# system, data and method in creative disciplines

practice and theory in the contemporary visual arts

Judith Mottram, School of Material, Royal College of Art, London

pinning jelly to the wall creating form from fluff spinning yarns from gossip pulling the wool over

herding cats

thinking in, through and with art the creative process as pathway refusing every explanatory gaze

puncturing the comfort zone

# Focus

#### System

- How artists work
- How artists' reputations develop

#### Data

- The research field
- Trouble with definitions

Method

- Artistic research
- Psycho-physics, neuroscience & psychology
- Interrogating visual creativity and its discourse

# Pinning down paint







### Willi Bongard and the Art Compass, 1975-1985

Art Aktuell newsletter

Criteria for determining invest-ability museum acquisition/exhibition private collection critical appraisal gallery representation With the great varity of art today, the one doesn't exclude the other by any means! In other words, the best sales chance still remains the right buy?

This has been at any rate the philosophy of this information service from the beginning, which I will also hold on to in the future because it has obviously proved itself.

As to our marketing director's plea for help, let me say so much:

There are artists and "artists", galleries and "galleries", just as there are museums and "museums". For years I have endeavoured with "art aktuell" to report primarily on those artists, museums and galleries worth paying attention to, who-in one way or the other- have contributed to the history of art and attracted attention beyond regional and national borders.

As far as galleries are concerned, I advise you if at all possibl to buy art only where you can bring it back again, at least at all times on commission or where you can exchange it for other works! And this without fuss!!

I admit, there are relatively few such galleries, primarily those mentioned in "art aktuell" more often than others-as opposed to, above all, dealers, who are also active and have their justification. But also as opposed to auction houses, which are even more justified, which however recommend themselves primarily

as buying sources for galleries and dealers-as well as selling

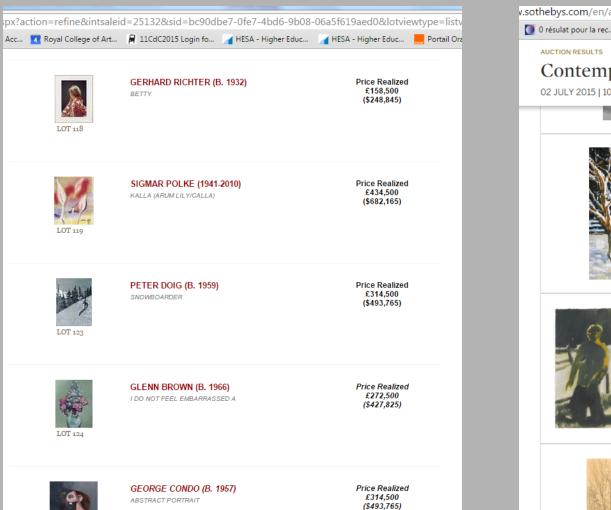
possibility for collectors.

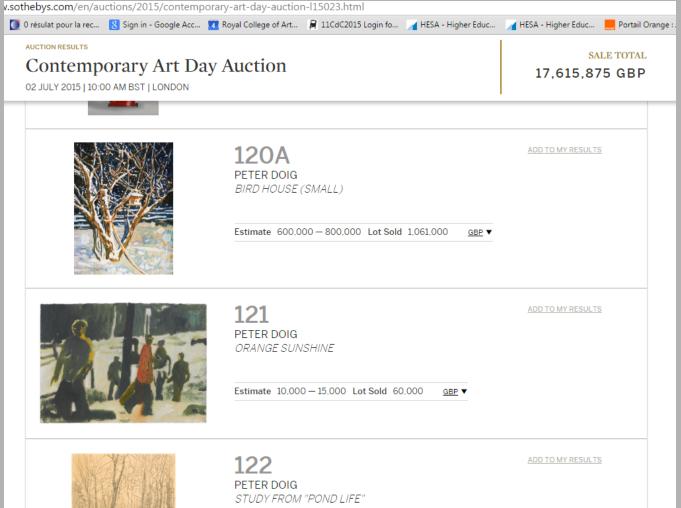
I am perfectly aware that I'm touching on a controversial topic in giving preference to auction houses-from the collector's standpoint over selling institutions. As source for buying, on the other hand, they don't seems to me half as suitable for collectors, if at all! For more reasons than I can discuss here.

