012), CAVTL (2013) remind us of the importance of cooperation in vocational education. Sennett (2012) points out that cooperation is a craft which requires skill and that it needs more than good will. Sennett foregrounds responsiveness to others at work and in the community. Cooperation, he argues,

> "…oils the machinery of getting things done, and sharing with others can make up for what we may individually lack. Cooperation is embedded in our genes, but cannot remain stuck in routine behaviour; it needs to be developed and deepened."
>
> (Sennett, 2012, p.ix)

Coffield (2009), Coffield & Borrill (1983), and Patrick (2013) all note the value of interaction, incisive language, and the two-way flow of information within education, a process that brings all those involved onto a level playing field, something Sennett (2008, p.32) touches on in his discussion of effective communication and learning within manufacturing industries. There is an opportunity for us to learn from each other through cooperation, collaboration, problem and project-based learning, multimodal assessment, and critique. Barone and Eisner (2012, p.148) offer a set of general principles for the critique of arts-based research that can be applied to any practice.

Recommendation 3:1

If we accept the respective works and conceptual frameworks offered by Sennett (2008, 2012) and Bernstein (1996) then the curriculum design and pedagogy in vocational education needs to encourage opportunities for cooperation and a sense of *communitas* in the student body. Students need to become animated by the opportunity to share their successes and failures with each other in order to 'see' how their practice could be improved. This will involve providing opportunities for students to demonstrate an activity or process to each other, and to share their stories and experiences of the results of their previous experiments, including their failures and successes, and to develop a degree of 'connoisseurship' informed by practice. Barone and Eisner (2012, p.148) offer a set of general principles for the critique of arts-based research that can be applied to any practice. Project based learning, collaboration, cooperation, and the development of critique are key elements that could be employed to support this, and the inclusion of

evidence and representation of practical engagement with processes and materials is vital here, as discussed in chapter 5 and shown in figures 54 and 71 for example.

While it may be good, as an educator, to assert a level of authority through competence and the sharing of good work in the form of a portfolio, and to consider the form a portfolio may take (actual artefacts, representational images, and narrative accounts), it may also be beneficial for students to 'see' the mistakes and early attempts made in practice on the part of their tutor which yielded less that optimal results, in order to provide students with proof that their tutor started from a similar point to where they are now.

Finding 4: The Power and Presence of a Sense of Place

A finding of this thesis is that a sense of place contributes to students' experiences of learning. This finding is closely linked to ideas of presence and greatly informed by Sennett's thoughts on the nature of the workshop (2008). This idea of shared learning spaces needs to extend beyond the workshop to include other allied areas, such as studios, in order to create a more cohesive idea of the importance of educational spaces, how they speak to us, and how they may be used. Place is more than simply a backdrop, and spaces have the power to animate us through our senses and imagination. We inhabit space though our physical existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.5) and our understanding and interaction within them is informed by our perception of how they may be used. On a deeper level we could ask what effect a space has on our practice, where does our practice live, where does it thrive or wither, and why?

Within much of this thesis my focus has been on the use of educational spaces, in the form of the classroom, workshop, or studio, while my personal narrative accounts have often spilled out into wider, more open spaces such as my local countryside and running routes, or national moorland such as Dartmoor. There is a question here as to where education happens and where our perception of it begins and ends. Does teaching and learning extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom? Dunne (2005) states that practices are kept alive by their true practitioners, and if we agree with this then we can argue that practice travels with the practitioner and is not restricted to a set workshop, classroom, or location.

Recommendation 4:1

A recommendation of this thesis is for tutors and education leaders to look for opportunities for students to have some ownership of and agency in the spaces they use (Bernstein, 1996) and that tutors and education leaders should be mindful of how places speak to students and what they 'say'.

Contributions to Knowledge

The findings of this study offer five contributions to knowledge within this thesis.

1. On the separation of theory and practice, I believe that theory is informed by practice and that the two need to be brought closer together within educational contexts in relation to curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment regimes in vocational education in England.
2. Data from this study suggest that there may be issues in vocational education arising from curricula becoming overcrowded in relation to content. I am not exactly sure what the issue is here but this may warrant further investigation in a future study. I intend to set up a small focus group with other staff members to look at this issue.

