PRESS RELEASE

Technology moving too fast for the arts

A nationwide consultation run by the visual arts centre for the Arts and Humanities Data Service has found that there are serious concerns within the arts education community relating to the impact of digital technologies on arts education and, in some ways, on the arts in general.

The six month long consultation, commissioned by the Images Working Group of the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), touched over 150 arts education institutions, including some forty universities and more than thirty associated organisations, including Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum, Imperial War Museum, National Museums & Galleries of Wales and Scotland, National Portrait Gallery and English Heritage.

A preliminary report on the consultation reveals that the arts education community is concerned by the speed with which technological change is happening, and is worried that that there is a lack of forethought and consideration for any negative impact that such change brings. Furthermore, the new technology seems to threaten livelihoods and the essential qualities of 'human' skills, with an apparent shift away from traditional expertise and resources towards increased 'virtual learning' and reliance on online materials with all attendant problems. And, for tutors and students alike, there is a perceived lack of support and investment for the new technologies across the sector. In particular, there are fears that, although a balance of old and new is to be desired, financial and strategic imperatives mean that this is unlikely to happen. Institutes will not, the community believes, maintain 'out-of-date' equipment and practices because of issues with cost, space, expertise and, increasingly, health & safety.

Despite such concerns, the consultation has clearly demonstrated that, overall, the community is keen to embrace the new technology, but in a measured and informed way, and in a manner that would compliment, rather than replace, traditional art teaching and practice. Sculptor Antony Gormley, when asked about digital imaging by AHDS Visual Arts Director Mike Pringle, at the Association of Art Historians' conference, perhaps sums up the art education community's feelings about digital media. He stated that his studio practice now made use of digital technologies and that "the Angel of the North could not have been made without digital space", but also emphasised the importance to him of taking his work "out of the virtual and into the real".

Contact: Polly Christie - 01252 892807 - polly@vads.ahds.ac.uk

Website: www.*the*digitalpicture.ac.uk.

Notes to editor:

The coordinators of *the* **Digital Picture**, AHDS Visual Arts, have a significant online image collection composed of images that have been digitized by or for the education sector. Please feel free to explore the collections to see if there are any images that you would like to include in an article.

Website: http://www.visualarts.ahds.ac.uk

AHDS Visual Arts is the visual arts centre for the Arts and Humanities Data Service, a National body, funded by the JISC and AHRC (see below) established to provide digital resources, preservation services and advice to UK education and research communities. AHDS Visual Arts is hosted by the Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College and is one of five centres. The others are: Archaeology, hosted by York; History, Essex; Literature, Languages and Linguistics, Oxford; and Performing Arts, Glasgow. AHDS Executive is hosted at Kings College, London.

Website: http://www.visualarts.ahds.ac.uk

JISC is the Joint Information Services Committee. JISC works with further and higher education by providing strategic guidance, advice and opportunities to use Information Communication Technology to support teaching, learning, research and administration.
With funding from the UK further and higher education funding councils, JISC provides a centralised and co-ordinated direction for the development of ICT infrastructure and activities. This project is funded by JISC's Images Working Group.

Website: http://www.jisc.ac.uk

AHRC is the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The AHRC supports research within a huge subject domain from traditional humanities subjects, such as history, modern languages and English literature, to the creative and performing arts. The AHRC funds research and postgraduate study within the UK's higher education institutions. In addition, on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, it provides funding for museums, galleries and collections that are based in, or attached to, higher education institutions in England.

Website: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk

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