Seminar to Master and Postgraduate students
Professor Anne Douglas

"Context is half the work": developing research through arts practice in transition

This seminar paper is based on a book chapter that outlines our doctoral/postdoctoral culture within On the Edge research.

2016   Douglas, A. "Context is half the work"[i] : developing doctoral research through arts practice in culture in Cartiere, C. and Zebracki, M. in *The Everyday Practice of Public Art: Art, Space and Social Inclusion*. London: Routledge pp 141-157

Fifteen years in development, this practice-led research programme is predominantly based in the visual arts. It traces the changing nature of the arts to public life through live projects co-produced between academic and cultural partners. Through the research we analyse activity as a complex community of academics, organizations and participants placing what we do in relation to histories of relevant artists' practices as well as critical theory and philosophy.

On the Edge started with the question: What does it mean to be a contemporary visual artist in remote, rural cultures? This question has evolved into a more fundamental set of questions about the role of the artist in public life in relation to ecology, culture and society with associated strands such as cultural leadership and the place of the artist, ecology, feminist manifestos as well as critical design.

The research is double threaded. It explores new forms of artistic practice in a changing world working with concepts such as improvisation and experimentation. In parallel we are evolving a new research paradigm in which the practice of the arts is central to the inquiry at all levels – ontological, epistemological and methodological.

The presentation will explore the evolution of our research questions over the fifteen years as a shared learning space and through particular projects. It will show the way in which individual PhDs open up new trajectories of research that problematise, enrich and develop our knowledge base.