

Research Statement

Research background

The #AustralianBeachspace exhibition is a project that coalesces a number of ideas and emerges from a strong theoretical base. The exhibition is one that emerged from the #AustralianBeachspace Instagram project of 2016 (as captured in a previous academic article, Ellison 2017a). This social media experiment investigated how Instagram could play a role in research dissemination by incorporating a visual component alongside more theoretical and textual content. As the higher education sector moves towards new understandings of impact (Gunn and Mintrom 2017), this project was designed to challenge traditional methods of sharing research findings.

Throughout this project, it became apparent that the Instagram project had become a type of artistic expression in its own right and not just as an extension of the previous research that inspired it. The role of social media in visual arts is not new, and Instagram exhibitions have previously been (somewhat controversially in the case of Richard Prince) shown internationally. The use of Instagram in driving popularity and re-presenting exhibition pieces is also an emerging area of interest and suggesting that the way Instagram uses engage with the gallery and museum sector is changing (Weilenmann, Hillman, and Jungselius 2013).

Research contribution

This exhibition is an interrogation of the visual iconography of both the Australian beach and Instagram. Using significant photographic work that has been initially carefully curated in the Instagram project, which is then re-presented and reworked in this exhibition, the collection creates a new interpretation of the work. Playing with size, iconography, and syntax (including the transformation or even loss of captions) forces the viewer to question the social media framing of the work. This work is an example of what Smith and Dean (2009, 7) call research-led practice, where creative work has “been imitated as a result of basic research work which was not originally intended for that purpose”. In this instance, the collection of creative works is an expression, interrogation, and reinterpretation of research findings and as such, that research is intrinsic and interwoven to the creative process.

Research significance

This exhibition was shown at the CQUni Noosa Art Space during August – September 2017. It has also received attention in its earlier form, as an Instagram collection. The research that has supported the development of this work has been previously published in academic publications, including a book chapter (Ellison 2017b), three journal articles (Ellison 2016, Ellison and Hawkes 2016, and a forthcoming publication in *TEXT*), and a PhD thesis (Ellison 2013). And the use of Instagram as a research dissemination method, focusing on the #AustralianBeachspace Instagram project, was published in an August 2017 *M/C Journal* issue.

Works Cited

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