Language in the Arts: Positioning the arts in education for the globalised 21st century

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Workshop Topic of Author’s choice:

Renewed Language of Arts Education

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What does it mean to language the arts for the 21st century? Many countries are grappling with the need for new or revised curricula for a globalised and technologised century. As arts educators we have a responsibility to be at the vanguard of this global move and to ensure that appropriate language is used to talk about, write about, mandate and teach the arts. For too long the arts have been positioned in the liberal humanist discourses of western enlightenment thinking with its over-emphasis on the individual and idealist positions. In a century characterized by difference, cultural heterogeneity, widening cultural opportunities, thriving of cultural and creative industries, and need for greater flexibility, there is a demand for a new way of thinking about the arts to enhance cooperation and collaboration across borders of cultural and personal thought and action in and through the arts. Today the arts open the way for new forms of thinking about ourselves and the world therefore a new vocabulary is imminent and due. That is our obligation.

This paper will explore this position through particular reference to my work in Australia and New Zealand. In Australia as well as working in the Higher
Education field, where I foster the creative arts as a field of research, I am involved in the development of the new National Arts Curriculum for Australia. The process for a new National Curriculum has been mandated and the curriculum is now in its first stages of construction. As the appointed writer for the Visual Arts in the Curriculum Shaping Paper to inform the shape of the new Arts Curriculum, I am well placed at this Conference to discuss the requirements for the arts as a field of knowledge, skills and understandings.

In New Zealand I was a Visual Arts advisor for the implementation phase of the New Zealand Arts Curriculum and subsequently complied a book addressing the need for enhanced criticality in the New Zealand Curriculum – *The Arts in Education: Critical Perspectives from Aotearoa New Zealand*. This book has since been widely read and consulted by scholars and arts educators as they move to a more critical disposition in the arts. The paper argues that we need to move beyond vested interests and posturing in the arts, beyond ego-driven sub-texts in the academies, beyond language that circumvents the need for critical and theoretical engagement as we all work to engage a more current language and disposition in and through the arts.

The paper will address the need for robust language in the arts and will be addressing this need to arts educators, curriculum writers, researchers, national governments and industry partners, all of whom have a significant responsibility to activate the UNESCO Road Map. The paper will position its discussion within the terms of the Road Map to ensure institutional policies and practices translate the spirit of the Road Map into recognizable and effective action for new generations. The arts demand a robust and rigorous positioning if they are to “cut it” with other fields, domains and disciplines in the stakes of knowledge production, acquisition and transfer. This position will be discussed in this paper and robust examples will be presented of actual work in the arts to engender a more current and appropriate use of language and way of thinking to engage creative dispositions, imagination, tactile, sensory and critically astute ways of shaping our environments and
understanding the world and ourselves within it through arts in the globalised 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

**Keywords**
Arts, Globalisation, Diversity, Creativity, Identity, Language

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Dr Elizabeth Grierson is Professor of Art and Philosophy, Head of the School of Art, and research leader of Design Research Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. She is Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (UK), World Councillor of International Society of Education Through Art (InSEA), and active participant in World Alliance of Arts Education (WAAE) World Creativity Summits in Taipei (2008) and Newcastle (2009). In 2010 she is the appointed Visual Arts Expert for Writing The Shape Paper for the new Australian National Arts Curriculum. She is Board Member of Australia Council of University Art and Design Schools (ACUADS) and Art Education Australia (AEA), editorial board member of refereed journals, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *Australian Art Education* and *International Journal of Education through Art*, and executive editor of ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies*. She is frequently invited to speak internationally and is author of many publications on arts in education, creativity, culture, identity and globalisation. Recent books include *Creative Arts Research: Narratives of Methodologies and Practices* (with L. Brearley, 2009, Sense Publishers); *A Skilled hand and Cultivated Mind* (with H. Edquist, 2008, RMIT Press); *Doctorate Journeys In Art Education* (co-ed with David Forrest, 2009, Academic Scholarly Publishing); *Thinking through Practice: Art as Research in the Academy*; (co-ed. with L. Duxbury, 2007, RMIT Press).

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