Research Paper

Context and performativity in identity choices: artists, designers and the academy

By **Kylie Budge** (**Kylie.budge@vu.edu.au**)
Centre for Collaborative Learning and Teaching, Victoria University, PO Box 14428 Melbourne, 8001, Australia. (http://www.vu.edu.au/)

Contextualization

Universities in countries such as Australia employ a range of people from practice-based professions to teach in undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs related to their field. The rationale to do so from the university perspective is that such practitioners are steeped in knowledge and hold specialist skills, and that this can be communicated to students through teaching. Those teaching art and design programs in universities are most often also practicing artists and designers. As creative practitioners they work in a variety of creative fields including the visual arts, industrial design, textile and fashion design, and the performing arts. Artists and designers teaching in universities do so for a range of reasons, some working full-time, some part-time due to the availability of university work, while others consciously choose to work part-time so that they can maintain their own art/design practices outside of the university. Artists and designers working in both their fields of practice in art and design, and academia through their roles as lecturers and tutors conceptualise their professional identity in a myriad of ways. By focusing on questions of identity, this study explores this topic in order to bring new understandings to the attention of universities, and to increase the visibility about this experience.

Abstract: *Universities employ practicing artists and designers to teach in higher education art and design programs. These members of the academy inhabit at least two professional worlds: that of art/design and that of academia, and this has a bearing on their identity construction. How then do artists and designers teaching in universities conceptualise their identity? Do they see themselves as artists/designers or academics? Do they view themselves as a combination of both? Is one identity privileged over the other? Or do these identity labels sit comfortably alongside each other? Does participating in multiple professional worlds create identity problems for artist/designer-academics? I focus on these questions in this article to explore qualitative data from a recent Australian study involving artist/designer-academics as participants. Through analysis of the data, I argue that artists and designers in universities conceptualise their identity in myriad ways. There is not one singular identity. Rather, it is shifting, changing, and performative in nature, influenced by the power and authority of habitus and dependent on context. Understanding more about this under-researched area will enable the academy to develop a deeper view of artist/designer-academics with possible implications for other practitioner-based academic disciplines.*

Introduction

Universities employ practicing artists and designers to teach in art and design programs. They are most often artists and designers with their own active and vibrant creative practices. These members of the academy inhabit at least two professional worlds: that of art/design and that of academia, and this has a bearing on how they conceptualise their identity. While there is a wealth of literature on identity (see for example, Giddens 1991;

Weinreich & Saunderson 2003; Erikson 1972, 1974), the notion of reality, and thus identity are viewed by Butler (2008) and Bourdieu (1990) as social constructs, and this understanding frames and informs the study at the heart of this article.

There is a small, growing body of research in the area of the artist/designer-academic (see for example, Bowman 2012; Shreeve 2008), yet much remains to be understood about this topic. Indeed, the teaching of art and design in universities more generally is an under-researched area of higher education despite the current interest in and emphasis on creativity in education. Shreeve's research in this area is significant because through a phenomenographic study she highlights five categories for how part-time, practice-based tutors in art and design experience the relationship between practice and teaching. The five ways this experience transpires are:

1. I'm a practitioner;
2. I'm a teacher, but able to do both;
3. I'm in no-man's-land;
4. I'm a multi-dimensional practitioner; to
5. I'm an artist educator (Shreeve 2008, p. 146).

Shreeve (2008 p. 29-30) argues that it is essential to view the relationship between creative practice and teaching in terms of understanding the contribution that practitioner-tutors make to learning in art and design. Such findings raise questions about how artist/designer-academics conceptualise their art/design and teaching practices and the way this might influence or orchestrate their contribution to teaching of art/design. They also suggest the challenges inherent in navigating two professional worlds.

Through my own experience of art practice in addition to working with art and design academics, I am aware that maintaining two professional worlds entails issues of immense complexity. Illustrating this point is Logan in her study on the design studio where she draws attention to one of the issues at play for design academics in maintaining roles in two professional communities.

