

**THE NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN**

Proposal for the Master of Arts Degree in **Multimedia**

by **Registered Project**

to be studied **part-time**

Name **SHAUN DAVID BELCHER**

Signed by Student:

Date:

The Supervisor(s) has read the Proposal and confirms that it should be considered by the Registration Board as academically valid and viable.

Signed by Supervisor:

Date:

In 1870-72, John Marius Wilson's Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales described Didcot like this:

DUDCOTT, Dudcote, or Didcot, a parish in Wallingford district, Berks; on the Great Western railway, at the deflection of the branch to Oxford, 5½ miles W of Wallingford. It has a station on the railway, and a post office under Wallingford....



(Photo: Shaun Belcher)

TRACK

Metaphors and a sense of belonging in a networked field of vision:

Does the deployment of traditional art practices within augmented reality locative multimedia applications alter the relationship between creator, viewer and traditional notions of an artistic sense of place?

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT



(Photo: Shaun Belcher)

TRACK is a fine art/ multimedia interdisciplinary project which focuses on a site-specific outcome.

It will utilise contemporary multimedia techniques of augmented reality and global satellite positioning to create online applications deployed on contemporary hand-held devices.

These applications will enable the viewing of traditional artefacts in new settings and create new metaphors and relationships between creator and viewer in a non-static environment. It is planned that users will be able to interact with and alter the artefacts.

The project will examine the wider implications of disrupting these conventional notions of creation and the 'confined' or 'static' viewer. Drawing on contemporary hybridity / network / locative arts practice it will investigate the relationship between viewer/landscape drawing and notions of land-writing and poetry. Utilising both traditional and the latest web-enabled concepts of

locative art using mapping tools it will also attempt to engage active participation in a larger communal site-specific event thus enabling a 'social' outcome to the project.

RATIONALE



(Photo: Shaun Belcher)

Research question:

Does the deployment of traditional art practices within augmented reality locative multimedia applications alter the relationship between creator, viewer and traditional notions of an artistic sense of place?

Context:

The project draws on over twenty five years of traditional art and poetic practice focussed on a specific locality. It contextualises this depth of traditional practice within a contemporary multimedia frame by redeploing this practice within a trans-media setting.

It thus incorporates my previous artistic practice, multimedia skills and research within a field of enquiry that fully engages with recent advances in hand-held devices and internet based systems and their related design and

coding. It will also draw on contemporary poetic, fine art and cartographic theories in a cross-disciplinary manner.

Future Plans:

The project will act as a driver of future artistic practice and research and enable a greater participation in research culture. (Professional Development Outcome)

CONTENT



(Photo: Shaun Belcher)

The project continues to build on a series of events, research enquiries and practice as research over a number of years. Material has been gathered including a portfolio of landscape drawings and several unpublished volumes of poetry.

The project is centred on a site specific location which involves a local art centre (Cornerstone, Didcot, Oxfordshire), an abandoned railway track (now a public thoroughfare) and internet resources, specifically GPS locative applications on handheld devices. I will create a series of applications which test the deployment of text and images through GPS mapping.

I then aim to draw together my multidisciplinary activities in one specific outcome. This will be an exhibition tied in with the created locative media that will also involve public engagement in producing new artworks through interaction. Users will use handheld internet connected devices to both read and create interaction during the event. I will create and deploy applications for hand-held devices across multiple platforms including iphone / ipad and android devices. I will submit applications and documentation of the exhibition if it occurs before assessment along with reflective journal.

Programme of events (provisional)

This is a preliminary listing which will be subject to additions and modification.

Publications:

'Last Farmer' - Salt Publications 'Modern Voices' No.4. (due November 2010)

Conferences etc:

November 30th 2010: Geography and Twentieth Century British Poetry -
Royal Holloway Landscape Surgery group
round table following the RGS-IBG conference.