3. In relation to approaches to assessment there is future work to be done on the development and integration of multi-modal assessment. This work needs to revolve around our understanding of the importance and role of the senses in vocational education, including the different and practical ways in which we can know something and the ways in which we can develop an 'eye' or an ear for good work and good practice.
4. An important contribution to knowledge in this theses is that it throws light upon how Awarding Bodies need to address these issues by engaging with or employing people who have a deeper understanding of educational practice, curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment in collaboration with practitioners who have an insider's view of the practice.
5. In relation to pedagogy problem-finding, problem-solving, and critique need to sit at the heart of the curriculum for the curriculum to remain relevant to practice lead education, framed and underpinned by problem and project based learning, and multi-modal assessment.

Limitations of the Research

This is a small-scale piece of research conducted by a single practitioner within a single college. The majority of participants were involved in the study of a single craft, artist blacksmithing, although some of the data collected was from a wider range of experience relating to education and the creative arts. The data collected from participants (data sets 1, 2, & 3) was recorded within one academic year, as was most of data set 4. The impact of covid-19 influenced the research, disrupting the original plan for this study (like so many other things). The researcher began the data analysis on their own before turning to three multiple coders to assist with this process.

A personal reflection on the thesis

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 proved to be a difficult and lengthy chapter to write. Somewhat naively I believe I had imagined that writing about the problem in educational practice I had encountered, and the context of this problem, would be an easy issue to tackle. I was after all involved with this issue on a daily basis within my role as a photographic technical demonstrator and as a practitioner. There are three main areas here that I needed to address within this chapter: finding an authentic voice, deciding on the content for this chapter, and identifying a suitable writing approach.

Finding an authentic voice came early within the writing, a result of discussions with my tutor, encouragement to write up a past experience as a critical incident (Dartmoor Summers), and the growing realisation that it might be okay to write an academic thesis in an approachable and accessible manner. Early key readings, such as Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008) and Coffield & Borrill's *Entrée and Exit* (1983), further reinforced the possibility that it would be acceptable to work in this way. Part of the joy of writing this chapter came from the opportunity to write freely, to test my voice as it were and to see where it may lead.

Deciding on the content for this chapter proved harder. Following the lead set in Dartmoor Summers I turned to other key experiences as a way to open up discussions of related issues, recognising the value of referring to personal experience as a way to open a discussion of related points. Here I found the potential for any area touched upon to expand; for example the passing notion that I should probably say

something about photographic practice developed rapidly into a more detailed reflection on the stages of photographic process and the technical qualities of the camera as a tool.

Somewhere in this mix I started to enjoy the process of writing and started to approach this activity as a muscle I really hadn't had to exercise for some time. I was reminded of Vonnegut's discussion of writing styles from *Timequake* (1998, p.108), that most writers are either 'bashers' or 'swoopers', the former working hard at each sentence bit by bit until the work is finished, the latter swooping through the writing process then returning to iron out mistakes and inconsistencies later on. I find that I fall somewhere in between, my writing guided by how much time I can devote to it and the level of energy I have in that moment, and by whether I have chanced upon a 'surprise embarkation point' (Eisner, 2002, p.7) that takes me to a destination I wasn't expecting to visit or explore when I set out to write. Although I find Vonnegut's description of writing styles quite sweet in its imagery, it still relies on a presentation of the ideas as a dichotomy or opposing binary pair.

While I was beginning to enjoy the writing process I was mindful of the balancing act required to submit documents and chapters at the specified word count and within agreed submission dates. In early iterations of my thesis writing I generated several Gantt charts with timings and deadlines attached to them but found them hard to stick to. I also briefly toyed with a writing plan that would allow for a swift completion of the thesis, a specified number of words to be delivered each month. This proved to be a fantasy of technical perfection that didn't survive a single week when exposed to the reality of my actual writing practice.

While I may have swooped through several parts of this chapter I was mindful to return time and again to check for key errors. Had I followed BERA (2018) guidelines in my anonymisation of areas and people correctly? Did the chapter offer a logical structure in its presentation of the issues involved? Was it readable? Chapter 1 sets the tone for the rest of the thesis, and this chapter remained 'in production' until near the end of the writing process.