> *The dual affiliations of lecturers, to the academic community and to the industry that is the intended destination of their students, has the potential to complicate the pedagogic practices involved in graphic design learning. The need to negotiate between the values of the two communities can alter teacher/learner relationships and problematize criteria for evaluating student achievement. Resulting alterations in pedagogic tone can detract from students' active inclusion as participants in practicum learning.* (Logan 2007, p. 15)

Further to this, she adds,

> *Tensions between the values of these two communities tend to surface under the pressure of evaluating student achievement, with the potential to disrupt classroom relationships.* (Logan 2007, p. 15)

Bowman refers to these dual professional worlds in her study of four artist-professors teaching in American universities and the way in which they navigate between and balance the 'artist' and 'educator' roles. She explores how artist-professors conceptualise their work as artists and professors, and challenges the notion that their teaching must in some way be compromised by attention to their practices as artists. Critically, she links the strengths in teaching she found across her four case studies with what she terms 'attitudes of being' or ways of thinking which 'served to inform actions' (Bowman 2012, p. 4). In her work, Bowman (2012, p. 143) identifies four models of negotiation: "Complete Separation, Complete Integration, See-Saw: A Fragile Balance, *and* Total Commitment: A Sacrificial Balance".

The notion of 'dual identity' has also been observed by Kleiman (2012) in relation to academics teaching performing arts in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, regardless of the degree to which a university teacher is actively practicing as an artist or designer, the cultures of art and design professional practice impact on conceptions of teaching for those teaching these disciplines (Shreeve 2008), shaping, informing and defining them in various ways. Layered upon this too, is the notion put forward by Vaughan, Austerlitz, Blythman, Grove-White, Jones, Jones and Shreeve (2008) that the cultures of each practice in which artist/designer-academics inhabit (art/design practice and teaching practice) are deeply different.

There is very little literature available in relation to the higher education sector about what artist-educators in schools call the 'artist-teacher' issue. The majority of the literature that exists focuses on the school sector in relation to how artist-teachers move between practices, various identity issues, case studies of individual artist-teachers and history of artist-teachers (for an overview see Daichendt 2010). The literature from the school sector focuses mostly on notions of identity and the challenge of maintaining two, artist and teacher, or merging these identities in some form (see for example, Atkinson 2002; Hatfield, Montana & Deffenbaugh 2006). Daichendt (2010) tries to include the higher education sector in his overview of the issue, however, the school sector still dominates much of the information he sets out. In addition, he does not recognise the role and importance of context to the degree I believe is needed to fully understand the issues of identity in different educational sectors.

My analysis of the literature suggests that the higher education context is substantially different in nature and that this adds a different dimension to the artist/designer-academic identity issue. For example, there is arguably more agency for higher education academics because they do not teach in a tightly controlled and regulated curriculum environment as exists in compulsory school education. Higher education academics are teaching towards a profession/career and teaching students who have *chosen* to study art or design as a post-school option. This influences the context in which artist/designer-academics work and students study. It also contributes to informing notions of identity.

How artist/designer-academics identify is framed in the literature as a debate and Daichendt (2010, p. 65) explains that this is essentially about "whether an ongoing creative practice by the art teacher contributes or detracts from the curriculum, priorities, identity, values and processes of teaching art". What is known from the research conducted into artist/designer-academics/educators is that identity is a key issue for both practice-based tutors in higher education (Shreeve 2008) and for those in external settings, such as artist-educators in galleries (Pringle 2009). Through Shreeve's (2008) and Bowman's (2012) recent work we now know how artist/designer-academics in higher education can experience teaching differently, and how a whole range of factors influence and shape this experience. Further to this, Pringle (2006; 2008; 2009) explores identity in the context of artist-educators working in galleries and in creative partnerships with schools. In her account of artist-educators working in creative partnerships there is much emphasis placed on the identity of the artist as experienced practitioner.

