



IMAGE AND REALITY – which is which? does it matter?

Practice without Guinea Pigs

the Project Office as Learning Experience

TILT FESTIVAL OF LEARNING 2019

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(Architectural) Practice without Guinea Pigs

Axiological foundations : the democratisation of knowledge



left or right?



... but ideas have no inherent strategy.
Ideas alone do not mobilize action — not until they are narrated.



The alternative: Practice with Guinea Pigs

Axiological lubricity / mutability : the tyranny of knowledge



left or right?



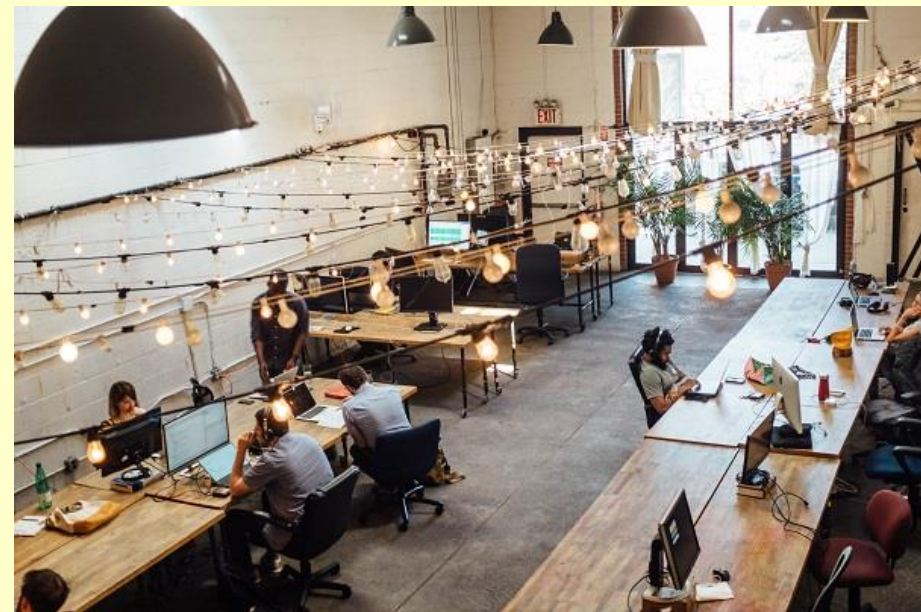
Information/ideas alone are meaningless and futile.
It is narrative alone that assigns motivation/meaning to the events that support an idea.



(Architectural) Practice without Guinea Pigs

Part 1 : establishment of the Project Office

A base within Sneinton (next to the windmill)
from which architecture students can undertake live projects for the local community
under the supervision of qualified architects.



OLD SCHOOL HALL, WINDMILL LANE, SNEINTON : **NTU SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE PROJECT OFFICE**



a Lottery-funded project managed by 2hD Architects
on behalf of SNEINTON ALCHEMY Ltd
(a registered Community Interest Company).



(Architectural) Practice without Guinea Pigs

Part 1 : establishment of the Project Office

A base within Sneinton (next to the windmill)
from which architecture students can undertake live projects for the local community
under the supervision of qualified architects.

Objectives:

- a) To teach students (through practical experience) how to engage effectively with members of a community in addressing built environment issues of concern to them.
- b) To help members of a community understand how they can exercise greater control over the quality of their surroundings.



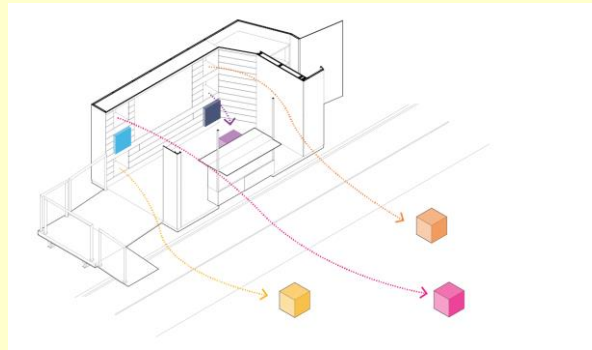
Funding:

Having paid for its fit-out, NTU leases the Old School Hall main space and curates community-related activities organised from there.

(Architectural) Practice without Guinea Pigs

Part 1 : Project Office Activities

Project 01 (October 2017) – a mobile base for running community workshops off-site.



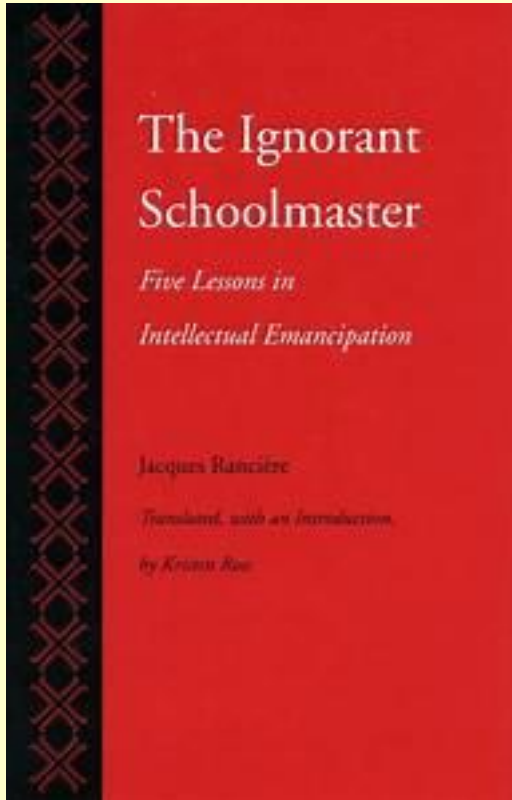
Project 02 (February 2018) – new kitchen area for St Christophers Church Hall