Chapter 2

If writing for Chapter 1 had allowed me to flex a literary muscle, then starting to tackle some of the theoretical texts attached to this thesis, in a critical and analytical fashion, helped me to approach the literature review section of this research. Theoretical texts had often looked daunting to me, and I held an underlying feeling that academic papers and articles were difficult to engage with (fig 72). Taught sessions on interpreting academic texts, conducted with a spirit of *communitas* on the SUNCETT residentials that formed part of the PRP program, went a long way to dispelling this myth for me.

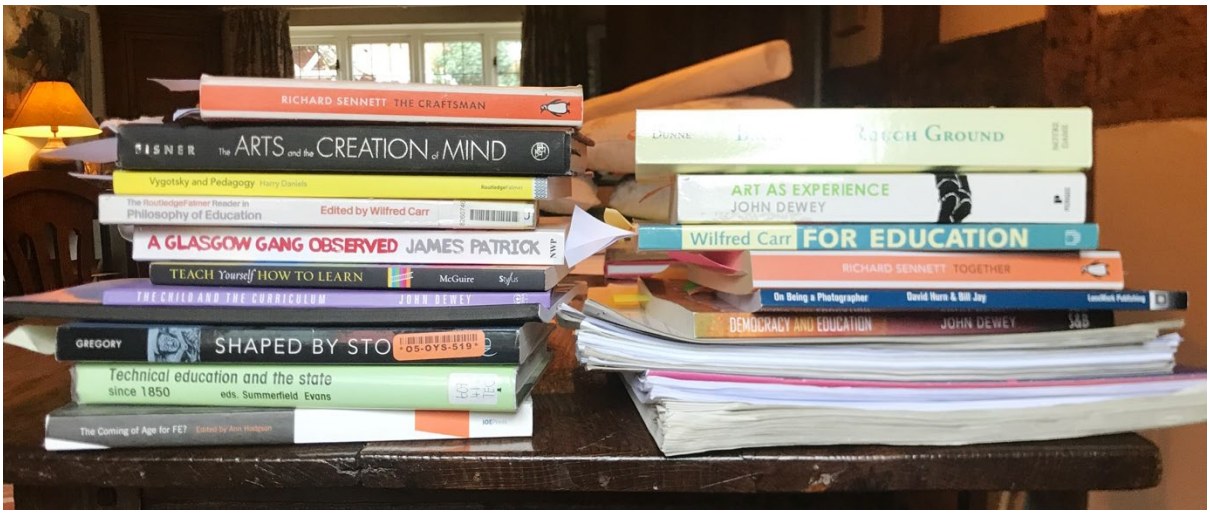


Figure 72 A daunting array of theoretical texts.

Here I learnt to scan theoretical texts and abstracts for keywords and areas of interest, and to follow trails offered by citations, in both text and bibliographies, to find interesting sources and authors. Rigour in citation practice, applied to my own writing, opened up the possibility of including references to a broad range of source material within my thesis, such as tv and film productions, radio broadcasts, and so on. Engaging with a wide range of material in this way allowed me to make theoretical connections across a spectrum of sources.

Within the writing of this chapter I also learnt to allow myself more time for my critical reading of theoretical texts, following guidance found on the SUNCETT program, at conference, and from practical directions in McGuire's work (2018). With a greater amount of time allotted to reading, and the permission to read with a view to the structure, style, and content of said texts, I felt more comfortable in my abilities to comprehend the works, to form an opinion of the theories contained, and to look for links to other authors. Reading and responding to theoretical texts had become an enjoyable activity.

As with chapter 1, I found the writing of this chapter to be an ongoing concern throughout the thesis, with numerous edits, authors, and areas of literature that, although interesting, didn't make the final cut.

Chapter 3

From the start of this research I understood that this chapter and the subject matter of methodology would be a hard nut to crack. Again the strength of the discussion and support I found on the SUNCETT residential that focused on this area of research made this far more accessible than I had expected. This chapter is rooted in Coe's (2017) discussion of theoretical standpoints and, with a steer from Coe and Dewey (1902), I was able to take a pragmatic view of my methodology and avoid locating myself, as a researcher, at either end of a binary spectrum bookended by positivist and constructivist standpoints. As discussed in chapter 2 and above, while binary opposites may serve well as introductory illustrations of a point, they need to be dispensed with as greater complexity and nuance is revealed.