Very little is known about identity in relation to artist/designer-academics in universities. Researching this area is important because practitioner-based academic disciplines and professions have much to offer the academy in terms of their understanding of creativity, creative process and practice. However, there is a paucity of information available about matters of identity and the challenges involved from the artist/designer-academic's perspective. Understanding more about the struggles they are immersed in to balance their two professional roles and worlds, including how they identify, is connected to sense and meaning-making for those teaching in art and design disciplines. Furthermore, this research will assist in understanding the decisions and priorities artist/designer-academics make and

how they impact on the professional worlds they inhabit. Such an understanding will enable us to see the complexities they navigate and, application of this knowledge and these insights has the potential to inform, shape and re-shape universities in a direction which more easily accommodates those inhabiting multiple professional realms.

Moreover, the rationale to do so is about addressing Suchman's (1995) request to make work visible. Though her context for doing so is research into and about work and workflow and how the design industry relates to it, there is much to be said about her request in relation to how the work of artists and designers teaching in higher education might be made more visible within the academy. This notion extends to and includes how they make sense of themselves and their work through identity claims. As Clarke, Hyde and Drennan (2013, p. 7) argue, few researchers question 'how academics come to possess the constructs and ideas that inform their professional identity' in general.

Terms

In the context of this article and the research described within it, the term *art and design disciplines* will be used broadly to include all the sub-disciplines of fine art, architecture, industrial design, interior design, graphic design (also known as communication design), textile design, fashion, visual arts, media arts, creative writing, film and television, and digital design. The term *artist/designer-academic* will be used to refer to those who teach art and/or design in university art and/or design programs.

Research design and focus

This article draws on recent doctoral research that explored creative practice, the teaching of art and design in higher education, and questions of value. The study generated qualitative data over two phases with 13 artist/designer-academic participants from universities in three Australian states in 2012. Table 1 (overleaf) outlines participants (by pseudonym), their creative practice and teaching areas, and their status as university employees. Anonymity was an important part of the ethics agreement agreed to by participants. Each of the 13 artist/designer-academics participated in semi-structured one-to-one interviews with me as the researcher in phase one of the study. Table 1 outlines information provided by participants during the interview.

In the interviews I asked questions that explored participants' views about their creative practice, teaching of art and design, and the overlaps between the two areas. I also asked participants to talk about what they enjoyed in each area and the challenges they faced in maintaining two professional worlds. At the end of each interview I asked participants to say how they identified themselves in a professional sense. In asking this question, I was interested in exploring how artist and designers teaching in universities conceptualise their identity. Related to this were sub-questions: Do they see themselves as artists/designers or academics? Do they view themselves as a combination of both? Do they privilege one identity over the other? Or do these identity labels sit comfortably alongside each other? Does participating in multiple professional realms create identity problems for artist/designer-academics? Thus, my final question to participants during each interview was: In a professional sense, how do you identify yourself? How do you describe yourself to others? I asked this question without any further prompting, not wanting to influence participants' framing of their responses.

Table 1. List of participants (by pseudonym), their creative practice, teaching areas and employment status.

Name	*Creative practice area*	*Teaching discipline/area*	*Employed*
James	Digital video & prints, installation & sculpture	Fine Art	Full-time
Rebecca	Textile design	Textile Design – knit	Part-time
Will	Drawing & painting	Fine Art – drawing	Part-time
Richard	Installation, drawing, video	Fine Art – painting	Full-time
Olivia	Painting, paper based stencil work, printmaking	Fine Art – studio	Full-time
Nicole	Designer – textiles and freelance design	Textile Design – surface	Part-time
Conrad	Expanded painting, film, video, performance, sculpture, installation	Design	Part-time
Grace	Sculpture	Fine Art – sculpture	Part-time
Diana	Drawing, painting and installation	Fine Art – drawing	Full-time
Harriet	Textiles – print, dyeing and hand painted	Textile Design – surface	Full-time
Peter	Public art, video installation, photography	Fine Art – sculpture	Full-time
Tania	Installation	Fine Art & Design	Part-time
Louisa	Printmaking	Fine Art – printmaking	Part-time

As the researcher, I was positioned as an insider-outsider (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). I have worked extensively in universities in teaching and non-teaching academic positions. I am also a printmaker, and have an understanding of art and design from this perspective. In addition, I have worked extensively with art/design academics in varying contexts. As a result, I have a deep understanding of the higher education context that underpins the life of art/design academics and understand some of the issues, challenges and complexities related to creativity, process, practice and teaching.