Auctions houses-like express-train stations- depend on the quickest

disposing of their clients and business. this is due after all to

#### The auction business





#### Modelling the system

Alan Bowness and the conditions for success

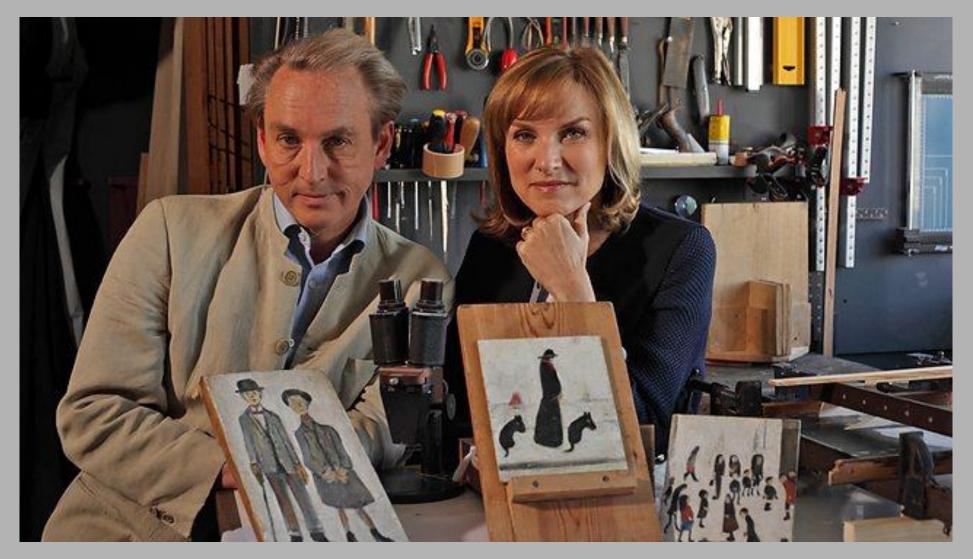
Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and the conditions for creativity

Pierre Bourdieu and field of cultural production

David Galenson and what success can tell us

Olav Velthuis and the symbolic meaning of prices

#### Fake or fortune?



#### Reputations, aesthetic objects and modelling systems

Scope for data mining New methods of tracking social networks

Artprice.com ArtTactic.com Artfacts.net Artinsight.co.uk artists, key figures and market trends unbiased art market research unlock the art market

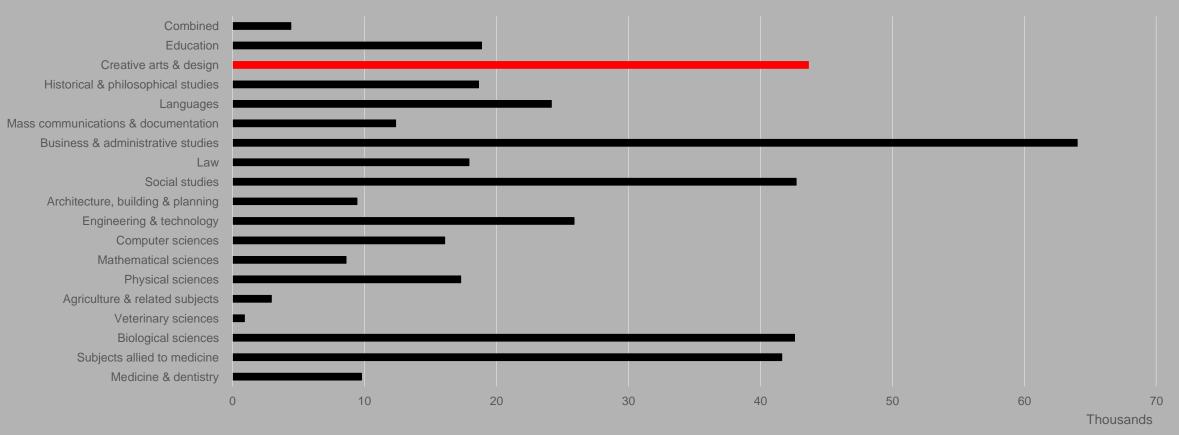
talks and events delivering art market knowledge, insight and expertise

