Text(ure), Modelling, Collage: Creative Writing and the Visual Arts

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While there exists some inquiry into the relationship between creative writing and composition, very little investigation has been done into the relationship between creative writing – its pedagogy and practice – and the visual arts. That lack of scholarship is likely due to the difficulties we have conversing in meaningful ways across academic units. This conversation essay is an exchange across disciplines and a blending of theoretical approaches and practical experiences that asserts, 'creative writing and visual arts – both studio art and graphic design – share underpinnings as academic disciplines of practice, have overlapping goals for students, and address common areas of artistic exploration such as the roles of ritual and experimentation, of self-expression and audience, and of intellect and empathy'.

In an essay about the future of creative writing pedagogy in *Fiction Writers' Review*, Cathy Day suggests, '[W]e should look outside the English department and turn to studio art departments for further guidance' (Day, CWAL, and Vanderslice 2011). So the three of us – a creative writer (Anna Leahy), a studio artist (Lia Halloran), and a graphic designer (Claudine Jaenichen) – began a conversation about what we do as teachers.[1] Together, we assert that creative writing and visual arts – both studio art and graphic design – share underpinnings as academic disciplines of practice, have overlapping goals for students, and address common areas of artistic exploration such as the roles of ritual and experimentation, of self-expression and audience, and of intellect and empathy.

Several articles on collaboration across artistic fields have appeared in *New Writing*. Shauna Busto Gilligan and Karen Lee Street, in an essay called 'Critical Reflection on Creative Collaborations: Imagining the Image and Wording the Work', assert, 'It is through collaboration and the sharing of information and craft – at events such as community workshops and academic conferences – that as artists we can expand our art (whether it is art of the word or image) and critically reflect on what we are trying to do through further creations' (Busto Gilligan and Street 2011). For those of us working in universities, we can connect with other creative disciplines to expand our artistic practices and, even more so, our approaches to teaching these artistic practices.

Similarly, Phillip Gross and Wyn Mason, in their essay 'Surface Tensions: Framing the Flow of a Poetry-Film Collaboration', assert:

> Collaboration, working across art forms and media in particular, offers a window into creative process. It often begins from the urge to enlarge one's own vocabulary; a writer collaborating at sufficient depth with a painter learns to see the world 'through painter's eyes', and vice versa. Observing a collaboration between art forms not only reveals the differences and the commonalities between their ways of working, it also offers a chance to capture traces of the blind spots, impediments or disjunctions in the creative process as they pass not within but between the participants. Collaborators across forms cannot presume a common language; they have to make their work apparent to each other. (Gross and Mason 2013)

Rather than responding to an overt urge to enlarge our individual, discipline-based vocabulary or attempting to see one discipline through another's eyes per se, the three of us remain deeply interested in our own subject and practice. We discovered, in conversation, shared intensity for what we separately do in our classrooms in creative writing, studio art, and graphic design as well as possible overlap.

Students are not only interdisciplinary consumers but also should become relevant contributors to the larger interdisciplinary culture. Our differing artistic disciplines are engaging culturally, and, as a result, our students' learning must include input from various disciplines, consideration of multiple approaches, and development of an array of skills.

CJ: We don't often make time for these conversations. As Karri Holley explains in *Understanding Interdisciplinary Challenges and Opportunities in Higher Education*, academic institutions often isolate faculty both physically and intellectually (Holley 2009, 18). A creative writer may not have occasion to bump into a visual artist across town or across campus to talk about how rigorous our practice is, how our fields share similar kinds of problem solving that build intuition, or how revision works across artistic endeavours. This interdisciplinary conversation essay is designed to circumvent our usual isolation, cultivate pedagogical allies, and develop new perspectives that invigorate teaching in both creative writing and the visual arts.

LH: What would happen if artists and writers sat down together on a regular basis to talk about their creative projects and their teaching? We could make some conclusions about overlap among our disciplines and how we can borrow from each other. What if artists at a university tapped musicians to discuss the physicality of their practices? What if poets, theatre professors, and musical professionals discussed voice techniques? What if fiction writers, painters, and historians explored together how narrative employs time and place?

AL: Clearly, the term and concept of *studio* emerges as crucial for the three of us. A space in which art is produced or performed through interaction both with the artistic medium – words on a page, paint from brush to canvas, a computer mouse and screen – and also as we share with other artists.

The Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) *Director's Handbook* defines three types of graduate creative writing programmes, each with a different balance between studio and other pedagogical approaches. The common focus is each student's writing, and those programmes that label themselves primarily as studio programmes 'most closely parallel studio programs in music, dance, and the visual arts. Most of the degree work is done in workshops, independent writing projects or tutorials, and thesis preparation' (Association of Writers and Writing Programs 2011, 7).