Data handling and analysis

Once interviews were completed, I handled the data by coding the interview transcripts working mostly inductively, simply naming what I saw. I developed codes arising from the contents of the interview transcripts in addition to codes informed by the research questions and the literature. I developed codes rapidly and all interview transcripts were eventually tagged with multiple codes. I frequently doubled back to check whether new codes could be added or if others should be collapsed together. Once this process was completed I began to group related codes together. I then searched for themes that categorised the codes using Sandelowski's (1998) idea of prevalence based on frequency.

I then asked questions of the data, searching it for connections to the literature and to identity theory. Specifically, I drew on Butler's (2008) theory of performativity in relation to identity construction to interpret and explain my analysis of the data. In addition, I briefly drew on Bourdieu's (1990) notions of habitus and field to understand broader aspects of context. In working this way, I developed an explanation of what participants were communicating in response to the interview question.

Identity through the eyes of participants

Participants responded in a variety of ways to the interview question asking them to describe how they identify professionally. I was expecting some diversity in answers but did not expect

the range of responses I received. Table 2 outlines each participant's main response to the question.

Table 2. Participants' main response to the question: "In a professional sense, how do you identify? How do you describe yourself to others?"

Pseudonym	***Main responses***
James	"Lecturer rather than an artist…being an artist is understood to be part of my lecturing role…I make art and I teach at University X" [at a dinner party].
Rebecca	"I say textile designer...I say textile designer first but I lecture in textile design...AND I do freelance design and creative work"
Will	"Teacher-artist, artist-teacher…I'm both and artist and a teacher"
Richard	"I'm an artist and educator. Yeah and I try to put those two things in that order"
Olivia	"I would actually say an academic, just because my role's changed. Earlier I would have just said 'just a lecturer'…I would no longer call myself just an artist anymore"
Nicole	"I always say designer…I never say I'm a teacher but I will in conversation…I wouldn't say that I'm a lecturer…I don't see it as my number one job"
Conrad	"I use 'I'm an artist'. If I'm in the professional academic context it's usually straight to well, 'you teach'".
Grace	"On the CENSUS forms I always put artist because I think that's important…[in conversation] I swap between the two…I'm an artist-teacher"
Diana	"I say I work at the art school"
Harriet	"Probably as a textile designer"
Peter	"I say an artist and lecturer. I rarely use the term 'academic' because it's pompous…I do make an effort to say artist first"
Tania	"An artist embedded in architecture…people often refer to me as an architect and as an artist"
Louisa	"I'm an artist-printmaker. I work in a studio and I also teach"

Notes: 1. The CENSUS is the official Australian population survey administered every five years by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.
2. Words in brackets [ ] are the author's, denoting information about context provided by participant.

There were five designer-academics in the study: Rebecca, Nicole, Conrad, Harriet and Tania. That is, they teach in design disciplines within the university but may incorporate other non-design elements in their creative practices. Of these, Rebecca and Harriet said they identify as textile designers, although Harriet uses the qualifier 'probably' before this label indicating some degree of uncertainty or lack of clarity on the matter. Nicole, however, says with more certainty, "I always say designer". Somewhat surprisingly, Conrad identifies as an artist, while Tania chooses to use a label she has developed for her unique position, "an artist embedded in architecture". Thus, amongst the five participants teaching in design disciplines, there is much variation in how they choose to identify professionally. Of significance, none of the five identify an aspect of their teaching self in their initial descriptor. Both Rebecca and Conrad refer to the secondary aspect that the teaching or lecturing part of their identity plays, while Nicole is adamant that she does not ever use this label. Furthermore, Harriet and Tania do not make reference to the teaching part of their professional lives at all.