#### Research in art & design and the research field - a history

#### 1960s 1<sup>st</sup> ten PhDs in art & design

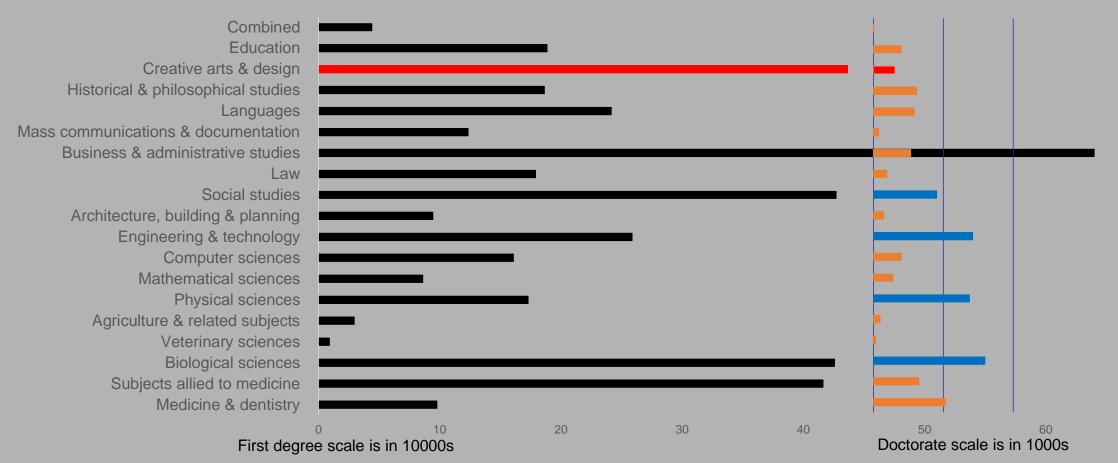
- 1970 Coldstream report
- 1974 National Council for Diplomas in Art & Design merged with CNAA
- 1984 CNAA statement on how to infuse teaching with a sense of critical enquiry
- 1985 100<sup>th</sup> art & design PhD in the UK
- 1988 CNAA conference: The Matrix of Research in Art & Design Education
- 1992 Establishment of post-1992 universities
- 1996 First substantial submission from Art & Design to RAE
- 2000 500<sup>th</sup> PhD in Art & Design in the UK
- 2010 Creative arts & design PhD completions reaching 500 p.a.