January 29 2011: Towards Re-Enchantment – A symposium. A day-long
enquiry into the landscapes of Suffolk, the spirit of place and its various
meanings, taking W.G. Sebald as its foundation.

June 17th 2011: 'Digital Hybridity' Conference Derby University - D-MARC
Digital and Material Arts Research Centre in collaboration with EMUA.

Research visits:

Visualisation Research Unit at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design
Quad Derby: Multimedia centre
Phoenix Square Leicester: Digital exhibiting
Broadway and Antenna Nottingham
Grizedale Arts: Possible widening of practice to incorporate alternative
outcomes and locations.

Exhibition:

Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot, Oxfordshire. (TBC).
A solo show in the gallery incorporating active participation by members of the
public off-site via hand-held devices

Design Milestones:

See Timetable.

Website:

A stand alone website (separate to reflective journal) displaying content and
possibly application download links or via itunes.

SUBMISSION

An application (or applications)

A website: A stand alone website for the project (separate to reflective journal) displaying created content.

A detailed documentation of exhibition outcomes

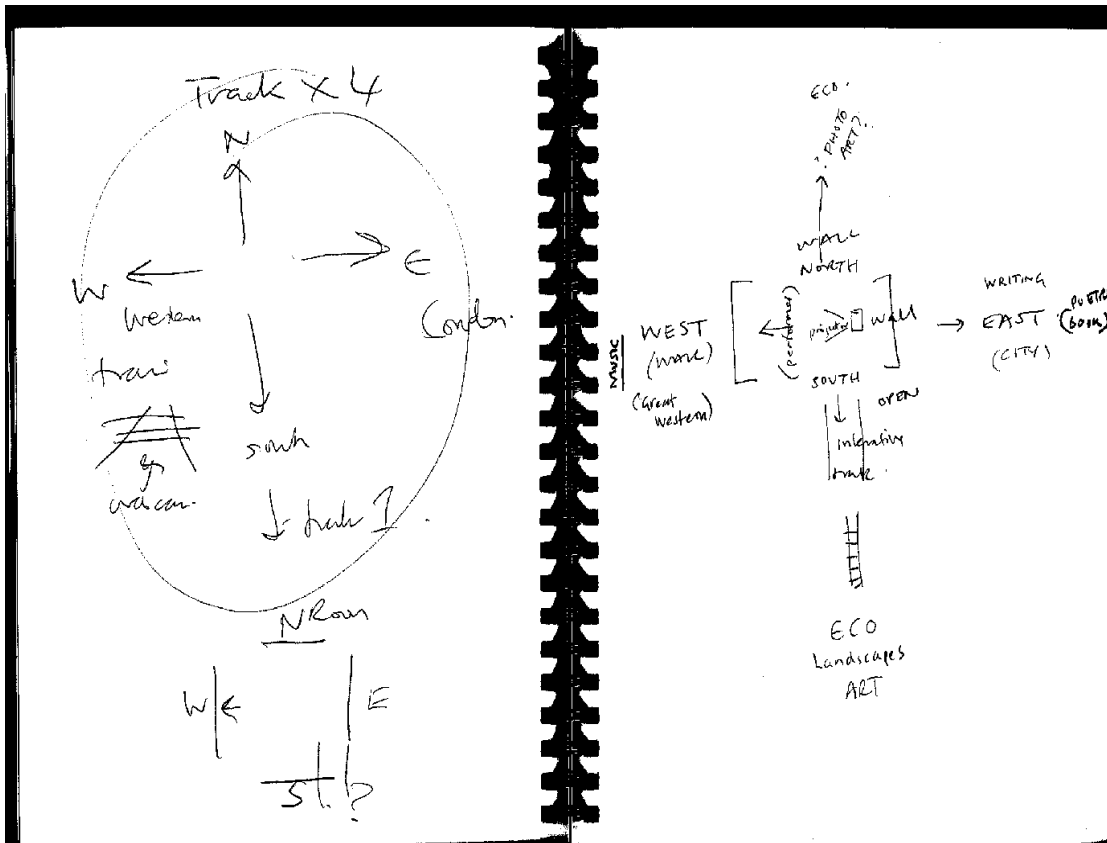
(if occurs before assessment.)

