

# RADAR Editorial Review 2011

## Introduction

In 2011 it's difficult to review research and research funding in art, design and architecture without making reference to the economy and the broad changes taking place within the higher educational sector. Hopes for economic growth in the UK are now being pinned more clearly on the university sector that deals with STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The UK government increasingly views the university sector in terms of their economic role; a 'functional' definition of higher education is directly linked to jobs and STEM research, which in turn is directly linked to the immediate needs of the economy. The principal underlying theme that emerges here is art, design and architecture schools' relationship to the broader economic, educational and social environment. In this context RADAR 2011 reflects on the role of the designer and artist in society, traditionally perceived as an independent 'portfolio worker'.

However, design and to some extent art is now beginning to

be applied and appropriated in a wider sense to a growing number of society's 'grand challenges', including healthcare, ecology, communications and security. Art and design schools do not traditionally have a legacy of becoming actively involved in societal needs, although in RADAR 2010 we asked "how will our creative practitioners maximize their contribution to the cultural, social and economic well being of society?"

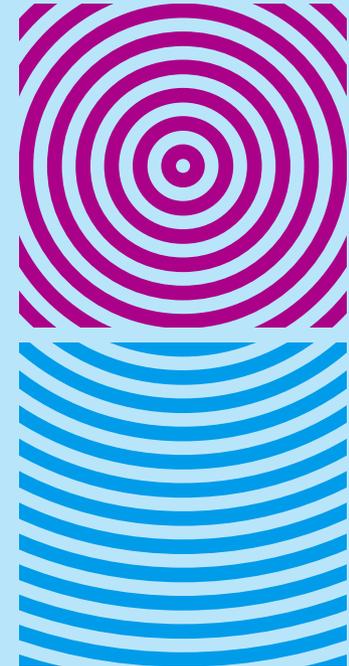
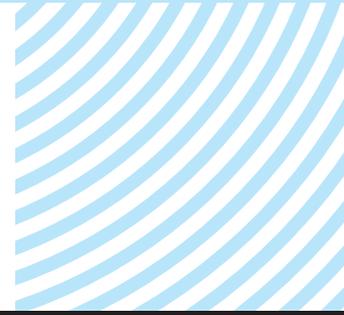
Pammi Sinha's (Subject Leader for Textiles) main research interest is in sustainability from an environmental, economic and social development perspective, particularly how design can contribute to these issues within developing economies. Through her work in Tanzania, Pammi examined how textiles waste is sorted, becomes part of the second hand clothes supply chain and the dilemmas regarding the proliferation of second hand market businesses and the struggle for existence of the local fashion and textiles producers. This interest in textiles waste management and its global

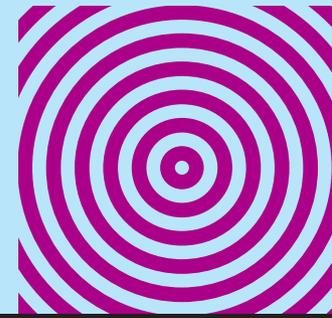
nature is the basis of her current three-year project funded by the University of Huddersfield's strategic University Research Fund (URF), commencing April 2011.

David Swann (Subject Leader for 3D and Interior Design) is currently a member of the Royal College of Art (RCA) Smart Pod design research team. His PhD research project: 'NHS at Home' examines how design and technology will shape the way that future healthcare is delivered, experienced and accepted in the 21st Century. Claire Barber (Lecturer in Textiles) and her students have been working with the Hope Centre, Bradford on a project to recycle and enhance through textile crafts abandoned sleeping bags left over from the Leeds Music Festival. Through the Hope Centre the 're-crafted' sleeping bags are given to the homeless during the UK winter months. Stephen Wigley (Senior Lecturer in Fashion Marketing) and Kevin Almond's (Subject Leader for Fashion) recent research investigates the effects

of the presumed 'obesity crisis' on fashion design, marketing and consumers. This research acknowledges the contradiction evident in the proven changes in the size, shape and weight of female UK fashion consumers while the industry that serves them remains apparently obsessed with unrealistic stereotypes of feminine beauty.

