

NW Network Group
Universities of Central Lancashire, Chester, Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan
and Cumbria Institute of the Arts,

**Case Studies in support of the Support for New Academic Staff (SNAS) Strand
3 project**

Linking Disciplinary Research to Teaching

Interviewee

John Renshaw

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Interviewer

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Introduction

JR is a highly experienced academic with experience in a range of educational contexts - from primary and secondary school art education, adult education, Foundation studies, Undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. His teaching has always been driven by an interest in the relationship between pedagogy and arts practice originally involving an approach that delivered teacher education through an encouragement to engage directly with visual arts practice.

Describes his research as being centred on a **drawing based practice**. Built around issues derived from cognitive psychology – how we make decisions within a drawing practice, **problematizing aesthetic preferences**.

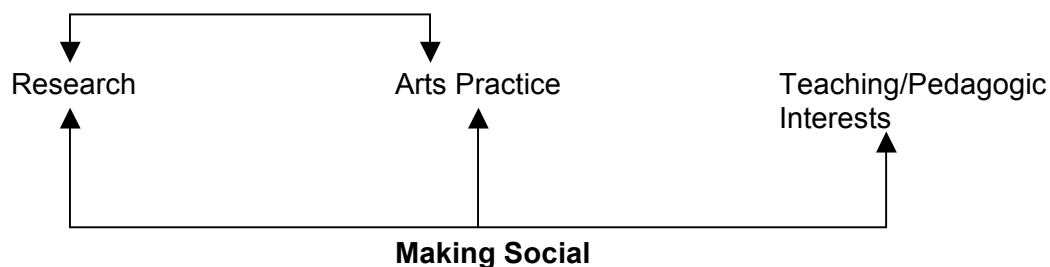
Also involves the observation of students' activities and the ways in which they make decisions as a part of visual experiences.

Suggests that he is attempting to disclose how a sense of visual organisation as individualised patterning emerges in the practices of drawing and painting.

Is currently gathering together information/data much of which tends to be informal or anecdotal.

Own studio practice is intimately connected to these research interests and impacts back on to them in the form of recurrent visual/pictorial issues and experiences. There is a consistent concern for the establishment of context that is emphatically visual – a sense of a visuality that is heightened by reflections on the psychology of perception.

Emphasises his interest in the wider implications of visual education – notions of **educating through awareness and celebration of the visual** in a broader social arena. Interests seem to be more than just educating artists and more about a **visual arts education that provides a platform for experiencing the world**.



Insists that the use of visual elements as an informed visual/pictorial agenda will always become a catalyst for other lived experiences. His arts practice is always imbued with the resonance of other experiences and he recognises his products of practice (as drawings or paintings) become ***machines for seeing with***.

A research forum has been established at Chester to encourage the sharing of practice/practices and to create a community of practitioner- researchers. This includes researchers and practitioners from other disciplines. A Centre for Practice – Based Research has been formed with conference planned for next year. Funding for this has been made available from the institution.

Research is encouraged, there is some investment in research staff and events and a sense that, for all staff, research informs teaching. The University maintains a

postgraduate programme in Art & Design Education, although this is managed through the School of Education. However, Chester appears to have retained a strong interest in teaching - given its origins as a teacher training institution.

Drawing continues to inform approaches to teaching with a continuing focus on both conceptual and visual approaches.

Has identified a key role in selecting and establishing an appropriate teaching team with a balance of opinions and artistic standpoints, which demonstrate an explicit focus on the visual presence of the work. But also recognises the need to encourage and exploit the impact of challenging the personal positions of staff and students through experience of alternative and often conflicting artistic positions.

JR is currently working towards an exhibition with DB-S in Chester planned for November 2006. This will take the form of a **collaborative debate** exploring a shared agenda derived from **transactions between painting and photography**.

Summary of Key Issues

- **drawing based practice.**
- **problematizing aesthetic preferences**
- **educating through awareness and celebration of the visual**
- **a visual arts education that provides a platform for experiencing the world.**
- **collaborative debate**
- **transactions between painting and photography**

It is important to recognise JR's continued belief in a fundamental, almost utopian belief in the possibility for an education through a study of, and an engagement with, an arts practice. This underpins his approach to both teaching and to his research practices.