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Intuitive Integration: a proposal for course design

Critical and Contextual Studies, Critical Studies, Contextual Studies, Visual Culture, Theory, Research, Art History and Contextual & Historical Studies are some of the many terms in circulation for forms of 'theory' in art and design education. Notwithstanding important differences, these terms allude to a common curricular 'space' that has long had a problematic position within or alongside the studio-based elements of art and design courses. It is the relationship between these 'theoretical' and 'practical' elements of an art and design course that is the focus of this paper – specifically what it means to integrate these elements, drawing upon FE art and design courses as case studies. This paper examines 'thinking' across these elements of an art and design course, and the knowledges therein, and examines the possibilities for their integration. The label 'integration' is frequently used in aspirational terms to describe an educational goal or process that will improve the student experience, engagement and understanding; integration is a reified term (and promise) that is unpicked in this paper through considering where it resides in a course and when it occurs in a student journey. I propose approaching integration as a future goal, and present a model that I term 'intuitive integration'. This model is based on affording students empowerment as learners and as artists, and relies on an understanding of intuition as a manifestation of seemingly disparate knowledges drawn together (integrated); in this model, intuition is a complex way of thinking and knowing and part of the rigour and integrity of art and design. On the way to arriving at this model, I ask what it means to create work using 'intuition' and in what ways this is a 'thought' process. I question also the relationship between intuition and critical making, and whether intuition can (and should) be facilitated through pedagogy.