

Rebellious Research Seminar Series - Round 4 (2024/2025)



Welcome to Round 4 of the Rebellious Research Seminar Series focusing on Creative Practice Research. Following the popular first three rounds (and a Special Issue on Recontextualising Practice-based Research in the [International Journal of Creative Media Research](#) which followed), the seminar series returns with, again, some truly exquisite guests. As always, free and open to all (all sessions run online via MS Teams), this initiative aims at widening support and understanding around practice research in a friendly and inclusive manner, with some top experts sharing their experience and advice.

For more info and to be added to the mailing list please contact Agata Lulkowska (Agata.Lulkowska@staffs.ac.uk)

All sessions are recorded and available to rewatch on the dedicated [YouTube channel](#).



Session 1: Wednesday 30th October 2024, 3:30-5pm (UK): Lee-Jane Bennion-Nixon
[Link](#) to join on MS Teams

Exploring the Intellectual Dimensions of Fiction Filmmaking: Why fiction filmmaking matters

This session will explore the intellectual, collaborative, and creative dimensions of fiction filmmaking, positioning it as both a practice and an academic pursuit. Filmmaker, researcher, and educator Lee-Jane will explore fiction filmmaking as practice-led research, using her film About the Night as a case study. Drawing on Barbara Bolt's (2004) work on creative arts practice, she will discuss how a focus on the final artefact, rather than the practice, creates a gap in understanding film as a dynamic process. Filmmaking is often viewed as a kind of alchemy—a fusion of innate talent, craft skill, and serendipitous moments. However, this mystique is unhelpful if it contributes to the 'cult of the director,' keeps creative 'workers' in their place, and overshadows the collaborative efforts of those diligently working to complete a film. Also, in this session, Lee-Jane will consider how film has the potential for infinite creative possibilities and yet seems ever more to favour formulaic

storytelling. Constraints should never be a barrier to creative work, with limitations creativity can thrive, as Rod Stoneman (2012) argues, benefiting from uncertainty, chance, and risk. Stoneman argues that filmmakers need the freedom to engage in what he terms "dangerous creation," embracing uncertainty and risk-taking—a process that, while often at odds with the priorities of funders is crucial for fostering imaginative and radical filmmaking. There has always been a risk averse culture in filmmaking with so much financial outlay required, so does this mean diverse and innovative filmmaking has no place, which in turn raises important considerations for educators, particularly if we are interested in teaching the changemakers of tomorrow.

Lee-Jane Bennion-Nixon is an independent filmmaker and experienced academic/lecturer. Currently she works for the Open University setting up a new curriculum in Film and Media. She has produced and directed short fiction films that have been showcased on UK television and at prestigious festivals including Edinburgh, Brooklyn, and Cork. Her latest work, *About the Night*, has garnered acclaim, winning Best Story at *The British International Film Festival* and receiving nominations for Best Narrative Short Film at the *Miami Women Film Festival*, *New York Arthouse Film Festival*, and nominated for Best Female Director, European Short Awards. In an academic context, the film was nominated for Best Screen-based Practice Research Award (short) at BAFTSS as well as being screened at Media Frictions, Sweden, the Experiential Fiction Film Festival, Manchester, and as part of the MeCCSA Conference, 2024.

Session 2: Wednesday 27th November 2024 3:30-5pm (UK): Dr Matthew Hawkins
[Link to join on MS Teams](#)