Government demands for an adapted 'output' may seem to clash with art and design schools' traditional position as autonomous institutions, where creative work seemingly could develop on its own terms without the demands for application. Back in 2000, Charles Leadbeater writing on the relationship between design education and the economy stated, "the real assets of the modern economy come out of our heads, not out of the ground: we need imagination, knowledge and talent" (*Living on Thin Air: The New Economy*, 2000). Although Professor Ellen Hazelkorn, Director of Research and Enterprise, and Dean of the Graduate Research School, Dublin Institute of Technology contests,





“As society demands more and more from art schools, their agenda needs to move from a desire to simply increase the general education level of the population to a greater concern to harness their education and research outputs to specific economic and social objectives. Art schools need to find ways to overcome their strong defence of individual art disciplines and all that represents in terms of their academic programmes, management and organization” (*Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education*, 2011).

The expectation remains that art and design schools should continue to supply the economy with fresh creative talent, developing innovations, which contribute economic recovery and growth. The significance of the creative industries to the UK economy is widely known although it is worth reminding ourselves of its overall contribution to the UK GDP. On 28th May 2010, the Prime Minister David Cameron gave a speech on ‘Transforming the British economy: Coalition

strategy for economic growth’ in which he highlighted the creative industries as an important growth area in rebalancing the economy. Creative employment provides around two million jobs, in the creative sector itself and in creative roles in other sectors. Employment in the sector has grown at double the rate of the economy as a whole.

In December 2010, the Department for Media Culture and Sport released the following information and statistics on the creative industries. In the summer quarter of 2010 (July to September), creative employment totalled just under 2.3 million jobs: 1.3 million jobs in the Creative Industries and 1 million further creative jobs in businesses related to these industries. The Creative Industries, excluding Crafts, accounted for 5.6% of Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2008. In 2010, there were an estimated 182,100 enterprises in the Creative Industries making up to 8.7% of all enterprises. The true number of enterprises in the Creative Industries is likely to be even higher, as certain

sectors such as Crafts contain predominantly small [portfolio] businesses. Exports of services from the Creative Industries totalled £17.3 billion in 2008, equating to 4.1% of all goods and services exported. (Source: [www.dcms.gov.uk](http://www.dcms.gov.uk))

The future of art, design and architecture schools and the research they produce would therefore seem critical to economic recovery and prosperity in the UK. However, art, design and architecture schools face many challenges over the forthcoming years; confronted by competition for recruitment and government focus on concentrating research funding on STEM subjects and onto a smaller number of elite universities, such as those represented by the Russell Group. It is understandable if art, design and architecture schools feel they are being pinched by the potentially contradictory demands of serving the economy with applied research, against a background of limited research funds whilst also giving due attention to the processes of

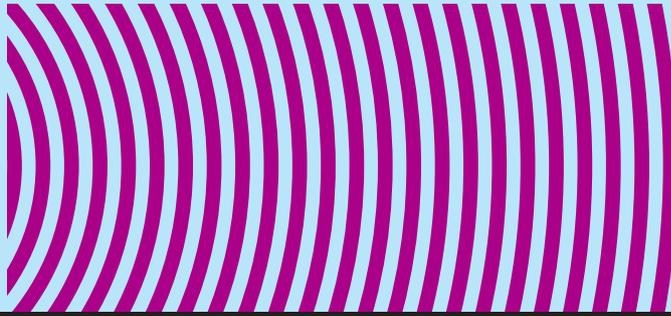
unlimited creativity that has previously brought cultural and economic success.

