



## Risk and Failure in Art / Research Collaborations

30 October 2015

The confluences of arts and research collaborations have galvanised an array of innovations in scholarship, teaching, arts practice and activism/community work. Nevertheless, problems and conflicts arise in the interaction of practices that warrant critical and honest exploration in three key areas:

- The Collaboration: Do such collaborations deepen rather than resolve longstanding debates concerning the, hierarchy of knowledges and politics of voice,; of authorial presence and autonomy; and of tensions between process and product?
- The Institution: What is the influence of institutional dynamics and funding; of pressures to 'innovate'; to 'measure'; of legitimisation crises within individual disciplines?
- The Individual: How do we define ourselves and our work, and what is the value of collaboration to our own intellectual and creative development?

This workshop, part of the project *Uncomfortable Encounters, Disruptive Pedagogies: Critical Explorations at the Intersections of Art, Research and Education*, addressed a theme central to what makes this work both 'uncomfortable' and 'disruptive' in our working lives: **risk and failure**. As artists and researchers engaged in art/research collaborations, we sought to ask and answer the question: how (and when) can/does our work fail? It created a space to talk productively about failure; how to fail productively; and explore shared experiences of taking professional risks and navigating mixed outcomes.

Focusing Question: *Thinking through the frame of risks and failures, how is our work across the multiple spaces of the Individual/Institutional/Collaborative ‘uncomfortable’ and ‘disruptive’?*

Pre-workshop preparation task:

Participants were asked to prepare a **one-minute** statement that sets out your practice in relation to each of the three contexts of practice as inspired by the focusing question:

- *My field/individual interest area*
- *Key institutional intersections*
- *Collaborative orientations/aspirations*

This information was initially used as an introductory/ice-breaking ‘speed-date practice share’, after which participants were assigned to one of three groups. As a way of mapping the critical coordinates of aesthetics, knowledge, and pedagogy, a table was arranged for each of the three areas. Beginning at one of the three tables, each group moved to a different table in 30 minute intervals. Each table was covered with large sheets of paper and an array of materials was provided for participants to render and leave their ideas behind for the next group. Afterwards, participants took a ‘conceptual walk-about’ among the reflect and take stock before having a collective conversation over lunch.



## Participants

Sheena Barrett (Curator, Arts Officer DCC)  
Dominique Bouchard (Curator, Hunt Museum),  
Catherine Conlon (TCD Social Policy)  
Emma Finucane (Artist)  
Maria Healy (UCD Midwifery)  
Megan Johnston (Curator/Director, The Model, PhD student)  
Gerry Kearns (NUIM Geography)  
Gareth Kennedy (Artist)  
Kevin Malone (UCD Psychiatry, St Vincent's)  
Cahal McLaughlin (QUB School of Creative Arts, Prison Archive)  
Seamus McGuinness (Artist, GMIT)  
Megs Morely (Artist, Curator)  
Fearghus O'Conchuir (Dancer/Choreographer, NIUM Geography Phd Student)  
Tadhg O'Keefe (UCD Archaeology)  
Evangelina Rigaki (TCD Music)  
Sean Taylor (Artist, LSAD, MA SPACE)  
David Teevan (Director, Clonmel Festival, UCD Phd Student, Arts/Cultural Policy)  
Fiona Whelan (Artist; NCAD SEA)  
Andrew Woollock (Artist, QUB Phd student Anthropology)

## Project Team

Alice Feldman (UCD Sociology)  
Francis Halsall (NCAD Faculty of Visual Culture)  
Hannah Harte (TCD Sociology)  
Nuala Hunt (NCAD Faculty of Education)  
Emily Mark-Fitzgerald (UCD Art History and Cultural Policy)  
Michael Mcloughlin (Artist-in-Residence, UCD College of Human Sciences)  
Ailbhe Murphy (Artist, CREATE)  
Emer O'Boyle (Artist, UCD Parity Studios)  
Aideen Quilty (UCD Social Policy, Social Work, Social Justice)



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agency for collaborative arts