Experimental Fiction Filmmaking – Notes on a Creative Practice Methodology

Matthew will discuss his research practice in the area of fiction filmmaking, and his involvement in the founding of the International Network of Experimental Fiction Filmmaking. The INEFF Festival and Conference unites academics and filmmakers to both define and expand the field of Experimental Fiction Filmmaking. In the last 18 months, INEFF has attracted over 3,000 submissions from filmmakers and academics from over 70 countries and 5 continents. Experimental Fiction Filmmaking adopts an open and exploratory approach to film practice, drawing inspiration from creative traditions such as experimental film, art cinema, and expanded cinema. The practice is often underpinned by film theory and philosophy concerned with concepts of affect, interiority, representation and, more broadly, filmic grammar. The films of the network are oft characterized by a deliberate departure from conventional narrative and stylistic norms, challenging expectations of coherent presentation, traditional dramatic structure, and commercial priorities focused on spectacle and entertainment. In this regard, EFF can be seen as a radical and emancipatory practice. By discussing the methodological approaches in his own fiction filmmaking and examining the practices within the international network, Matthew will begin to

define the conditions and boundaries of Experimental Fiction, highlighting its relevance for filmmakers in both academic and industrial contexts.

Matthew Hawkins is a filmmaker and academic. His research interest in film practice is focused on affect and tone in narrative cinema, documentary film, and experimental practice. He holds a PhD from the University of East London, which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. This research project, entitled *The Concept of Affective Tonality and the Role of the Senses in Producing a Cinematic Narrative*, is focused on affective and mood, rooted in a Deleuzian film-philosophy, and how this can be used as a method and methodology for composing narrative fiction film that privileges the subjective experience of characters, rhythm, and tone, over traditional narrative structure. Matthew is Chair of the Screen Research Group and Course Leader for Film Practice at London South Bank University. His work has twice been nominated for the BAFTSS Screen Based Practice as Research award. He is a founding member of the International Network of Experimental Fiction Filmmaking, and an associate editor for the journal, *Screenworks*.

Session 3: Wednesday 18th December 2024 3:30-5pm (UK): Prof. Shreepali Patel
[Link to join on MS Teams](#)

Multimodal Storytelling: Language, Process, and Radical Interdisciplinarity

Creative Practitioners have had to evolve their vision, methods and communication skills to keep up with the pace of technological development and distribution across platforms and genres. This has led to the adoption of speculative design practices within the rapid pace of creative application (the Fourth Industrial Revolution) which often has limited scope for reflection. Based on a series of case studies, this presentation explores the role of dialogical aesthetics and radical interdisciplinarity across diverse modes of communication (screen, sound, space and language), methods of inquiry and engagement in multimodal storytelling.

Shreepali Patel is Professor of Film & Screen at the University of the Arts London (UAL), an artist filmmaker, story consultant and writer. A former BBC producer/director, her research is underpinned by 30 years of film and broadcast industry experience. She specialises in the convergence of storytelling, human creativity and technology to develop powerful narrative driven experiences across. She is the former Director of the multi-award winning research institute, StoryLab, currently leads the Sonic Screen Lab (UAL), and co-director of BAFTA and Emmy Award winning Eyclinefilms. She holds several advisory, associate and executive positions including British Association of Film & Television Screen Studies (BAFTSS), Royal Television Society, and Cambridge Digital Humanities.

Session 4: Wednesday 29th January 2025 3:30-5pm (UK): Dave Payling

[Link](#) to join on MS Teams

The composition of 'visual music'

Moving images can be a source of information for the sound scientist and creative inspiration for the musician. Sound can be used to sonify the content of images through a data mapping process. The artist might attempt a more personal interpretation of what they see and how they compose music to express this. These varied approaches to working with multiple media and the transition between them have been evident in my own creative practice. Beginning with quantitative value driven methods to enhance auditory display, a technique for making data audible, towards a more intuitive expression based on personal aesthetics, each has proven to be a valid arena for academic research. Various projects will be discussed in this presentation including a technical approach of mapping visual colour to sound timbre, the composition of 'visual music' where music informs image and vice versa and a live ensemble performance in the Heatwork project premiered at Middleport Potteries and later performed in Zurich. These projects will illustrate the variety of methods possible in audio-visual media. Predominantly involving a practice-based approach this journey has been punctuated with a series of reflective written articles, that will also be discussed, that have helped crystallise and further inform the ongoing creative process.