The government’s strategy that the university sector has to demonstrate its impact upon the cultural and economic life of society denotes the way research and knowledge is now understood and will continued to be framed in the future in order to meet government expectations on benefiting the wider community. We identified in RADAR 2010 that our research and enterprise strategy has the clear intention that the school is constantly aware of these challenges and that we are well placed to handle the delicate balancing act between externalised application and nurturing creative freedom. We acknowledge the situation requires a consistent positive paradigm where a new understanding of the relationship between staff and students can thrive as we continue to maintain a significant impact on social and cultural spheres and markets. A relationship designed to reach beyond academia to impact upon

societal needs, is in turn founded upon a dynamic and consistent creative education. Particular for our school is the specialist nature of our research, which requires specialist approaches to a teaching-research nexus, our resources and estate. In this respect we consistently integrate learning, teaching and research and adapt our subject and resource infrastructure to nurture a thriving community of creative practitioners who can competitively meet these challenges without compromise.

In ‘Conversation’ in *ART SCHOOL (Propositions for the 21st Century)* MIT Press, 2009, John Baldessari (Cal Arts) and Michael Craig-Martin (Goldsmiths) reminisce on the cultural environment during the latter half of the 20th century that allowed art and design schools to flourish. They reflect on the pedagogical brilliance of Black Mountain College as a template; itself emerging during a period of economic uncertainty and social unrest but managing to find an openness to interdisciplinary thinking that is still prevalent today. Baldessari





and Craig-Martin propose, “you have to set up a situation” so that people feel comfortable to act according to their instincts; staff and students have to feel at ease so they can bring their ideas, desires and energies to the campus.

We also asked in RADAR 2010 “how do we maintain a dynamic and interdisciplinary learning community, which allows both staff and students the opportunity to nurture, develop and exploit their creative abilities towards their own professional intent?” It is very important to have artists practising and teaching art, designers practising and teaching design, and architects practising and architecture so at least, there are people teaching who can bring their experience of what it means to be a practitioner in the world. So teaching takes place through example, through the presence of the artist, designer or architect being actively ‘in-residence’ on-campus and supporting the student on how best to progress their work and career. A teaching-research

nexus creates circumstances and environment where success can happen.

In 2010 Ian Massey (Subject Leader for Communication Arts) was able to launch his book on Patrick Proctor through the Redfern Gallery, which represents Proctor’s estate. The book combines a biography with a critique of the development of the artist’s work as well as the artistic and social milieus in which he operated. *Patrick Proctor: Art and Life* by Ian Massey is published by Unicorn Press. Jayne Sheridan (Senior Lecturer Fashion Marketing) was also able to launch her book in 2010, *Fashion, Media, Promotion: the new black magic*, published by Wiley-Blackwell. Jayne’s book examines the way in which the fashion industry works with the media to promote its products in the global marketplace and demonstrates how it adapts to changing means of production and promotion in the digital era. Gil Pasternak is currently co-editing *Visual Conflicts: On The Formation of Political Memory in History of Art and Visual*

*Cultures* which is scheduled for publication by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2011. Gil’s book explores portraiture in the Israeli Defence Force and their respected families as declarations of social assimilation and approval. In particular his research demonstrates how family photographs assist in perpetuating and solidifying Israeli social norms, positions, standards and positive attitudes towards the Israeli army.

On the student front, Architecture student Isaac Barraclough topped the awards at the Royal Institute of British Architects Yorkshire Student Awards 2010. Isaac currently works for architecture practice Healey Associates.

Past Contemporary Art graduate Ryan Moseley’s work continues to be featured in major international exhibitions, *Newspeak: British Art Now* was shown at The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg and The Saatchi Gallery, London. Ryan is currently represented by Alison Jacques Gallery, London.

Our Research and Enterprise strategy has evolved to reflect the needs of the teaching and learning communities we are part of, embracing tradition and innovation, continuity and change. In RADAR 2010 as now in RADAR 2011 our vision remains the same – to provide world-class creative education and research in art, design and architecture which makes a significant contribution to cultural, social and economic spheres.

**Dr Steve Swindells  
Kevin Almond**