The remaining eight participants teach in art disciplines within their universities. Like the five designer-academics, there was much variation in how they identified themselves in response to my question. Louisa uses the term 'artist-printmaker' to identify her professional self. Of the eight artist-academics she is the one who identifies herself first and foremost as 'artist'. With similar referencing of the term, Grace uses the identifier 'artist' on official forms (such as the CENSUS population survey) but later adds that in conversation she uses both 'artist-teacher' and that she "swap[s] between the two".

Will uses a descriptor that incorporates both teacher and artist with 'teacher' being placed first, while Richard and Peter use labels that place 'artist' first followed by labels that reflect their academic role ('artist and educator', and 'artist-lecturer' respectively).

Contrasting with previously described artist-academics in the study, James and Olivia use 'lecturer' and 'academic' respectively, the word 'artist' absent from their choice of descriptor. However, Olivia mentions this absence, saying that she "would no longer call [her]self just an artist anymore" because of her changing academic role. Diana uses none of the descriptors others have chosen. Instead she uses a phrase that is quite loose and open, and does not signal status: "I work at the art school". In her chosen identifier there is no direct indication of her role as artist or academic.

Across the two groups of 13 artist/designer-academics in this study, four participants, that is, three designer-academics and one artist-academic (Nicole, Harriet, Tania and Diana) use descriptors that do not acknowledge their teaching/academic role. More designer-academics than artist-academics in this study choose to leave this aspect of their professional lives out of their identifying labels. On the other end of the spectrum, two participants (artist-academics), choose to use only terms that indicate their academic roles (James and Olivia).

In summary, what can be seen through a description of the data is that there is a real mix of identifying descriptors used by the 13 participants of this study to capture their dual professional lives. Some acknowledge only their designer or artist identities, while others only their academic ones. Others combine the two, with those doing this showing a preference for placing their creative practice identity first. One participant chooses to use a term that only tentatively associates her identity with either art or the academy. Thus, the artist and designer-academics in this study conceptualise their identity in myriad ways.

Discussion

There is not one singular identity that encapsulates the complexities that artist/designer-academics inhabit in their two professional worlds. Closer analysis of the interview transcripts suggests that identity is heavily context dependent and shifting, changing and fluid in nature. It is also related to employment status and job roles.

Context appears to play a role in most participants' decisions about which identity descriptor to use. In the extended transcripts, participants refer to the way they might use one descriptor in conversation for example, at conferences and at dinner parties, but another in more formal contexts such as in filling out official forms. *Who* one is communicating one's identity to appears to be an important part of how it is conveyed for most participants. For example, Rebecca explains,

> *I say textile designer first but I lecture in textile design. There's also if people are interested there's the AND [laughs] I do freelance design and creative work.* [Rebecca]

In this example, Rebecca decides if the context involves people who are interested in more about her identity then she reveals further information about her interest in 'freelance design and creative work.'

Will explains, "it depends on who I'm talking to" but that he does not "worry too much about it", revealing that context is also important to him but not to the point where he chooses to overthink it.

Illustrating the idea of context further, James explains,

> *It depends on who I'm talking to as identity always does. But yeah if I'm not at border control, if I'm talking to people I'm introduced to at a dinner party then [pause], I'd probably say both – I make art and I teach at Institution X. That would probably be the what I'd say.* [James]
>
> *Note: 'Institution X' is used to de-identify James' employer*

Factors such as *employment status* (sessional/casual, part-time/full-time) appear to also influence how participants identify professionally. For example, all designer-academics in the study are employed by their universities on a part-time basis except for Harriet (who is employed full-time), whereas there are five full-time artist-academics. Designer-academics are least likely to associate their academic role in their identity descriptors.