LH: In art making, the *studio* is not only a physical space of production but encourages students to research and experiment to develop a studio practice that is cultivated in the classroom. The genesis of an undergraduate art education begins with students partaking in group critiques and dialogues to articulate verbally what they are exploring visually, while upper-division coursework develops into more creative and individualised projects and one-on-one critiques. These early stages are essential for a student to begin to set up a studio space of his or her own that will eventually be an outward expression of not only the work being produced but also as a physical informant of the concepts explored in the artist's work.

CJ: In graphic design, the term *studio* is applied differently during one's educational experience than it is in professional practice. Courses required for majors are labelled as studio courses and reflect similar objectives as creative writing and studio art.

Lower-division courses combine design and studio art students who share physical space in painting, drawing, and sculpture foundation courses. As design students enter upper-division courses, they are introduced to digital media and technique. The studio space and structure change to reflect this new technological medium. The undergraduate studio course provides a location where students not only interact with materials and develop content for their work but also provides a transcendent space where students begin placing work in historical and contemporary contexts and where considerations for cultural, social, and semiotic implications are initiated. These design studio courses include a component of making work as well as research, theory, seminar, and critiques. Explorations, experimentation, and defining one's creative originality continue outside the classroom and will develop in parallel to other studio courses threaded into the curriculum.

AL: Creative writing as a field doesn't break down the undergraduate curriculum that neatly, though a given programme or professor often gives attention to specific goals for students. According to *The Director's Handbook*, 'Whereas the general goal for a graduate program in creative writing is to nurture and expedite the development of a literary artist, the goal for an undergraduate program is mainly to develop a well-rounded student in the liberal arts and humanities, a student who develops a general expertise in literature, in critical reading, and in persuasive writing' (Association of Writers and Writing Programs 2011, 35). These categories of expertise reflect areas of study in English departments and parallel relationships among areas in art departments, including art history and theory.

It sounds as if undergraduates in art and design are very aware of how they are becoming artists. Though programmes vary, creative writing promotes generalism – well-roundedness – on the undergraduate level. Many undergraduates write in more than one genre, many programmes include multiple genres in the introductory course, and most programmes have hefty literature requirements.

LH: College Art Association (CAA) also has separate standards for undergraduate and MFA programmes and distinguishes between the BA, which has a liberal arts context akin to what AWP advocates, and the BFA, which includes greater focus in studio art and art history. Very similar to creative writing, the trajectory of learning outcomes toward a career for a visual artist is much more mystifying in terms of how one becomes an actual practicing artist, in large part because it is unlikely one will get a salary for making artwork upon graduation, as opposed to the clearer trajectory of graphic design. Many art majors go on to very creative careers, art making or otherwise, but benefit from this same well-rounded education.

AL: AWP makes little distinction between the BA and BFA but does distinguish the MFA from the undergraduate programme in significant ways. The MFA is a professional and terminal degree.

LH: At the graduate level, MFA students in studio art inhabit a studio for two to three years. They do not treat the studio as an exhibition space but, rather, use it as a physical space to make, collect, look, research, and glean from influences and inspirations to create a body of work that cumulates in a cohesive exhibition. The one-on-one critique interactions students have with professors and critics is the common model for most MFA programmes and also serves as an introduction to the interaction that professional artists have in studio visits with gallerists, writers, curators, and collectors after the completion of their education.

CJ: It is not common for graphic designers to pursue an MFA unless they are interested in academia or research. The majority of students who graduate from undergraduate programmes will enter the work force right away. Graphic designers who do pursue the MFA will use their studio as a space for discussions and critique.

The term *studio* is much more fluid and organic in design education than in professional practice. The studio in professional practice becomes more rigid and reflects the physical place of business in design. The majority of design studios are small business hubs where designers, account executives, clients, and project managers share a space.

AL: Visual art practices suggest that creative writers might give greater attention to these distinctions and relationships between practice as a student and practice as a professional. Of course, we see a connection between developing a writing practice as a student and continuing to read and write over a lifetime; it's all on the same continuum.

At the same time, creative writing teachers readily admit that most of our students, even our MFA students, will not go on to publish books. The visual arts, especially in graphic design, see a more overt connection between what happens in an academic programme and the career the student goes on to

have. Even if my students don't go on to publish poetry collections, what careers am I preparing them for? I'm interested in what kinds of lives creative writing degrees make possible.

All three of us ask our students to develop creative ways of seeing, thinking about, and articulating the world. These skills and habits of mind are useful in and of themselves, and in a variety of pursuits our students may have. Creative writing plays an important role in forming literary citizens, and we need to articulate the relationship between what we are doing in our programmes and classrooms and what our alums will be doing with their careers and their larger lives.