The reflective journal and summary:

<http://www.shaubelcher.com/rpt>

Or a summative written piece.

Sketchbooks. (selections of which scanned into journal)



Sketchbook: (Photo: Shaun Belcher)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Objective A: ART AND DESIGN (Development)

1. Through depth of research catalogue and map existing territory of current multimedia design and construction in area of applications using augmented reality on hand-held devices.
2. Experiment and test (beta) a range of artefacts that investigate the parameters of the project.
3. Deploy a working prototype by Summer 2011 as per timetable.

Objective B: CONTEMPORARY THEORY/ART HISTORY (Development)

1. Catalogue the current theories and art history of relevance to the theoretical area.
2. Explore and analyse the underpinning conceptual frameworks in theory and art history that examine and debate the territory.
3. Discuss and relate these debates to practical solutions and wider art and design theory.

Objective C: ART AND DESIGN (Production)

1. Acquire a high level of technical design and coding competence in the field.
2. Deploy a range of applications/artefacts that successfully demonstrate this acquisition of knowledge and skills.
3. Display this level of competence and knowledge by deploying these artefacts through online repositories e.g. itunes shop or from website download thus disseminating valid applications and good practice.

Objective D: SOCIAL / ADVANCED (Production)

1. Aim at social integration of participants in a online 'gallery' related to an exhibition (location TBC).
2. Integrate findings and participation into overall outcomes into M.A. process if this phase successful.
3. Through this social/personal integration achieve an advanced contribution to practice and/or discourse.

THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK:

RESEARCH METHODS: In order of importance to project.

Practice Led Research:

AHRC distinction between research & practice section 53, p.13¹

Creative output can be produced, or practice undertaken as an integral part of a research process

Practice must be accompanied by documentation of the research process, some form of textual analysis or explanation, demonstration of critical reflection

Qualitative Research:

Methods: Interaction, Participant Observation, Non-participant Observation, Field Notes, Reflexive Journals, Structured Interview, Semi-structured Interview, Unstructured Interview, and Analysis of documents and materials.

Quantitative Research:

I cannot at present see a role for hard data being available but if possible Google analytics, online referral statistics etc may be used if sufficient interaction generated by users for quantitative analysis.

¹ In Mottram, J. The difference between professional practice and research

CREATIVE AND INTELLECTUAL METHODS:

Delineation of 'Theory': An artist's personal statement

Throughout my 'art-working' life some things have remained stubbornly, one might even say obsessively', constant. Be it in digital images as recently or in drawing or poetry and song I have remained constant in delineating a clearly 'map-able' terrain. This terrain extends about 5 to 20 miles in radius of my hometown of Didcot in Oxfordshire, England. Always the poor relation of the illustrious centre of learning that resides but a stones throw away.