#### The scale of the UK education field – first degrees



subjects of first degree graduates, UK universities, 2013-14

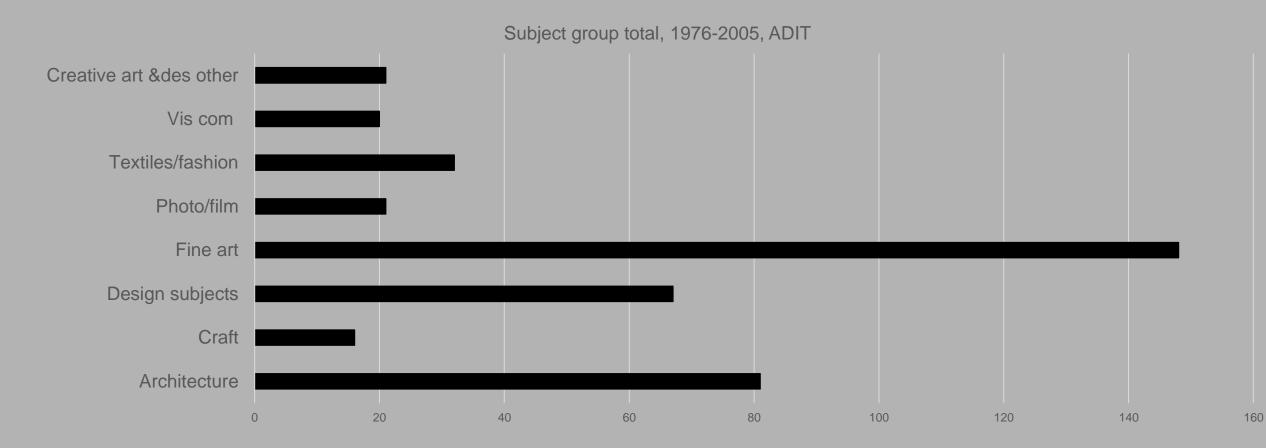
### Scale of activity in different subjects



70

subjects of first degree graduates and doctorates, UK universities, 2013-14

# PhDs by subject, 1976-2005 - Art & Design Index to Theses



# Dewey categorisation of EThoS records

736 Carving and carvings 737 Numismatics and sigillography 738 Ceramic arts 739 Art metalwork 740 Graphic arts & decorative arts 741 Drawing and drawing 742 Perspective in drawing in an of the second strategy of the seco 701-708 Standard subdivisions of fine and decorative arts 747 Interior decoration **701** Philosophy and theory of fine and decorative arts 748 Glass 749 Furniture and accessories **702** Miscellany of fine and decorative arts 750 Painting 750Painting and paintings 751

703 Dictionaries, encyclopedias, concordances of fine and decorative a752 Color

- 704 Special topics in fine and decorative arts
- 705 Serial publications of fine and decorative arts
- **706** Organizations and management of fine and decorative arts
- **707** Education, research, related topics of fine and decorative arts
- **708** Galleries, museums, private collections of fine and decorative arts
- **709** History, geographic treatment, biography

59.05 \*1800-1899 759.06\*1900-1999 759.07\*2000-2099 760Printmaking and prints 760[.044] Iconography of graphic arts 760[.09] History, geographic treatment, biography of graphic arts 760.1 Philosophy and theory 760.2Miscellany 760.7Education, research, related topics 760[.9]History, geographic treatment, biography 761-767 Printmaking [768][Unassigned] 769 Prints

730 Sculpture and related arts 731-735 Sculpture <sup>232</sup> Sculpture from earliest times to ca. 500, sculpture of nonliterate peoples 733 + Greek, Etruscan, Roman sculpture 734 \*Sculpture from ca. 500 to 1399