CJ: Graphic design has both an accreditation association, National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), and also a professional organization, the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), suggesting the two distinct arenas: inside the academy and the so-called real world or profession. Also, the rarity of an undergraduate BFA student pursuing a graduate degree suggests the strong preparatory approach to professional application over research in graphic design, whether at the undergraduate or graduate level.

LH: This relationship between education and career is an important difference among fields in the arts. The path toward professionalism in the field of visual art shares a similarity to creative writing, where many art students go on to be involved with the arts through galleries, museums, curatorial positions, and even as critics, but only a very small percentage will become exhibiting artists. Especially over the last decade, an increasing trend I've noticed in galleries is that almost all younger exhibiting contemporary artists have MFA degrees. It's rare for emerging artists to not be linked with a MFA programme and, therefore, a specific pedagogy associated with the art market and gallery or the museum collective of a specific city.

Perhaps the MFA gives a physical space in which to encounter critiques and professors in the same format in which a professional artist meets with galleries, museums, and curators, whereas a graphic design student can get a job and essentially be mentored in a professional environment in the early stages of a career.

AL: In the arts, there exists a long tradition of the mentor–apprentice relationship. Though we are teachers inside educational institutions, the process of critique – workshopping, in the case of creative writing – upon which we base our pedagogy, draws from that tradition. The one-on-one attention a student artist or writer receives puts that student in the role of apprentice. Of course, teaching and mentoring aren't the same thing, and we're not working with all our students day to day as, say, a stonecutter and his apprentices would have toiled together to build a church in yesteryear. Yet, through workshopping, individual conferences, and informal advising inter-action, our academic programmes mimic that sort of good counsel (Leahy and Szporluk 2010).

In fact, academic programmes seem especially good places for the arts – visual or written – to flourish because they serve as hubs where creative people can congregate with experts and with relative validation for what we do. As

Nancy Andreasen notes in *The Creating Brain*, '[C]reative people are likely to be more productive and more original if surrounded by other creative people. This too produces an environment in which the creative brain is stimulated to form novel connections and novel ideas' (Andresen 2005, 129). Our job is to create an environment that stimulates the minds of creative people and to nudge, advise, and critique there.

LH: While the studio apprenticeship model is not relevant any longer, it is common for students in MFA programmes to become studio assistants for the professors with whom they work in graduate school. This kind of practical hands-on learning is different from the conceptual and theory-based art-making found in most MFA programmes. This environment allows for continued mentorship and a space for young artists to develop their own studio practice while being able to take part in many aspects of the art and gallery world that are not addressed in academia. Many students who graduate from an MFA programme look for guidance on how to get gallery representation and to polish the technical aspects of their work that are conceptually flushed out in school.

CJ: Printers and print shops were the first to do the jobs of what we know as graphic design today. To practice as a printer, one needed to seek an apprenticeship with a printer willing to mentor. The printer would gain extra help in exchange for his knowledge, room, and board. In its early years, as graphic design broke away from the printing sector and became its own sector in creative development, learning the skills of graphic design reflected a similar mentor-apprentice relationship.

This tradition still underpins a major segment in graphic design education. For example, internships at design agencies are required and students complete 120 hours at an off-campus design agency in exchange for academic credit. Both full- and part-time teachers are expected to be current practicing designers in order to pass on relevant knowledge of the field in the classroom. Several chapters of the professional association, AIGA, offer a seven-month mentorship programme with volunteer professional designers beginning at the high-school level.

Importantly, the faculty-to-student ratio is kept relatively small, usually 1-to-18 (depending on various goals and constraints), in order to manage a level of individual commitment to each student's development.

AL: We also see a small class size as part of the connection between education and the larger practice. AWP recommends 15 students at most for workshops, with 12 as ideal.

Several years ago, AWP changed its name from the Association of Writing Programs to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. That recognises the two arenas – education and profession – and welcomes writers from outside the academy. The field, in at least a symbolic way, makes a distinction that could be helpful in articulating the difference between student and professional and, at the same time, implies an important connection.

CJ: In 2010, AIGA held a design educators' conference titled 'New contexts/ New practices' and organised by the North Carolina State graphic design faculty. The conference included six topics: changing conditions; shifting

paradigms; social economies; design research; interdisciplinarity; and designing for experience. Emphasis is placed on the speed in which design is changing, but design education is slower to respond and prepare students for real-world applications and expectations.

