

# Collaboration, Continuity and Community

Crumbling Ecologies Catalogue Essay, April 2012.

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*The Crumbling Ecologies Project* addresses the key issues surrounding the closure of media-specific studios across Victoria and asks us to consider why these studios are disappearing from the education system. The project openly questions which forms of artistic practice can be considered as contemporary, and which are now considered irrelevant, while identifying the obsolete notion of the artist existing within a singular medium. Since the rise of Conceptualism in the 1960s, the art world has recognised the dominance of the multidisciplinary artist, designer and architect whose creative practice relies on accessibility to various media-specific studios. Yet, art schools have continued to perceive traditional studio practice outside of the *freer* forms as rigid classicism with dictatorial notions at play. This has resulted in the disempowering of artists and designers in aspects of technical specificity. This dated mode of linking technical practitioners to the divisive thought of being *either* a maker or a thinker is a discontinuous logic that has led to the current closed studio archetype. Only through the notions of collaboration, continuity and community can changes be made within art schools to stabilise an otherwise crumbling ecology.

### Collaboration

The current split model, which has studios and departments separated both physically and metaphorically, has segmented and narrowed skilled visual and conceptual approaches to simply exist within a singular canon. The artist working solitarily within a single discipline is a dated 20<sup>th</sup> century notion, it is instead proposed that a *no walls* approach to studio practice should be adopted and should act as a reflection of the contemporary artist who works outside of one medium and expands past limited learning systems. Architecture should act as collaborative tool that draws practices together through open spaces that enhance creative production.

### Continuity

To foster progression, a collegial assessment of the three compasses of visual arts; aesthetics, technique and economics should be used to promote creativity between disciplines. Basic training in different technical arenas for all artists, architects and designers with access to media-specific artisans and specialists, along with exposure to conceptual theory will foster new dialogues and open advanced discourses about our cultural and visual anthropology. The separation and isolation of mediums only amplifies the current approach of closed dialogues between disciplines which hinders innovation in each field; becoming a catalyst for the current unsustainable approach to arts education and production.

### Community

The new art school should demand an approach to arts education that combines intelligent physical making along with providing an experiential sensorium which joins studios, labs and lecture theatres in one collaborative space. Rather than the closed circle, of work and display hidden within a labyrinth of walls, it should aim to choreograph the self-referential space of the studio with engineered exposure of mixed spaces and galleries that coexist within mutually accessible arenas. The new art school should be a thriving hybrid learning environment with co-teaching, studios, galleries and technical labs for collegial learning, a network of intimacies, that is shared and explored by artists, architects and designers.

It doesn't take much to create a dynamic community and sustainable ecology for the arts, it does however take vision and a portion of risk to invite dialogues surrounding shifting paradigms of the environment. Perhaps it is only when these conversations happen that we can start to see some stability and longevity in ecology, art, education and production.

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