ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Socio-constructivist pedagogy in physical and virtual spaces: The impacts and opportunities for dialogic learning in creative disciplines.

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• Abstract (300 words):
The process and outcomes of studio design work are extensively communicated through visual means. However, notwithstanding this tangible manifestation of learning outcomes, architectural education strongly aligns with socio-constructivist pedagogy, in which discourse is a primary tool for cognitive development, and learning is co-constructed through interaction, negotiation and collaboration between students and teachers and between their peers. It has been argued that students’ emotional responses to these dialogues are some of the most important instruments through which they interpret meaning from them, and therefore exert significant influence on learning.

This presentation will evaluate the impact of the transition from studio-based encounters to virtual learning on a pedagogy that revolves around dialogic interaction, the dynamics of which arguably become distinctly different online. Combining a reflection on practices used in both face-to-face and online design teaching with relevant research literature, the presentation will explore the effects on a variety of signature elements of architectural pedagogy through which dialogic learning occurs, such as:
one-to-one tutorials (desk crits), group tutorials, and design reviews (crit or juries). For example, an integral feature of the design review lies in the event itself – an exhibition and verbal presentation of work for formative or summative feedback; can this be effectively replicated in a virtual format? Similarly, informal peer to peer discussion and studio culture are often considered fundamental, if tacit, elements of learning in creative disciplines – how do these occur effectively in a virtual space? Moving forward, it is likely that institutions will seek to retain elements of virtual teaching alongside face-to-face through a blended learning approach; the presentation will consider the implications of this for creative disciplines. Furthermore, upon the return to face-to-face teaching after a prolonged hiatus, some students will have very little experience of studio culture; the presentation will discuss potential consequences and opportunities this presents.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dr Smith is Reader in Creative Pedagogies at Liverpool John Moores University’s School of Art and Design. His research focuses on learning and teaching within creative programmes, and in particular on assessment and feedback, and the student experience. He has published numerous pedagogic research projects, including: formative feedback methods in creative programmes, student-directed learning, problem-based learning in creative curricula, students’ critique of the design crit, the nature of learning through student peer review, student retention and the early student experience, and students’ use of formative and summative feedback. In the Architecture programme at LJMU he teaches design across the undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and he has played a crucial role in the design and development of new programmes in the School. Dr Smith has presented at numerous national and international education conferences, and he contributes to evolving the learning, teaching and assessment experience at School, Faculty and University levels. In 2014 he achieved recognition as a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and in 2016 he was presented with an Individual Teaching Award, acknowledging his outstanding, transformative and inspiration impact the education of students at LJMU.