LH: The College Art Association (CAA) represents artists and art programmes in the academy. Just as AWP states for the MFA in creative writing, the CAA asserts the MFA as the terminal degree. There is a clear goal for 'professional competency in the visual arts and contemporary practices. To earn an MFA, a practicing artist must exhibit the highest level of accomplishment through the generation of a body of work. The work needs to demonstrate the ability to conceptualise and communicate effectively by employing visual language to interpret ideas' (College Art Association 2008). CAA suggests minimum required credits, coursework in art history and visual culture, and a final exhibition. In some ways, it offers very clear and rigorous guidelines; it takes what we do seriously so that others (like university administrators) will too.

But there's also an overt recognition that programmes vary widely. Many of the requirements of MFA programmes today are accompanied by the completion of a substantial written thesis in addition to the MFA thesis exhibition in a gallery. This requires the combination of art theory, art history, writing, and the work developed in the studio practice.

AL: Those guidelines sound like the best of both worlds: student and apprentice. That combination of theoretical and practical is rationale for housing the arts in universities.

CJ: NASAD, graphic design's academic accreditation arm, determines the standards and guidelines for graphic design undergraduate and graduate programmes. NASAD's purpose and philosophy is summarised as follows: 'Art and design are professions requiring talent, knowledge, skill, and dedication. Employment depends almost entirely on demonstrated competence. Success is based primarily on work rather than on credentials. Experience tells us that art and design, though dependent on talent, inspiration, and creativity, require much more to function as a significant spiritual and educational force. Talent without skills, inspiration without knowledge, and creativity without technique can account for little but lost potential. The primary purpose of schools of art and design is to help individual students turn talent, inspiration, creativity, and dedication into significant potential for service to the development of art and design culture in its multiple dimensions' (NASAD).

It is interesting to note the differences in how design education is framed between the two graphic design organisations. NASAD places emphasis on talent, creativity, and technique, whereas the professional organisation, AIGA, places priorities on preparing professionals for social and cultural problem solving, design research, advancement in technology, and interdisciplinarity. Design theory, visual literacy, visual histories, formal critiques, and design discourse are threaded through the undergraduate programme. Classroom projects help develop macro methods of research and process (e.g. participatory methods, benchmarking, etc.) and micro methods of research (e.g. image

research, client objective, etc.) that reflect the concerns stated by the AIGA educators conference.

LH: In conceptual investigations of research and development, perhaps it is at the initial brainstorming stage that our three disciplines share the point when students are being the most creative. The above statement by NASAD holds very true to visual arts as well: 'creativity without technique can account for little but lost potential'. All three disciplines – creative writing, studio arts, and graphic design – are concerned with creativity as an essential magical component to the wellness and success of a student's learning. We are continually asking ourselves how we can best foster and encourage these traits while instilling competent technical skills that will lead to a confident and creative student.

This is a difficult balance. Too much technique and rigour can lead to an over-practicing, a *performance* of creativity. Not introducing enough skills results in a lot of energy and ideas with no way to make something substantial of that.

CJ: This idea of over-practising is a constant challenge in developing content for courses. Students easily over-prioritise learning software as a way to compensate for the much harder skill of developing conceptual thinking. The result of over-practicing in graphic design is a project that appears polished and finished but with no substantial idea. This conclusion may also manifest because of back-to-back rigorous scheduling and a multitude of constraints.

AL: That difficult balance – of talent, energy, ideas, skills, practice – seems central for all of us. Investigation of creativity by cognitive scientists points to talent not playing nearly as large a role as we've traditionally thought (Andresen 2005; Flaherty 2004). While we can't teach talent per se, we can model and guide motivation and skills, which ideally go hand in hand, one fuelling the other. Energy and ideas are tricky to teach, but we can create environments that help spark and nourish curiosity, serendipity, and a variety of other less tangible things that we think of as inspiration or talent.

Classroom Assessment Techniques lists writing skills, think for self, and analytic skills as the top three teaching goals for English, where creative writing programmes are often housed. In fact, across the humanities, we want students to think for themselves (without classes becoming some free-for-all). Our top goals in creative writing, despite its usual disciplinary home in English departments, may be closer to the priorities of the arts: aesthetic appreciation, creativity, and think for self (Angelo and Cross 1993, 368).

It's important to note the differences, too, among our disciplines. Writing skills are central to creative writing (we have *writing* in the name of the field, after all).

CJ: Writing is especially relevant in graphic design. Lower- and upper-division design courses include a seminar and writing component. Students are expected to formalise not only their own work analytically but also to analyse the work of others using established formal vocabulary shared in design and art. A writing programme begins sophomore year that stays consistent throughout the requirements of the graphic design programme. Every project requires a written statement that includes: (1) stating the problem and

addressing constraints, requirements, and research methods of the project; (2) explaining the concept and how formal decisions (e.g., typography, colour, choice of imagery, visual composition, etc.) support the idea; (3) describing decisions behind formal elements; and (4) providing how their influences and decisions affect the placement of their work in a context of contemporary and/ or historical influences.