Research into methodology and methodological approaches highlighted the value of understanding others through interaction and dialogue. The opportunity to present, and listen to, research and ideas at residentials and conferences was an enormous confidence booster throughout the generation of this

thesis (fig 73). These opportunities reinforced the feeling that I was moving in the right direction and had chosen the correct methods for my research.

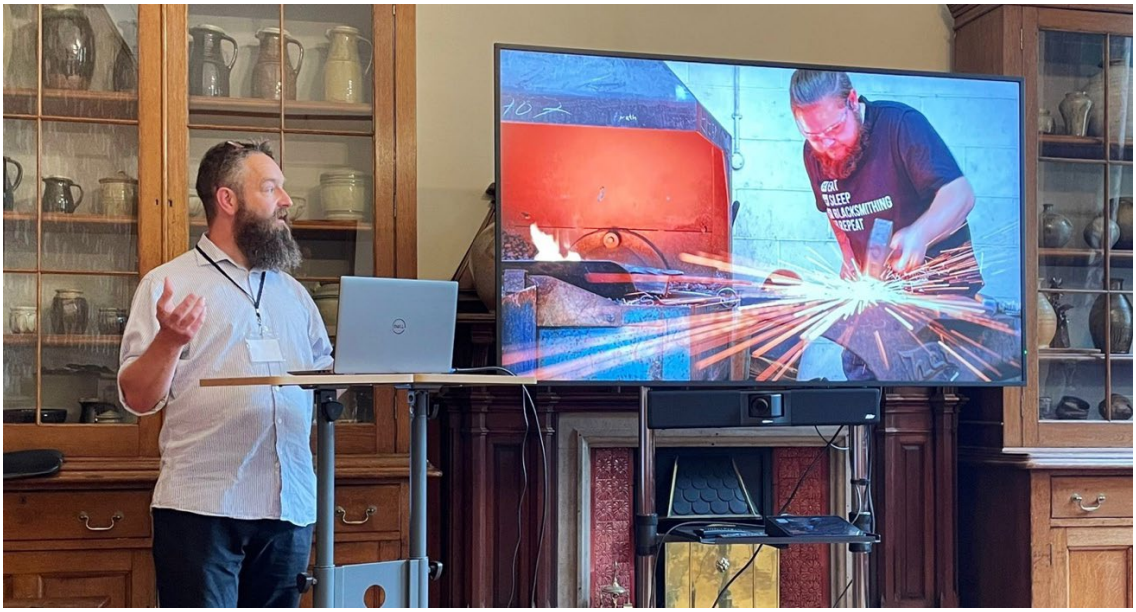


Figure 73 Presenting the research at conference.

One unexpected and somewhat unfortunate side effect of this examination of experience and how we may understand our experience through dialogue with others, was a crisis in confidence over my own experiences and memories. Though the research here was not the primary cause of this I do believe it was in some small way a contributing factor, a side effect of questioning the validity of lived experience. I found relief from this bout of anxiety and self-doubt in the embodied learning activities and shared experiences of dancing and running, and found myself considering these activities through the lens of an educational researcher.

Chapter 4

I arrived at the start of chapter 4 with two key questions relating to my data: what have I got and what do I do with it? This was my first in-depth take on data analysis and a massive step up from the analysis conducted as part of the SUNCETT MA short course. Was I seeing what I wanted to see in the data or what was actually there, and how could I know this?

I had collected much of the data early on in the research process but took some time to reach the data processing stage. I had collected my data in the spirit of open enquiry and hadn't quite accounted for how much data I had to work with or the time and effort this would take. I recognise that my early efforts to interrogate the data were faltering, and although based on using thematic analysis (Nowell *et al.,* 2017, & Byrne, 2021) as a guiding framework, I tended to produce too many themes. I'm reminded here of a similar trend in my literature reviews, of how an initial pass of works by Sennett (2018) or Dewey (1902) would result in an array of marked pages and highlighted passages, while a second reading of the text would merit an additional round of highlighting and bookmarks (fig 74). Each time I looked at my data I would see something new of interest or note.