Other factors, such as *changing job roles*, as in Olivia's case where she has had increasing academic responsibilities in recent years and was promoted during the course of this study, appear to influence one's choice of descriptor. Amongst the 13 participants, Olivia and James hold the most senior of all formal academic roles. They were the only ones who use the terms 'lecturer' and 'academic', with no reference to the word 'artist'.

When handling the transcripts, I noticed most participants found it difficult to simply state a term that they used to label their professional selves. Most used extensive qualifying and explanatory language in their responses suggesting that stating a simple identity label was not straightforward for them. Much of the extra language in these responses reveals that context is of critical importance in terms of understanding identity. It also suggests some hesitation, a level of discomfort, difficulty or lack of confidence in participants identifying themselves professionally. This challenge of artist/designer-academics identifying their two professional lives is also echoed in Shreeve's (2008) study for how part-time, practice-based tutors in art and design experience the relationship between practice and teaching.

Identity descriptors, performativity, habitus and field

Butler (2008) uses the notion of performativity in relation to identity, albeit mostly in the context of gender. Her main argument is that acts of speech do not *express* an identity; they *perform* it. For example, the naming of oneself in terms of identity descriptors is important in terms of performing an identity, either current or desired. In analysis of the data from my study, I will now use Butler's ideas about identity and performativity as a lens for understanding the complexities at play. Further, because of the prominence of context in the data, Bourdieu's (1990) notions of habitus and field are also considered to provide explanatory insights.

Butler (2008) claims the importance of power in relation to performativity and identity. In the context of participants' responses, Butler's ideas prompt questions about power and how it might be attached to one's choice of certain identifying labels rather than others. For example, why do some participants insist on the artist/designer label only or as first in their

descriptor, while others (the minority in my study) use the sole descriptor of academic/lecturer/teacher? What power do they ascribe to one term and not to the other? Do some participants associate power in claiming the identity of artist or designer but less power in using the terms that describe their academic roles? Is this choice connected to a professional identity or community they value over the other?

In the Butlerian sense, these decisions are not made alone by individuals but are made with the full discursive power of their social context. That is, society reinforces the power attached to declarations of speech through identity labels, or they would not carry the authority that they do. In choosing their specific descriptors participants understand this, if not consciously then unconsciously, and such societal connections to power assist in their decisions about which identity labels they choose to use to describe their professional selves.

Furthermore, Butler claims that reality is fundamentally *social* reality and is created through continuous performance. That is, reality is not a given; it is constructed. In the context of my study, what can be drawn from these ideas is that participants' continuous performance in using specific identity labels assists in constructing their reality so that they *become* the identity inscribed within them.

Butler argues that enacting an identity occurs through corporeal acts such as speech, body, and gesture. Thus, the act of being an artist or designer and/or an academic occurs through the corporeal speech act of verbalising one's identity using certain descriptors, such as in the context of responding to my interview question on this topic. Repeating acts of identity speech, such as "I am…" descriptors, is an important part of the Butlerian notion of performativity and by doing so, enables such acts to carry power. Butler claims that such acts are types of authoritative speech. To the participants in this study, using specific speech acts is critical to embodying the identity to which they ascribe power, artist/designer and/or academic. Given the majority of participants in this study preference the use of artist/designer identity labels, or at least indicate preference by placing them at the beginning of double-barrel labels (for example, artist-teacher), such power and authority appears to reside in their artist/designer identities, rather than their academic ones.

Butler (2008) and Bourdieu (1990) both see reality as a social construct. As such, Bourdieu's notions of *habitus* and *field* are useful lenses for understanding broader, but important aspects surrounding participants' choices in identity descriptors. As was described earlier, analysis of the data conveys that context plays a role in terms of most participants' choices of descriptors. Indeed, the circumstances that surround performative speech acts about identity, including who such acts are communicated to, play an important role in most participants' decisions about which identity terms to use.

