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### ***Redefining Teaching and Learning Strategies in a Contemporary Art School Environment: Two Models for Discussion***

The separation of disciplines (areas of practice) in Australian art schools has been largely predicated on the histories of English art schools and on the tenets of modernism. While increasing interest in New Media and Electronic Art has seen the emergence of the multi-disciplinary art student and of hybrid art forms, textile students still make textiles in textile studios under the watchful eyes of textile lecturers. The same could be said for sculpture, painting, print media and ceramics.

Although post-modern theory dominates the current academic curriculum there is little evidence to support the view that the pluralist nature of this theory has influenced the structure of schools or courses. Therefore

- Do schools practice what they preach?
- Does the adoption of a pluralist attitude, of choice and relativism result in the denial of skills acquisition?

This paper will examine two models developed at Curtin University of Technology in response to the restrictions inherent in traditional art school values.

The first model, specific to Fibre/Textiles has evolved over some sixteen years. Until recently the Department of Fibre Textiles existed as a major subject area. Originally part of a larger school of Art and Design, the Department of Craft and Fine Art separated from Design in 1986 and was amalgamated into a School of Visual Arts some three years later. Regardless of the problems associated with ongoing philosophical and practical change, the identity and context of Fibre Textiles was based on an inclusive and flexible approach integrating the best of Art, Design and Craft theories and practice. The philosophical and structural flexibility enabled marginal practice to be equally positioned within the school and attracted students seeking an open ended academically challenging studio environment.

The second model describes the emergence of a new structure for learning within the School of Art. Now a part of a new Faculty of Built Environment, Art and Design, the Department of Art features broadly inclusive generic studio programmes enabling students to privilege specialisation or acknowledge diversity. Study programmes are

developed in a cross-disciplinary tutorial involvement and assessment processes engage all students and studio staff in dynamic holistic review settings.

The Curtin experience addresses many such issues arising from this dilemma. Particular reference will be made to the innovative and challenging strategies developed in one studio area to test structures and boundaries and to establish a learning environment based in Praxis: a space between theory and the making of art.

This paper will raise and question some of challenges facing Art Schools in the 21st. Century.

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