Business Positioning Statement:

Further to NTU's strategic vision for ENRICHING SOCIETY, we play an active role in the social, cultural and environmental life of the city and region.

(Architectural) Practice without Guinea Pigs



1987: the intellectual emancipation of the students occurs when the holder of knowledge, the teacher, claims ignorance.



The Project Office's PHILOSOPHY:
Designing a thinking medium to fit humans,
instead of deforming humans to fit the medium.

(Architectural) Practice without Guinea Pigs

Project Office Activities (continued)

Project 03 (April 2018) – new accommodation for Sneinton Market stalls.



Project 04 (October 2018) – refurbishment of St Stephens vicarage



Methodology:

Involving the community in the design process,
requiring people-centred rather than technical skills - an approach involving ACTION RESEARCH.

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Project Office Activities (continuing)

Project 05 (January 2019) – a Neighbourhood Plan for Sneinton Forum.



Project 06 (March 2019) – revitalising the William Booth Memorial Complex



Methodology:

Involving the community in the design process,
requiring people-centred rather than technical skills - an approach involving ACTION RESEARCH.

Narratives are about meaning, not truth.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/03/>



Luca Giordano: Pilate Washing His Hands (c. 1655-60)

Architectural Practice as learnt by students

'PROJECT OFFICE' is offered as an **optional module** in our MArch(Hons) programme.



TEAMWORK SKILLS rather than individualistic 'starchitecture' is the pedagogical objective.



For practical reasons related to resourcing, the option is **restricted to 10 students**, with priority for those lacking previous experience in practice.



The real **LEARNING OUTCOME** is related to the implications of a professional architect's **social obligations** (rather than merely serving wealthy developer-clients).

The wrong lens



Correcting the Vision: Architectural Practice as learnt by the Community

The PROJECT OFFICE has been welcomed by local residents who feel NTU is less remote as an institution and is now part of the Sneinton community.



May 2019: gathering feedback from local people in Sneinton Hermitage Community Centre.

Local people have expressed amazement at how easily they have been enabled to produce good ideas for the improvement of their own built environment, and feel stronger about discussing them with local councillors.



Tutor's Insight: developing architectural ideas with a community group is not very different from teaching Year 1 Design Studio.

From the students' point of view...

Architectural Practice with Guinea Pigs

(based upon Evasys comments 2019 – reflecting the commodification of learning)



Key Learning Outcome : familiarity with the use of PARTICIPATIVE ACTION RESEARCH as a method for developing an architectural brief and design.

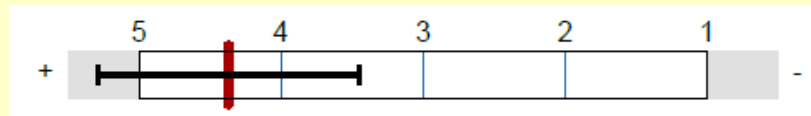
- The module has helped me to establish an understanding into an Architects practice - and what other tasks besides designing we may be required to do.



- break down the deadline into mini-hand in.
this would mean students wouldn't be so confused & could complete work on time.
i.e. have a programme hand in, a 'on team' hand in
↳ make it more step by step so feedback can be gained.

Action Point for 2019-20:
involve students more closely in programme-planning further to the specified Learning Outcomes.

5. Overall Satisfaction
(not too bad)



From the students' and the communities' point of view...

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Input:

architectural education for our students.



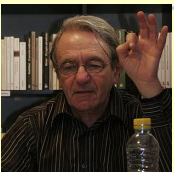
Key Learning Outcome : familiarity with the use of PARTICIPATIVE ACTION RESEARCH as a method for developing an architectural brief and design.

This means blurring any student/teacher divide:
THE STUDENTS BECOME THE TEACHERS –
helping members of the community learn architecture
(and realising how much they already know about design).

Teaching students to blur also the architect/client divide
through close interaction between students/community groups
(demanding recognition of citizen-knowledge).

Outcome:

the architectural education of the public,
empowering them to take control over the shape of their surroundings
and stimulating them to take pride in the quality of the spaces and buildings they inhabit.



“WANTING is all that is necessary for DOING” (Rancière, 1987)

Letting the guinea pigs go

Light touch paper, and...



... it's over in a flash.

Was this a

Light touch paper ?



Through narrative we co-construct our personal and cultural identities.
Ideas and beliefs result from those identities, and **actions follow**.

Light



IMAGE AND REALITY – which is which? does it matter?