Bourdieu argues that habitus comprises such things as systems, structures, including structures developed in the mind based on conventions, culture, lifestyle, behaviour, and individual and collective practices as a result of history (p. 54). Field, according to Bourdieu's ideas is about contextual environment. Bourdieu's notion of field understands humans as relating to each other through spheres of action, semi-autonomous in nature. Power relations occur both within and between fields, shaping human behaviour. Both of the notions of habitus and field are of relevance in the context of this study and assist in explaining some of the broader factors surrounding artist/designer-academics' decisions about identity descriptors.

In the context of this study, participants' choices about identity descriptors seem to be very dependent on field in which performative acts occur. What one participant may consider their professional identity to be privately in their own mind may be entirely different to how they convey such information to non-artist friends at a dinner party, or indeed, to academic

colleagues at a formal university event due to the role of field. For most participants, field appears to be a strong determining and shaping factor in decisions about performative acts of identity. Such decisions, too, are connected to habitus. For example, if an individual participant places great authority in the collective practices, systems and structures valued by fine art, these particular aspects of habitus act to inform decisions about identity descriptors while taking into account the context, or field in which such decisions are taking place. The same could be argued for participants who place such value in their academic habitus, but different kinds of identity decisions will result. Such decisions will, however, again depend on context.

What analysis of this participant sample reveals is that artists and designers in universities conceptualise their identity in myriad ways; there is not one singular identity to which they ascribe even though their professional lives may, on some levels, appear similar in nature. Furthermore, professional identity is shifting, changing and fluid in nature, influenced by the power and authority of the Bourdieuian (1990) notions of habitus and field, and dependent on context. Indeed, field appears to be a strong determining and shaping factor in decisions about performative acts of identity. The identity descriptor choices of participants in this study suggest that power and authority are constituted in their artist/designer identities, and not in their academic ones. However, data also suggests these decisions about which particular identity speech acts to perform, are again, dependent on context. The hesitation, difficulty or lack of confidence in many participants being able to identify themselves professionally indicates, like Shreeve's (2008) participants, that speech acts about identity are laden with the complexity associated with maintaining and crossing back and forth between the dual professional worlds in which artist/designer-academics inhabit.

Conclusion

This article has shed new light on how artist and designer academic participants conceptualise their identity. This work builds upon findings from Shreeve's (2008) study on how part-time, practice-based tutors in art and design experience the relationship between practice and teaching. It does this by emphasising context (habitus and field) in shaping participants' decisions about their choice of professional identity descriptors and the shifting, changing nature of these decisions. Thus, for participants as a group, the way they choose to identity their professional selves is not singular in nature, and certainly not static. There is a significant degree of complexity surrounding choices about such identity labels, much of which is attached to power and authority in a broader sense. This article also highlights the way in which power and authority appear to reside in the artist/designer identities of participants, rather than their academic ones, thus revealing the discursive power of social context.

Importantly, this research does not claim a universalised position regarding the phenomenon of how artists and designers identify themselves professionally. Rather it provides detailed insight into a small set of artist/designer-academics' understandings of this within the Australian higher education context to reveal perceptions on this topic. The limitation of this work relates to the small sample of participants who shared their views on this topic. A larger sample, including an international one, would be of value in exploring this topic further, and providing a cross-section of cultural perspectives. A positive characteristic of the research conducted, however, pertains to the qualitative nature of the responses generated, enabling participants to communicate the depth and complexity of the issues at hand. Therefore, through the research design undertaken, nuances of identity were captured that might not have been possible through other research designs employing different methodologies and methods. Future research into this area would benefit the academy in developing a deeper view of artist/designer-academics and the complexities surrounding their multiple professional worlds. In doing so, there are possible connections, implications and

opportunities for learning to be had amongst other practitioner-based academic disciplines. Indeed, there is much to be learned about how the professional worlds of the practitioner-academic across all fields of study within the academy add value to and influence the experience of their role as academics.

Acknowledgements
I wish to acknowledge and thank the participants of my study for their generosity and honesty. I am unable to name them or their institutions due to our ethics agreement but I know that in reading this article, they will recognise themselves and their contributions.

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