LH: In a studio programme, writing is used to pinpoint conceptual rigor and theoretical discourse outside the work, not necessarily within it. For foundation courses, writing is not as important for students as they are encouraged to amass technical proficiencies and formal aspects of creating work, while using group critiques to develop skills to define in language what they are seeing visually within the work. This ability to *read* a work formally, solely based on looking at the work without outside information, is an entry point, which then develops from critique into writing. Dave Hickey, in his well-known book *Air Guitar* on art theory and art criticism, states, 'Colleagues of mine will tell you that people despise critiques because they fear our power. But I know better. People despise critiques because people despise weakness, and criticism is the weakest thing you can do in writing. It is the written equivalent of air guitar – flurries of the silent, sympathetic gestures with nothing at their heart but the memory of the music. It produces no knowledge, states no facts, and never stands alone. It neither saves the things we love (as we would wish them saved) nor ruins the things we hate' (Hickey 1997, 163). In upper-division courses and exhibitions, artist statements help to define intent of the subject matter and technical execution and place the work within a historical and contemporary context.

AL: These written statements sound like the reflective essays I ask my students to include in their portfolios. The graphic design and studio arts models propose that students articulate their process in relation to learning and/or audience. In creative writing workshop discussions, the author often remains silent so as to not explain the work before others discuss its effects. We often ignore the author's intentions, assuming that she will recognize when an intended effect diverges from the actual effect on readers (and be able to decide which should be encouraged through revision). The author could use a written statement to document constraints and decisions, and such a statement could be done before and/or after workshopping. That way, the student becomes aware of gaps between intention and effect and can rethink decisions, perhaps letting go of triggering intentions in favour of something more original sparked by readers.

Whether in creative writing or in art, written statements make students more aware of their learning. Awareness can be a time-saver in the long run of a writing career.

LH: Similar in studio critiques, it's common for the instructor to have the student whose work is being critiqued remain quiet while the class discusses the work, which is important feedback to see if the artist's intentions in the work are visually translated. In art museums as well there is an impulse to use language as a guide when we do not understand a work – we look for the wall label to illuminate the meaning. In any learning environment, written

statements can be useful for accountability of one's thoughts or impulses that help to define parameters and goals in a project. Even articulating simple things, such as defining materiality to link with specific concepts or artistic influences, would be helpful for the direction of the work.

Yet there is great value when a student follows some sort of lead that is outside language, outside of description, in the physical act of making. When students are neither performing creativity, nor relying on direction, they are *creators*. There is such a rich history of artists describing meaning – finding language – months or years later; it was almost through subconscious direction that a great breakthrough occurred.

The South African artist William Kentridge, who uses drawing and film together in his work, speaks about art as an active event when the artists must be open and confident with the physical making to move forward along the trajectory and see new things about the work: 'It's a physical process, new images and ideas suggest themselves' (Kentridge 1999, 2009). I find my studio art students seem more inspired and take new directions in their work through reading about art rather than writing about art.

AL: Creative writers resist over-articulation of intent and process, too. Poet Larissa Szporluk and I grappled with this issue. We acknowledge the importance of imitation (which requires reading) and the usefulness of writing exercises that encourage invention and, as Szporluk says, 'the marriage of two previously disconnected things' (Leahy and Szporluk 2010, 64). But even invention can be tied to intention, to solving the problem the exercise poses or to a preconceived purpose. Ultimately, we want to end up in what Szporluk calls *deep imagination*. Poet Jane Hirshfield puts it this way: 'a kind of fullness that overspills into everything. One breath taken completely; one poem, fully written, fully read – in such a moment, anything can happen' (Hirshfield 1997, 32).

CJ: In the field of typography,[2] writing as a technique and application to content is addressed. Designers are required to write headlines, taglines, slogans, mission statements, body copy, etc. and are introduced to concepts that include tone-of-voice, writing structure, hierarchy, narratives, and editing. Donald Norman provides an appropriate comparison to design and writing in *Writing as Design, Design as Writing*. As with writing, design has a reader. Design is *read*. Design communicates usually with definitive intention. 'A good designer and a good writer have to share certain characteristics, among the most important being "empathy"' (Norman 1993, 175–186).