Dave Payling is an audio-visual artist and associate professor, based in Staffordshire UK. His formative research centred on sonification and auditory display and his composition 'Listen (Awakening)' was performed at the Sydney Opera House as part of the ICAD conference in 2004. His more recent work focuses on composition for Electronic Visual Music fusing digital animation with electronic music. His book on this subject is available through Routledge. Dave's compositions have been performed at the Soundings Festival Edinburgh, MANTIS Festival University of Manchester, fLEXiff Experimental Film Festival Sydney Australia, Seeing Sound Bath Spa, ICMC Shanghai, NoiseFloor Staffordshire and the Understanding Visual Music Conference in Brasilia, Brazil. He is From the Floor section editor for Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture.

Session 5: Wednesday 26th February 2025 9-10:30 (UK): Max Schleser

[Link](#) to join on MS Teams (please note it's a different time than all the other sessions)

The Future is Now Mobile Filmmaking and Smart Storytelling as Rebellious and Creative Practice Research.

Over the last decade, mobile filmmaking evolved from an underground, rebellious and art house into an egalitarian filmmaking form and audiovisual practice. In an international context mobile, smartphone and pocket films can provide access to filmmaking tools and technologies for a new generation of filmmakers and bring new

voices to the mobile and cinema screens. Within the contemporary moving image culture and screen ecologies new production forms and formats appear on the horizon. These are driven by the affordances of mobile media and embrace the potential of decentralised networks. This presentation will feature some creative provocations related developments and new directions in production, dissemination, and exhibition process(es) of film and screen production. As Creative Arts researcher, Max Schleser's research projects are disseminated via Non-Traditional Research Outputs (NTROs) that explore aesthetic refinement and collaborative storytelling processes. He applies practice-led research to examine novel film forms and formats (www.schleser.nz). His creative practice focuses on smartphone filmmaking and curating mobile moving-image arts through the MINA (www.mina.pro) smartphone film festival.

Max Schleser (PhD) is Associate Professor in Film and Television and a researcher in the Centre for Transformative Media Technologies (CTMT) at Swinburne University of Technology (Melbourne, Australia), Adobe Creative Educator Innovator, Founder of the Mobile Innovation Network & Association (www.mina.pro) and Screening Director of the MINA Smartphone Film Festival. He is an award-winning filmmaker with expertise in immersive media, documentary film and creative arts 4.0 with a focus on cinematic VR and interactive filmmaking (www.schleser.nz). His research explores screen production, emerging media and smartphone filmmaking for community engagement, creative transformation and transmedia storytelling. His monograph *Smartphone Filmmaking: Theory and Practice* was published by Bloomsbury in 2021. Max Schleser is Editorial Board Member for the Media Practice and Education journal.

Session 6: Wednesday 26th March 2025 3:30-5pm (UK): with Jimmy Hay
[Link](#) to join on MS Teams

Grieving on Screen: Auto-ethnographic approaches to grief in fiction filmmaking

In this talk, Dr Jimmy Hay discusses his current research project in which he is exploring representations of grief in fiction cinema through a series of short films that he has directed and produced. Referencing the three films he has made as part of this project - Lost Property (2021), Nothing Echoes Here (2023) and The Night a Spanish Doctor Called (2025) - he will address the project's central question of whether it is possible to convey the lived experience of grief, loss, and bereavement in a film. In particular, he will consider the final of these three films (The Night a Spanish Doctor Called) and the role that auto-ethnography has played in the film's exploration of memory, hapticity, and subjectivity.

Dr Jimmy Hay is a film director, senior lecturer, and the Head of Subject for Film and Television at the University of Bristol. He has written and directed a number of short films and his debut feature film *High Tide* (2015) - which was the practice element of his PhD - enjoyed a national cinema release. His current research interests are concerned with cinematic representations of grief and the extent to which a

phenomenological approach to film practice can help to explore the creative possibilities of capturing the lived-experience of grief on film.

