



### **Resource Review**

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#### **Review:**

The Journal of Writing in Creative Practice is the 'official organ' of the Writing PAD (Writing Purposefully in Art and Design) network, founded six years ago by Julia Lockheart and Professor John Wood at Goldsmiths, University of London, Maziar Raein now at Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo (KHIO) but then at Central St Martins College of Art and Design, and Harriet Edwards at the Royal College of Art.

As a participant member of several highly rewarding Writing PAD conference events, I am pleased to see this new publication take up and take forward the issues and concerns of a growing constituency of interest in writing within creative practice. With just two issues in its first volume published, this journal already occupies a particularly necessary critical niche in the ever-growing panoply of titles in the creative industries' field.

With design in mind (as the disciplinary well-spring and arguably native bias of the otherwise inclusive Writing PAD agenda), the journal's form accepts the publisher's design principles for format, page layout and low-key academic publication

aesthetics. As a result, it is well sized and easy to navigate, if somewhat unadventurous in design. Whilst 'visual texts are encouraged', for reasons of ecology and economy, images - both photographic and schematic - are reproduced in black and white, with variable legibility due to scale, image-resolution and partially recycled print stock. This 'fit for purpose' aesthetic is further underwritten by the 'notes to contributors', which lay out in detail the editorial requirements for standardisation of format and academic presentation of submissions.

Given this highly prescriptive framework, I was interested to see how the ambitious editorial pledge to support writing not just 'for' and 'in' (as one might anticipate) art, craft, designing and performance but also 'as' art, craft, designing and performance, would emerge in practice. With the current heat now gently simmering in the debate on methodology in practice-based PhDs and in the role of writing and research within arts education in general, there is no doubt that this journal is poised to make a timely contribution to the discourse in this contested field. Indeed the majority of articles pertinently address the many challenges and complexities outlined by Lockheart and Wood's inspirational editorial in the first issue. But they do so largely from an explicitly pedagogic context, and as such tend to utilise the prescribed 'clear' and accessible language of academia. The imperative to hold on to the 'p' word (purposefully) appears therefore, to have created an interesting paradoxical tension in the editorial scope of the JWCP. Where as educators we might wholeheartedly agree with Jane Graves' advocacy for the hidden, the un-certain, the risky and the subjective as key aspects of creativity (*Conversations heard and unheard; creativity in the studio and in writing*), and with Harriet Edwards' and Dr. Natalie Woolf's recognition that a designer's mind is more likely to produce less conventional writing and deploy heterogeneous textual modalities to better 'illustrate' their thesis (*Design research by practice modes of writing in a recent Ph.D. from the RCA*), their own writing readily falls within the 'for' art and 'in' design camps respectively. Dr. Mark Evans (*Another kind of writing: reflective practice and creative journals in the performing arts*) writes interestingly on a project to develop expressivity and ownership of reflective writing in students where the tutor aims and student experience seem to have slipped apart' - a not unfamiliar problem in academicised art education post-Coldstream Report, usefully rehearsed in Erik Borg's *Writing in fine arts and Design education in context* article.

Though these articles are richly informative, it was refreshing to note that texts in which the writer's will to play, *s'il vous plait*, with the conventions of academic writing; in particular Hanna Jones' abstract, where she make pithy use of quotation -

“Connect, Always Connect...” (Koestler 1964, p.231), and Dr. Janet Hand’s deployment of ‘side notes continued’ in *Art-Write* were more inclined towards the writing ‘as’ spectrum. Arguably however, only Mary Anne Francis’ *In the Café Flaubert* managed to fully rise to the challenge by parenthesising the meta-critical within the abstract thus leaving the body of the article to artfully play out a Socratic dialogue between the authorial artist and a fictional (?) professor on the subject of ‘truth regimes’ in the arch mise-en-scene of the eponymously named café. Delightful.

With such dense and demanding thought expressed in such consummate fashion in the JWCP, one wonders how the admirable ambition to encourage submissions from those whose quality of thought is not adequately represented by their writing abilities (in recognition of specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, presumably) will fare. No place here, given the insufficiencies of this author, to speculate on the complex whereabouts of sense, but, if writing is the primary means of articulating thought in the JWCP (in its present format at least) then how can it not, in the interests of communicative competency fall uncomfortably into the gap between the academic process of ‘writing-up’ as re-presented (thought) for others, and that of ‘writing-down’ as embodied and creative (thought) act?

Of course, one could always write with someone else. Whilst M. A. Francis cleverly acts as her own academic interlocutor for her thesis of ‘a writing-as-an-art-form as theory’, collaboration and co-authorship is another key theme of the JWCP editorial agenda. In response to this some collaborative articles are either straightforwardly credited as co-authored or else present a more corporate authorial identity where ‘there is no principal author or co-author’ as in *Walking with wolves: displaying the holding pattern* by Theodore Barth and Maziar Raein. Even apparently solo authored articles, such as Andrea Holland’s *The good collusion defeats the Lone Ranger* and Peter Spring’s complex *Adaptive Assembly*, explicitly address writing and the research process as social (and ecological) praxis and are thereby fundamentally co-operative. Perhaps future issues will focus more on the complex processes of collaborative writing.

In conclusion, the journal is a gripping read; erudite, challenging, at times playful and on occasions profound. It left this reader with an excited mind-ache and a cold bath - *where else does one get time to read these days?...Barth....Barthes...ah yes - the train.*

Claire Scanlon (with help from Paul Grivell)