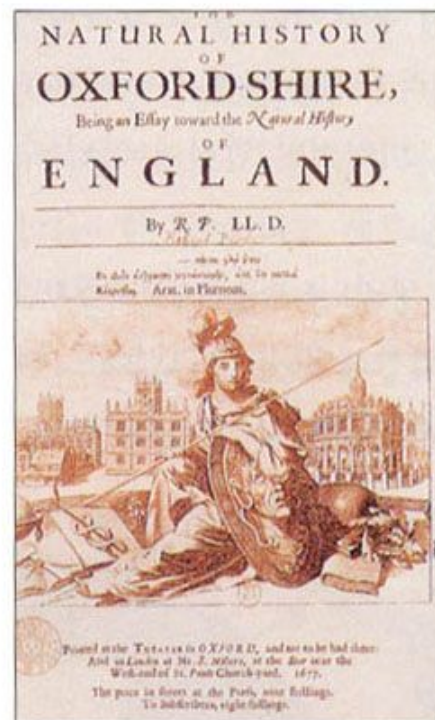
There runs a hard core of intention throughout which draws on politics, ecological thinking and that obsessive returning to notions of 'place' and 'landscape'. I regard my work as being a mapping of constant themes which recur sometimes years later. The River Thames is one theme the Berkshire Downs another. Local folk tales and oral literature mined from local libraries another. A recent song 'Hanging Puppet' drew on one such 'tale. In fact one could describe it as artistic 'Anglocana' to differentiate it from Americana. I have written well over 2000 songs over the years. Mostly these are recorded in lo-fi versions and only really coming to life when in the hands of other more talented musicians (see the Moon Over the Downs CD 2003). Poetry has appeared in various magazines and in the Scottish anthology *The Ice Horses* (1996). I currently have at least 4 unpublished complete books of poetry on the shelf. One could describe my work as multi-disciplinary with a strong streak of green politics colouring the waters beneath.

I have drawn on some clear influences in writing and art. Seamus Heaney's concept of a personal 'Hedge School' going back to John Clare is one thread. My forebear's personal involvement in Agricultural Unions is another (see *Skeleton at the Plough* poems). I also am influenced by a 'working class' sense of writing picked up from Carver and Gallagher and other dirty realists. In song almost any Americana act would suffice. I am not American but I have strong American influences going back to Thoreau and Walden lake. To try and build an alternative 'English' approach I have increasingly been drawn back to the English Civil War when the notions of science and arts were more fluid and interchangeable. As an example I would cite Robert Plot's *Oxford a marvellous Natural History of Oxfordshire from 1677*. In it one finds specimens such as 'Stones that look like Horses'. I draw heavily upon cultural geography theory post Williams and Berger.

It is this kind of merging of scientific natural history and folk-lore terminology that I now most interested in both in poetry and artwork.

<http://shaunbelcher.com/fineart>

So how does theory inform my practice? Well I see no distinction between the various arts. I am widely read in poetry and song and that informs my practice whatever I do. At times I have also used cartooning as an 'art criticism' vehicle as well as penning many art review pieces. I regard both theory and practice as being essential parts of art education and indeed my own life-long learning. One would not exist without the other.



Robert Plot's Natural History of Oxfordshire, first published in 1677, contained descriptions and illustrations of a wide range of fossils, rocks and minerals found in Oxfordshire. It was a seminal work in early geology.

Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scrotum_humanum.jpg

Last accessed: 08.11.2010

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

SUPERVISOR: Terry Shave

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: Dr. David Downes

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

Various hand-held devices for instance. ipad, blackberry playpad, iphone etc as available.

I understand that a bid for some of these items is in progress. Possible bids for funding to support hardware needs. Purchase of own hardware platforms. All other materials provided by myself.

Technical specifically coding support as and when required from within multimedia department.

Other organisations: (speculative)

Didcot Cornerstone Arts Centre as partner in project.

Grizedale Arts, Cumbria: Further development of concept.

These organisations will be approached formally and agreement statements will be included in a 'modification' of this proposal in future.



Oxfordshire County Council monitoring device at town end of track. (Photo: Shaun Belcher)



Didcot Power Station from the track. (Photo: Shaun Belcher)

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TIMETABLE

	Begin	End
M.A. RPT	08/11/10	31/07/12
Proposal	08/11/10	09/11/10
Learning Agreement	08/11/10	04/12/10
Presentation	06/12/10	10/12/10
Application Development	03/01/11	30/06/11
Beta testing	02/05/11	30/06/11
On Site	01/07/11	30/07/11
Vacation	01/08/11	31/08/11
Production 1	01/09/11	23/12/11
Production 2	02/01/12	28/04/12
Exhibition	01/05/12	31/05/12
Evaluation	01/11/12	02/11/12
Exposition	01/07/12	31/07/12

Gantt Chart