Session 7: Wednesday 30th April 2025 3:30-5pm (UK): Dafydd Sills-Jones

[Link](#) to join on MS Teams

Unfolding Creative Media Research: Investigation and Intuition in the Age of Big Tech Media

This talk examines the challenges of researching through media making, with its traditional emphasis on autoethnography and craft, in an age where the available tech and dissemination platforms are dominated by proprietary tools and automated systems.

Dafydd Sills-Jones is Associate Professor and Head of the Virtual Creative Precinct (VCP) of the Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies (DCT). He is acting Head of the AVG (Animation, Visual Effects and Gaming) department in Te Kura Toi a Hoahoa / The School of Art and Design. He is co-editor of the Peter Lang book series 'Documentary Film Cultures' and the open access e-journal 'International Journal of Creative Media Research'. He is a member of the editorial board of the journal 'Media History' (Taylor & Francis), the 'Journal of Media Practice and Education' (Taylor & Francis). He is a member of the 'The International Association for Minority Language Media Research' (IAMLMR), and co-founder of the 'Unfolding Media Lab'. Previously, Dafydd worked in the media industry in the UK in a number of sectors and roles, including producing, directing, and researching documentary, drama-documentary, interactive, commercials and corporate for local, network and digital channels. <https://academics.aut.ac.nz/dafydd.sills.jones>

Session 8: Wednesday 28th May 2025 at 9:30-11 UK time (please note it's a different time than all the other sessions): Kath Dooley

[Link](#) to join on MS Teams

Exploring Screenwriting and Embodiment Through Creative Practice Research

In this presentation, Kath reflects on her creative practice research undertaken in the context of cinema and virtual reality storytelling, which has explored screenwriting and embodiment. This research is driven by an interest in screenwriting craft informed by the body of the writer, reader and eventual media viewer.

With reference to a short webisode series, Kath firstly outlines a project that explored use of language that could encourage an embodied reaction in the screenplay reader. Drawing upon theoretical concepts from Laura Marks (2000) and others, Kath sought to instil a sense of haptic visuality into her writing.

In terms of screenwriting for Virtual Reality, Kath has explored screenwriting formats and strategies that position the reader (and eventual VR project interactor) within

the spherical diegetic space of a story as a witness or participant to unfolding drama. This creative work has called for a rethinking of narration strategies for 360-degree media, considering the user's sense of embodiment and presence within a storyworld.

Associate Professor Kath Dooley is a writer/director and academic based at the University of South Australia. Her creative work as has screened at events such the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival and FIVARS, Toronto. Kath is author of *Cinematic Virtual Reality: A Critical Study of 21st Century Approaches and Practices* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and co-editor of *Screenwriting for Virtual Reality: Story Space and Experience* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). Her research interests include embodiment in the context of screen media, virtual reality and screenwriting, women's screen industry practice, and diversity in the screen industries.

Session 9: Wednesday 25th June 2025: **Francisco Mazza**

[Link](#) to join on MS Teams

Listening as Method: Navigating a PhD in Creative Practice Research

In this seminar, Francisco Mazza offers a candid reflection on his PhD practice research journey, from the initial proposal to the research outcomes. As a sound artist exploring the Sonic Ecosystem of Documentary Filmmaking, he shares his experiences crafting a research proposal, navigating challenges, designing a creative research method, and the breakthroughs that have shaped his project.

Central to this presentation is his interdisciplinary approach, merging sonic methodologies with documentary studies, and the role of listening practices as a research method. With a focus on personal experience, Francisco aims to provide emerging researchers with insights on navigating the complexities of a creative practice PhD. He emphasizes the importance of adaptability, critical thinking, creative reflection, and balancing artistic vision with academic rigour.

Francisco Mazza is a London-based sound artist, researcher, and lecturer at UCL. He explores listening practices and the environment around us through modern composition, installation, documentary filmmaking, and radio art. Francisco completed a Master's in Sound Arts at the London College of Communication in 2016 and earned his PhD from Staffordshire University in 2024. His film *Notes on Listening* won the BAFTSS award 2024 in the Doctoral Practice Research category.