AL: We acknowledge the role of empathy in creative writing, too. In a *Poets & Writers* article, Jane Ciabattari mentions it as one of the lifelong skills creative writing students develop (Ciabattari 2005). Wallace Stegner talks of 'empathy, a capacity to enter into another mind without dominating it' (Stegner 2002, 52). Lisa Zunshine, most notably in *Why We Read*, is one of several literary theorists who argue that empathy is central to literature. The pretence of art has real effects of feeling.

LH: Absolutely true! Designers are constantly assigned the task of having the visuals for the words say something about how we feel without the meaning of the word.

A great example is the work of Ed Ruscha; he invented fonts for painted words as a pictorial landscape to speak about how we interpret and ingest meaning. One of my favourite works by Ruscha, which I first saw at the Los Angeles County Museum when I was a student, is the word 'Adios' (1967) painted as a puddle of spilled beans and bean juice. I always loved the confusion of the viewer: registering the image of the beans before language, or perhaps it was the other way around.

Ruscha worked in an advertising agency after completing his education at Chouinard Art Institute (now California Institute of the Arts) in 1960, and as a painting student there, he was in the midst of post-abstract-expressionism influences from New York and the early dawning of pop art, and also a more graphic approach to art with artists like Jasper Johns. His eventual studio practice straddled both worlds of design and art and became something new.

AL: Our disciplines may be even more closely aligned than I'd imagined. Our goals aren't about knowing, or memorising factual information, though that kind of study can be foundational. These skills we value most for creative writers, visual artists, and graphic designers must be built over time, through practice, and by the sort of straddling the Ruscha example demonstrates. Our fields invite that wonderful confusion or disorientation as aspects of originality and as part of our practice and process.

LH: Our discussion of all these goals and skills points to the artistic *process*. Historically, the idea of a studio visit was valued not only because on any one occasion you might see new work or more work that the artist has created but also because one would be privy to the process, as if given a sneak peek at deciphering the creative steps that one took toward creating an artwork.

For students, this focus on process may start by having been guided to think about their physical space as they stand in front of an easel, how they organise a palette, where they keep their brushes beside them, and many other seemingly trivial moves that, over time and practice, will develop into a rigorous and dedicated studio practice. It is through exploring and developing a physical space to work that many conceptual issues get explored in art. While there are many conceptual crossovers between design and creative writing, undoubtedly art is the most physical practice and, therefore, the space in which the act of creating becomes intrinsically linked to the finished piece. The studio is the physical manifestation of the artistic process.

AL: A focus on process clearly links our disciplines and, importantly, distinguishes our teaching from those of many other disciplines. Our pedagogy embodies practice, and we want students to cultivate habits of mind.

The concept of *studio* in art and graphic design, then, is equivalent to the concept of *workshop* in creative writing. A workshop, in commonplace parlance, is a physical space, but in creative writing pedagogy, it is larger than that. Rather than referring to the place in which the student writes in isolation, the workshop is the classroom of writers, the act of sharing and critique, the passing of habits and vocabulary from teacher to students, and the nudge into revision. By experiencing the workshop, students internalise the deeper processes of our work as poets, fiction writers, essayists, or playwrights.

We use writing assignments of imitation and invention as ways to invite creative habits of mind. The first few times a student writes a sonnet, for instance, the result is likely to be hit and miss, but the task requires creative problem solving and focus on certain aspects of language. The focus on form may also free up subconscious play with areas of content because an artist can't possibly keep every choice at the tip of the tongue (or fingers) at the same time. When fledgling sonneteers share and discuss their attempts, they become more aware of their decisions and surprised at the variety that emerges within seemingly narrow constraints. The workshop is a process through which we not only practice writing but also become aware of our development.

CJ: In other words, our disciplines share an attention to the interrelationship of form and content and also of practice and awareness, though the straddling or balance varies across disciplines.

Content of graphic design projects is diverse and is placed within social, commercial, trans-cross-multi-*and/or*-inter-disciplinary, cross-cultural and/or political contexts. Students are required to take accountability in the impact and footprint of the work they create. *Impact* refers to how visual and textual messaging is received by the viewer and how meaning is transferred in the context and ideology into which the work is being placed. This also includes the more literal impact of choice surrounding materials and production processes, such as in printing and packaging.

A target audience is also provided at the beginning of a project in order to justify and evaluate student choices in visual and verbal language. For example, a political campaign project is assigned with a pre-defined audience of people who are 18–25 years old with a gross income of $30,000–35,000 per year and who have never voted in past elections. The research, approach, placement, and effect of creative decisions would be significantly different than the same project with an audience twice as old with twice the income and who have claimed a political party for several years. These constraints, or parameters of the target audience, were reflected in the design campaigns during the 2008 presidential election between Barak Obama and John McCain, who defined their target audiences very differently.