Figure 74 Slightly annotated critical texts.

Guidance from my tutor to recruit friends and family to act as external auditors or multiple coders (MCs) proved to be an essential lifeline in this process, and the subsequent conversations between myself and my coders, in relation to the data, proved invaluable. Here too I found the importance of offering the data up in more than one format: transcriptions were made from the audio data, and both audio and transcribed data were supplied to my multiple coders for examination, resulting in a more rigorous and consistent approach to the assessment of the data. Even small things, such as the colour coding of themes (blue for practice, green for community, *etc.*), were implemented and maintained to make the analysis process more coherent and accessible (fig 75). Viewed as a new practice, I can recognise numerous occasions that link to Sennett's (2008) notions of problem finding and problem solving in relation to the analysis of the data.

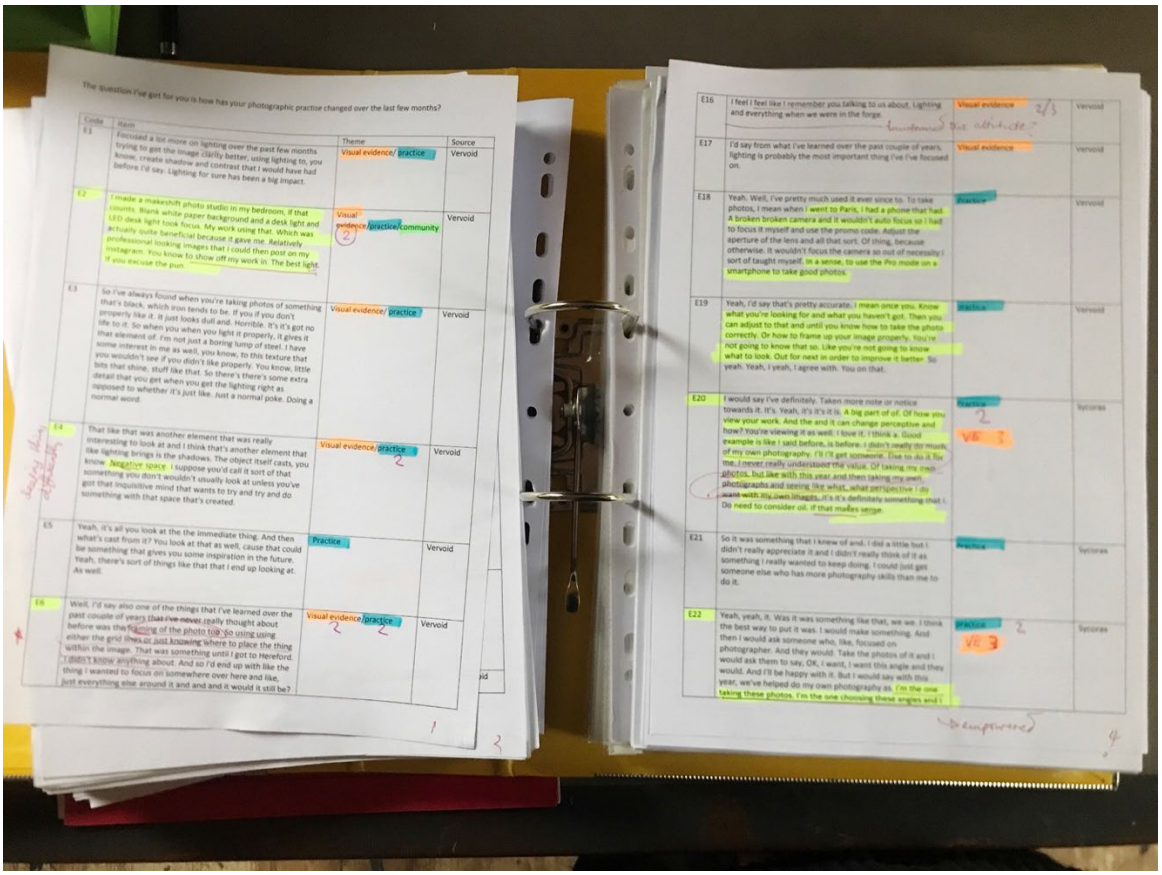


Figure 75 A section of annotated and coded data.