735.2 Specific periods 735.21 \*1400-1799 735.22 \*1800-1899 736-739 Other plastic arts

736-739 Other plastic arts

740 Graphic arts [formerly 760] and decorative arts

753-758lconography

9.02 \*500-1399 59.03 \*1400-1599 9.04 \*1600-1799

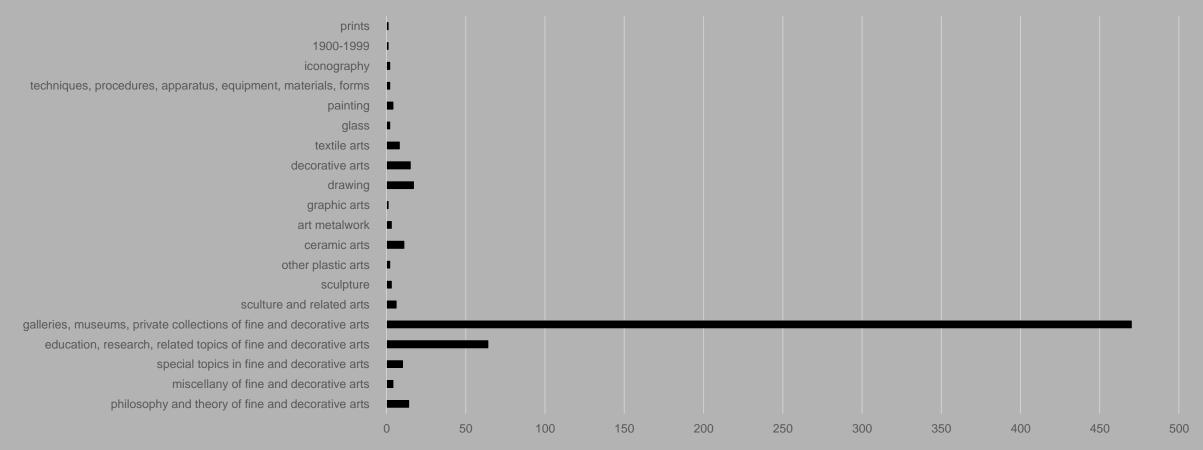
759History, geographic treatment, biography

759.01\*Nonliterate peoples, and earliest times to 499

759.01-759.07 Periods of development

## PhDs by subject, 2008-2012 British Library Dewey classification

art & craft PhD theses 2008-2012 by Dewey category



#### Data and the trouble with definitions

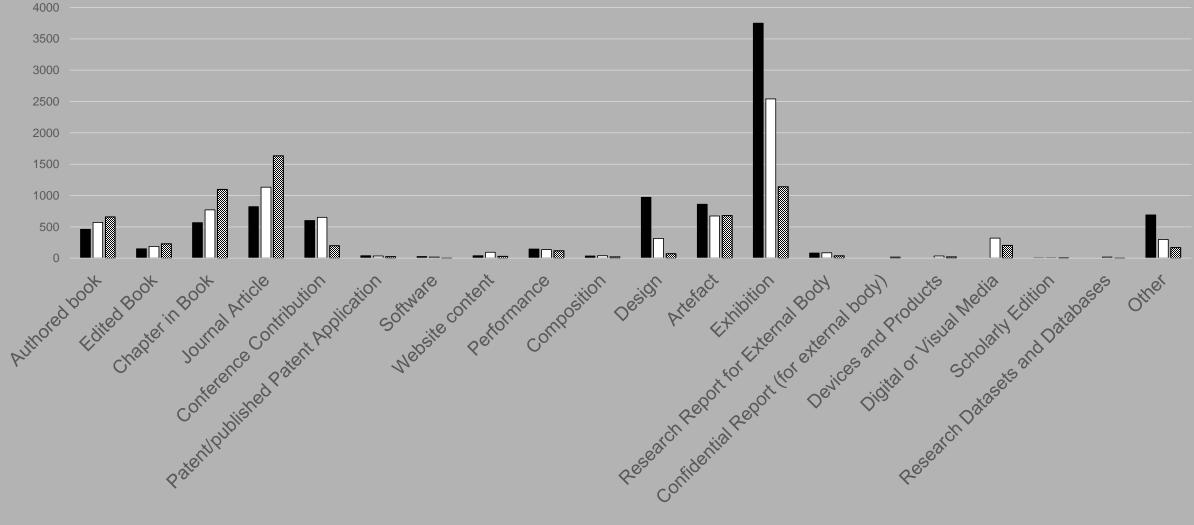
Data-driven demands of the modern workplace Count us in: Quantitative Skills for a New Generation

Statistics may rule our lives, but they are no way to measure the true value of the arts (Andrew Marr, Observer, 29.07.01)