LH: Audience is a fantastic question for studio artists because, while one of the very first stages of a design project is to identify the client or target audience, this aspect is rarely defined in studio art. If we can think of design as a visual democracy, we can think of art as a visual hierarchy in which the artist chooses how much to explain (in the work or peripherally). While context is always important, specific sign and symbols need to be decoded in some work for a viewer to be inspired and challenged by a piece of art.

Many successful artists today address conceptual universalities but, more importantly, these arise from some personal narrative. The audience isn't as clear in contemporary art. Shepard Fairy was quite well-known for years as the street artist in San Francisco making the street posters of Andre the Giant; I doubt he had the intentions of developing a visual style to target young Democrats in a presidential election. His work that made him well known was not even intended for a gallery or for financial gain. For a long time, his audience was himself and only his universe of peers in the know and only

inadvertently every lucky San Franciscan that came upon his work on BART or walking down the street. The Democratic Party successfully used his visual style to target back the audience from which the style had emerged in the first place.

AL: These intersections – between the personal and the universal, between accessibility and the need to be decoded, among different disciplines or areas of endeavour – point to creative writing and the arts as inherently interdisciplinary. While poets have written poems about poetry, our subject matter can come from history, science, personal experience, and so on.

That's why I find Steven Johnson's book *Where Good Ideas Come From* such a good reference point for thinking about creative writing pedagogy and about the usefulness of the academy for the arts. He writes, '[E]ncouragement does not necessarily lead to creativity. Collisions do – the collisions that happen when different fields of expertise converge in some shared physical or intellectual space' (Johnson 2010, 163). Of course, neither he nor I dismiss encouragement. The point is that the academy in the United States serves the same role as the pub in Ireland during the last century or the coffee shop during the Enlightenment. As teachers, we orchestrate a shared physical and intellectual space in which creativity can flourish.

LH: This circles back on the idea of *studio* as a social construction where creativity is fostered by more creativity – and not necessarily in one's discipline. Some of the greatest artwork and writing of the early 20th century came out of small salons where writers, thinkers, and visual creators came together to share, learn, and grow from each other. One of the most fantastic and famous examples is the salon held by Guertrude Stein and her brother Leo Stein as they started to collect art where everyone from Picasso, Matisse, Rousseau, and writers Max Jacob and Guillaume Apollinaire frequented. Their salon became the place people came to see the cutting-edge artwork and talk about it, which not only helped to propel these artists into fame but also became the place and process through which the artists themselves developed ideas by interacting with writers and thinkers outside their own disciplines. (There was an exceptional exhibition held recently at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art that shows the collection, highlighting the importance of the salon to elevate many careers into fame). I wonder if it would be beneficial in our classrooms, as they become more interdisciplinary, to take on the model of a salon and to practice creativity through interaction.

That notion that poets have written poems about poetry but that most poems focus their subjects toward outside experiences rings true for art as well. The most interesting or engaging art pieces historically have an interaction with something *outside* using the discipline of art as a subject of its own work and not simply self-reflective. If this is the trend for successful designers and writers, then encouraging interdisciplinary as a pedagogical model seems crucial to our students' success.

CJ: In graphic design, the nature of the client-designer relationship exposes the profession to levels and lengths of various disciplines. In one eight-hour day, a designer can work on projects ranging from healthcare and aviation to candy and toy products. Projects are client driven, which dictates the content a

designer researches and works in. Some may argue that, by this nature, graphic design is interdisciplinary, but I beg to differ. My proposal of interdisciplinarity is the exchange of activity and thinking between disciplines – emphasis on *exchange*. For example, students are required to obtain the skill set of conducting basic ethnographies, a skill in building empathy and perspective outside their own experiences. In a medicine design project, students invite people who use over-the-counter medicines into the design process as decision-makers. The exchange is between audience and designer, where the activity as user and designer equally affects the creative outcome. In typography, students consider the work of concrete and kinetic poetry and the role of typography, page composition, and authorship intersections more intimately.

AL: Our conversation is an invitation to simultaneously blur the lines between our disciplines and more clearly articulate those boundaries. In *Academic Instincts*, Marjorie Garber astutely points out, 'The inevitable consequence of interdisciplinarity may not be the end of the scholarly world as we know it but the acknowledgment that our knowledge is always partial, rather than total' (Garber 2003). Creative writers and artists seem attuned to this partial-ness and willing to explore collisions among ideas.

LH: Even if these collaborations do not immediately produce a product – whether an article, a musical composition, or a piece of artwork – the creative capital gained from these discussions would be undoubtedly monumental. This intersection is process, and while creative process may be performed or expressed differently in various disciplines, sharing these creative steps would be enriching.

