



# Uneasy alliances: art as observation, site, and social innovation

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*Research into Practice 2008* brings into focus important questions about the nature of interpretation as it pertains to the arts. Simply put, how can we best talk about research outputs in the arts? Although the fields of the arts and sciences share an investment in the senses, these fields have traditionally engaged the senses, observation, making, and the critique of knowledge differently. Arts making activates relationality; it keeps the sense field active, multiple, fluid, and visceral; it operates *in situ*. Scientific knowing, on the other hand, activates distanciation; the observer must, in some ways, leave the sense field in order to assert a series of objective claims.

In brief, I want to argue for the efficacy of what I am calling 'revelatory turbulence,' a widening of perceptual fields, the value of actively engaging in experiences where the subject/object relations are variable, and the recalibration of what we call 'observation.' In the context of art work itself, artists have often talked about making as a method of research. This thinking at the microcosmic level keeps us awake and actively listening to the new in a series of 'ephemeral performances.'

This type of work could impact institutional frames, such as the new MA in Cultural Studies that I currently direct, and there are already emergent conversations regarding 'creative industries' and more hybrid approaches to transdisciplinary project design, as participants consider how to make this work 'count.' As a result of this growing trend, artistic, pedagogical and research practices need to become increasingly mobile, creative, and responsive to diverse communities. Remapping art as research across the university, community, business and politics can then lead to new models for innovation and learning.