Black box theory

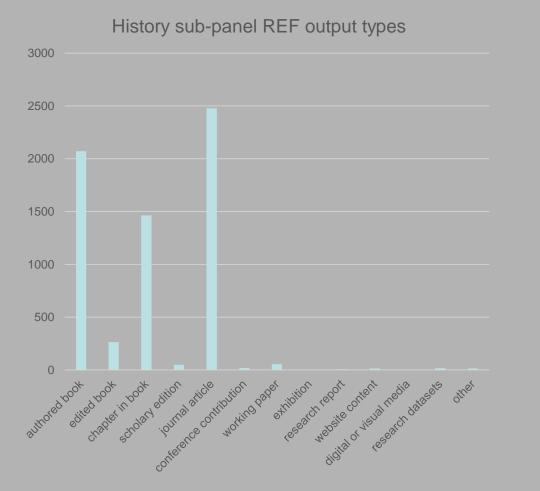
Caillois wanted to cut the bean open to find out its secret, while Breton was offended by such a suggestion, arguing that such an approach would dispel the bean's mystery and undermine its potential for poetic speculation in its viewers' minds (Marquard Smith, Post-screen literacy, 2015)

#### output types in art & design RAE and REF submissions



■2001 □2008 ■2014

# Output types History sub-panel and main panel B



journal atticle contribution books and chapters patent research report datase working paper othertypes

#### output types in REF submission Main Panel B

#### Artistic research and its methods

Artistic research is ... any kind of production or original use and dissemination of knowledge – that artists make as part of or in connection with their artistic creativity (Soren Kjorup 2010)

...the trans- or interdisciplinary research conducted by artists in their artistic practices in not characterised by an objective, empirical approach (Henk Slager 2010)

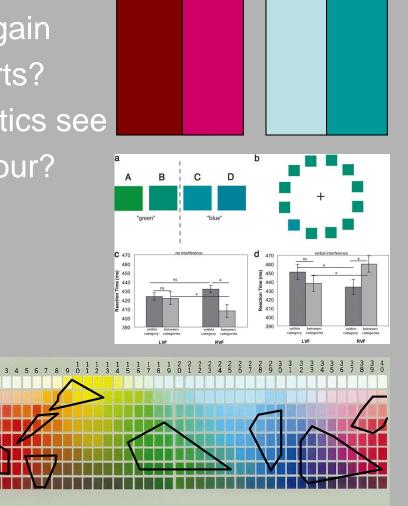
'spasmic, interdisciplinary probes, haphazard cognitive investigations, dissipating interaction, and imaginary archiving' (Sarat Maharaj, 2004)

A process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared

#### Psycho-physics and something to see

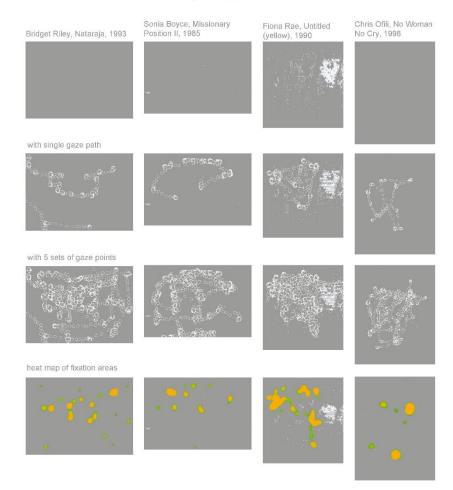
Looking at paintings again Experts and non-experts? Looking at what the critics see What is said about colour?





#### Looking at paintings - Visual Evidence 1, research methods

Sample images from Tate Collection showing 5s tracking of gaze point and heat maps of fixations from 5 test sessions with digital images



### New perspectives from neuroscience & psychology

Neuroscience

Ramachandran's 10 aesthetic laws

Integration of 'old' and 'new' aesthetics

Psychology

Cognitive psychology and the conditions for creativity

Gestalt psychology and figural goodness

#### And as for interpretation...

International Art English

Comparisons with linguistic corpora PhD abstracts, Art & Craft, 2008-2013 International Colour Association Conference abstracts 2013 Selected exhibition reviews and catalogue essays 1992-4 & 2012-14

Wood, trees, or pencils in waiting?