I teach a course called 'The Intersection of Art and Science' with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. My desire to teach this class was not to pair science and art next to each other so that we could see similarities or differences but, instead, to see where each discipline could learn from the other through observation and discussion of creative process. When we spoke to the engineers who designed and built the Mars Rovers, the students could understand that each step was about problem solving. How do you put a machine on the surface of another planet where we don't know the atmosphere, the contents of the soil, whether there is extreme heating and cooling, and a countless list of other unpredictable variables? All normal operating environments are out the window. You have to think outside of the box; if you don't, you're probably not going to get very far, not to Mars anyway. My students could relate to this situation because the engineers were making something that just has never existed in the world before. I think this is true for writing, design, and art: our desire to create something that has never existed before, that which creatively pushes the boundaries, inspires, and surprises us.

AL: Robert Frost famously wrote, 'No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader' (Frost 1972). Creative writers and artists must surprise ourselves in order to make something that has not existed in the world before.

CJ: In part, in order to explore that kind of surprise, Lia and I discussed teaching a team-taught course with a third faculty in architecture entitled 'Up'. The course could be taught in multiple disciplines with possible contributions

from art, science, history, psychology, and theology. As a conceptual course that merges three disciplines into one classroom, it would explore all things unbounded by the earth. Topics would include looking at how things move in air, images that point us upward (conceptually, physically, and spiritually), go over the history and future of flight on the earth and space, look at the anatomy of birds, understand the physics behind airplanes, explore the dynamic structures of clouds and the fears of flying, and conclude with students taking part in a discovery flight. Project outcomes would be defined by the exchange of the three disciplines and team-teaching would nurture the three areas into actively looking at and discussing their perspectives.

LH: Taking one subject that has inspired multiple disciplines would offer students a new perspective of researching one's creative subject matter. Perhaps some of the first steps to encouraging our students' creativity are exploring the process of various creative disciplines and, through these early stages, making a case they are linked together. And, let's face it, what student wouldn't be thrilled to take a course that moves them outside the gravitational boundaries and offers flying lessons at the end of the semester?

AL: This course is why we must talk across academic departments and disciplines. I wrote a chapbook called *Turns about a Point* that draws together poems about the concept of flight. I even took a few flying lessons.

A course like that could include reading of literature about flight, perhaps Alain de Botton's essay 'On Travelling Places' (de Botton 2002), astronaut Michael Collins's *Carrying the Fire* (Collins 2009), Helen Humphreys's short novel *Leaving Earth* (Humphreys 2000), Margaret Lazarus Dean's novel *The Time It Takes to Fall* (Dean 2007), or the poems that *Air & Space* published online for National Poetry Month (*Air & Space Magazine*). There's a marvellous online collection of true stories called *Airplane Reading* – 'a kind of storytelling that can animate, reflect on, and rejuvenate the experience of flight' (*Airplane Reading*) – that's continually expanding; students could submit their writing there for possible publication.

Students in such a course might also consider how we use language and metaphor. Why is *up* as an idea generally a good thing? What does it mean to cheer someone up (or to feel down in the dumps)? In aviation museums, why are aircraft hung from the ceiling in an *up*right position that shows viewers its underside? What does it mean to be upside-down? It also might be fruitful to study words and phrases for *up* across different languages.

LH: It is clear how valuable these interactions can be as we prepare our students to be interdisciplinary creators in the 21st century. The next step for us is to gain intuitional support for these kinds of co-taught courses and other interactions that will give our students the fuel for graduate school and unique professional directions.

CJ: Conversations like ours open up possibilities for ourselves as creative artists and as teachers and, therefore, open up possibilities for our students – and for our institutions. We each do our work differently, of course. Those differences make the intersections all the more exciting.

AL: Frost writes, 'Scholars get theirs [their knowledge] with conscientious thoroughness along projected lines of logic; poets theirs through cavalierly and

as it happens in and out of books. They stick to nothing deliberately, but let what will stick to them like burrs where they walk in the fields' (Frost 1972, 395). So a creative writer, a studio artist, and a graphic designer have just meandered through a field together, pointing out and discussing flora and fauna as we went. As we continue to explore the distinctions among our separate fields, we will likely find reasons – unexpected burrs that have clung to us – to use these intersections within our teaching.

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Notes

1. The three authors are also part of our college's CRASsH – Chapman Research in the Arts Social Sciences and Humanities – project that encourages interdisciplinary research. (http://www.chapman.edu/wilkinson/crassh-burn/).
2. Typography is the study of the appearance of letterforms on the printed page, the history of technologies including automisation (from physical to digital) and reproduction, understanding cultural codes and systems of language, and arrangement of language and meaning.

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