The support I had from my multiple coders enabled me to identify themes and sub-themes, and to present these themes in a graphic diagram format that further helped us to identify key areas of interest. I am deeply grateful for the help I received from my multiple coders, I would have been lost without them.

Chapter 5

Turning to examine the themes and look for findings within the data, I found myself working in a steady and unhurried way, building on a solid foundation provided by the data analysis conducted as discussed in chapter 4. I looked for significant areas of interest within the coded data, and sought to collate these within their related themes. Data was then linked to theoretical texts and personal experience, with a view to pulling the connections together. Writing this chapter felt like a series of lightbulb moments, of connections made between personal experience, theoretical sources, and participant's feedback.

One aspect I was aware of in putting this chapter together was the push and pull of moving towards the end of the writing process. If the first three chapters can be viewed as the upward incline on a rollercoaster, then it's hard to resist the race towards the end as it comes into sight. Time and again I was reminded to view the writing of this chapter as a slow process, something not to be rushed. Like all the others this chapter needed to be written, revisited and reassessed, and has benefitted from moving through several iterations before coming to rest in its current form.

Chapter 6

After all the hard work that has gone into the preceding chapters, discussions, and presentations, it's probably correct to view chapter 6, with its recommendations and conclusions, as the big 'so what' chapter. Kessell-Holland, in his presentation at an ETF conference (2019), encouraged researchers to refine what they were researching, to get their point across without wasting time or effort, in a way that is accessible. Again, resisting the temptation to sprint to the finish line and hand the thesis in, to consider it done, time to move on to other adventures, can be hard. Although unlikely to be as lengthy a chapter as the others, there still needs to be a clear idea of recommended outcomes from the research, and ideas for possible future research.

Overall

I started this research journey in 2017. By some medieval guild measures I would have completed an apprenticeship within this time, or due to my experience in other fields of practice I may have moved to a journeyman status (Sennett, 2008). This research journey has been a fantastic opportunity and an intense experience. Through this research I have questioned my practice and my own personal experiences. Throughout this research process I have benefitted immensely from opportunities within the SUNCETT program to discuss ideas, issues, and theories with my peers and tutors, and to present my research at conference. These opportunities have proved to me the value of *communitas* within an educational setting, and I am grateful to have had the chance to experience them.

Future areas for Research

There is so much here that I feel I have barely scraped the surface of. I believe there is more work to be done in the investigation of confidence building and autonomy within craft practices. The use of creative spaces and how they may impact creative communities has been touched on lightly within this research and would bear further discussion, as would the value of physical sensation in vocational education. There is potential to consider a longer version of this research, extending data gathering across all three years of the degree journey. As mentioned earlier within my contributions to knowledge there may be something to investigate within the curriculum.

Things I wish I had known from the start
Advice for others foolish enough to ask for it

On the subject of what would I have liked to have known before I started, or realised sooner within the research process, several things spring to mind. First, find your travelling companions. It's a long journey, and a tough one to tackle alone. Much of this thesis has touched on the value of shared experience, whether in person at conferences, residentials, day-to-day activities, or online. Recognise similar experiences within the body of theoretical texts, and remember that just because we have been arguing about these ideas for decades doesn't mean we should stop pushing the discussion forward.

Second, pace yourself. Compared to a 100-metre sprint, or a 5k parkrun, this is an intercontinental ultra marathon. Go steady, and be prepared to revisit your tracks over and over. Give yourself the time to enjoy the journey, but remember that it's a long way to go. Look to plan for your research but don't set yourself impossible deadlines or unattainable goals.

Third, start writing. Like any other practice, writing requires repetition and revision but it also helps if you can make it enjoyable. Take a leaf from Eisner's book (2002) and lean into your writing when it takes you somewhere you weren't expecting to go. Keep all your notes, scribbles, audio recordings, diaries, all the little things you can record, you never know when they might be useful to you.

Finally, photographs speak in a way words cannot. Remember to take some photographs along the way.

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