The Pedagogy of Digital Auto-Ethnography and Reflective Practice: Creating Virtual Spaces for Reflection

This paper discusses a pedagogic research project aimed at empowering visual arts students through the use of a digital auto-ethnographic methodology. It is based on current research with students to be completed September 2016. Initially being used in my own practice as an artist in the studio and during a residency, this method is now being employed by students across a range of creative arts programmes to encourage them to become researchers into their own practices.

I used digital auto-ethnography to record my making and thinking to gain insight into my creative process. It allowed me to get closer to my practice and examine and reflect upon it in detail, as well as gain distance from it. Visual and audio recordings enabled me to become an audience of my practice and a public blog enabled me to re-construct my understanding of this practice to share with others.

Through this highly reflective methodology I considered how digital technologies could encourage students to approach their practices with more self-awareness and reflexivity. ‘doing, sharing, and reading auto-ethnography [can] also help transform researchers and readers (listeners) in the process. The transformation of self and others is not necessarily a primary goal of auto-ethnography but a frequently occurring, powerful by-product of this research inquiry’ (Chang, 2008 p13). Encouraging students to consider what it means to be a researcher of their practice may encourage more curiosity, inquiry and insight into their practice.

The project has encouraged students to use recording equipment such as Go-pro headcams, voice recorders, camcorders and blogs to document their thoughts and making processes, and to listen, watch and re-tell what they observed. They had access to equipment and tutorials and project blog: https://seeingpracticeblog.wordpress.com/, which provided supporting materials for reflective thinking and writing, using the equipment and methodology.

The approach frames arts practice as a culture to become part of, immersed in and gain an understanding of. Through their own discovery it aims to allow students to consider how and where they locate themselves with their own practice, to support their transition from student to practitioners and help them to create their own spaces for reflection.


Bio:

Joanna is currently working on her PhD at the University of Glasgow. She is based in the school of Education where she is bringing together her research interests: Arts, Education and Technology. The PhD explores themes around conversational reflection and how technology can support and enhance creative and reflective processes. A recurring theme through her work has been an interest in the ‘making’ process, the process of making work, sometimes the work being about process and the process being visible in the work. She is interested in what can be made visible by reflecting and re-seeing through different media and using digital auto-ethnography as a methodology to do this.

Joanna teaches drawing, research methodologies, reflective practice and textiles at University Centre Blackburn College. Her research blog: https://feltlikeit.wordpress.com/
An example of a digital auto-ethnographic research project here:
https://drawnconversation.wordpress.com/