**SACE RESEARCH THEMES**

**Creative and artistic practice**

Practice-led research in performance, dramaturgy, creative writing and visual arts

Our creative and artistic practices are multidisciplinary, intensely innovative and practice-led.

Through cross-disciplinary arts-led practices, we develop innovative approaches to production that challenge and develop creative and artistic traditions. Founded in studio-based and literary experimentation, field research and cultural engagement, our research uncovers new perspectives and insightful responses to the world around us.

Our researchers maintain vital relationships in the cultural sector and work with external partners to collaborate on exhibitions, performances, publications and publicly engaged projects. We work with a variety of disciplines, fabrication industries, organisations and with other faculties at the University of Sydney to explore innovative solutions to poignant questions.

**Criticism and interpretation**

Critically engaging with the world and interpreting its challenges

Critical practice informs our engagement with textual, visual and digital forms. We engage with the arts and cultural sector, media, the public service and industry, bringing critical thinking to bear in shaping and refining public discourse.

Criticism and interpretation underpin our capacity to respond to global challenges. Critical thinking is central to everything we do in our daily lives. It ensures the quality of public debate, education and cultural practice.

Our research engages with a wide range of forms from mediaeval to contemporary representations but is united in its critical commitment to nuancing the ways in which we interpret the world. Our research understands theory as a site for interrogation and reflection rather than application.

We work across academic disciplines and beyond to generate high-impact scholarly work that intervenes in key public debates about the arts, culture, media and public policy. We address and contribute to public discourse about such urgent global challenges as climate change, migration, indigeneity, gender politics, health communication, and racial and sexual diversity.

**Digital technologies and societies**

Analysing our relationships with digital technologies and their impacts on society and culture

Our research focuses on the pervasive social, cultural and political impacts of platforms, artificial intelligence, digitalisation and data.

The transformative impacts of the ways we design, implement and use digital technologies are changing our societies and cultures. With its roots in the growth of the Internet, pervasive computing, data mining and social networking, the global advance of digital platforms, artificial intelligence and data driven enterprise at scale has reshaped how we work, play, educate, and care for ourselves and others. It has also fundamentally reshaped media and communications industries, cultures and practices.  Professions such as journalism, public relations, and publishing are responding to the challenges of platformisation, and new jobs and business models emerging. Uses of emerging technologies in the arts and culture sectors present new opportunities for creativity and engaging audiences.

Our research focuses on the nature of these changes, and how scholars can reshape dominant discourses, laws and policies, professional and creative practices, and industry frameworks, in order to promote more just and equitable outcomes. It is informed by visions of social justice, inclusion, economic equity, and environmental sustainability and by interdisciplinary approaches that bring together insights from  communication, media and cultural studies, science and technology studies, law, economics, sociology, digital humanities, arts, design and computing sciences. We work across disciplines to generate high-impact scholarly work that intervenes in key public debates about digital futures.

**Literary and textual analysis**

How texts are made, how they circulate, and how readers interact with them

The material forms of textuality, including digital and oral texts, convey meaning to readers and viewers. Our research explores a broad range of fields to help us to understand the significance of different texts.

In our everyday lives, we are constantly addressed by texts of all kinds, from the literary—novels, short stories, poetry—to more prosaic forms of the written word—newspapers, magazines, blogs, Twitter and text messages. In an image-rich information society, ‘texts’ also include still images and audiovisual media, from advertisements to multi-episode television series.

Understanding the significance of texts involves understanding how words on a page, or a screen, make meaning, and what they tell us about life now and in the past. Textual analysis is the basis for other judgments and decisions, and the skills required to carry out these kinds of evaluation are essential in navigating a world of information, from interpreting law, matters of public literacy, and multimedia consumption, to familiar modes of reading literary texts and viewing performances. Understanding how texts are produced and arranged is also a first crucial step in creating texts of our own.

Our research gives focus to how texts are produced, what kinds of forms they take, and how we evaluate and analyse them. Literary studies evaluates physical texts – manuscripts, printed books, journals – but also performed texts and digital texts, and the field of communication considers texts in their broadest sense, including advertising, computer gaming, and various modes of public information. Film, video, and online visual sources also form crucial parts of our textual landscapes. How we read these texts – visually, aurally, by touch – shapes how we identify their themes and significance, and we use analytic techniques to engage their meanings.

**Storytelling and community**

Making the world: telling stories and building communities

We express, build, and sustain our collective identities—and our futures—with stories. Working with diverse global and local communities, our work explores how cultural practices envision their shared possibilities.

People tell stories all the time: with words, images, objects, in performances, on film, in social media, with what they wear, in songs, in everyday exchanges.

As we do so, we make sense of our world, and we forge shared senses of being and of possibility. We understand what we have been, express who we are, and we consider what we might be in the future.

Our researchers work in and with diverse communities—artistic, literary, media, scientific, subcultural and everyday groups—to understand the hows and whys of the processes with which people make sense of their worlds.

We use a range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, looking at texts and practices, applying methodologies of fieldwork, critical analysis, computational social science, experiments with form and creative practice, among others. We ask: who gets to tell stories? How is story-telling itself a site of struggle as communities seek to forge their identities, to include and to exclude, to negotiate questions of social justice, access, and equity, and to make the future?

Our research informs policy and practice across a range of sectors, from government to industry, to training, and throughout the arts sector.

Our current areas of focus include:

* investigating how regional museums and galleries, through exhibitions, public programming and other approaches are supporting communities through times of crisis.
* understanding how certain voices and interests come to dominate the media, and how digital disruption supports alternative narratives;
* researching how bodies of literature address ideas of inclusion and exclusion and relate to wider contexts, such as history and politics;
* working with incarcerated men to understa­nd how creative practice inside prisons make a difference in the lives of the incarcerated, in the institutional culture of prisons, and in the communities to which these men return?
* exploring and supporting storytelling with diverse groups, including refugees and cultural workers from around the world;
* understanding how communities of artists develop their work collaboratively, and through negotiations with historical and international traditions, as well as their immediate contexts;
* developing and supporting community-based arts practice to support resilience in the face of, and to find creative solutions to health, environmental, and economic challenges.

**Visual forms and practices**

How we create, understand and interact with our visual world

We explore the fabric of the visual world. We explore how objects, images and symbols move across time and space, how they are displayed, viewed and interpreted. We ask how we see the world, and chart the impact of visual culture on society, politics and human life.

From cave art to the metaverse, the visual is fundamental to human cultural experience and has a privileged place in our exploration of our world.  Visual culture has been shaped and remade by the possibilities of technology and come to play a key role in how we see and present ourselves as individuals, and communities. Our diverse group of researchers, including practitioners, historians, curators and theorists, explore the richness of the visual world. Their scholarship and thought helps trace and articulate new and complex histories of how art and visual culture is transmitted, connected, interpreted, made, collected and exchanged and to question how, why and what we see.

We are engaged with visual forms as a means of communication, expression and as a way of understanding the world around us. Our work encompasses research into individual and cultural perception; a focus on the social and political contexts of vision in diverse times and places; the multiple forms of social, cultural and political expression to which visual culture gives rise; and the frameworks in which we interact with visual culture, from museums and collections to digital platforms, on our streets and in our homes and workplaces.

Our work highlights the vital role of visual knowledge in cultures and societies across the world. We study the complexity of Indigenous Australian visual knowledge, and its continuing vitality; we explore how seeing can reveal or distort truth; we chart the growth of new visual technologies and we help to place our saturated visual present in helpful and illuminating historical contexts.  We work with many partners globally and nationally, to explore how the question of the visual is of continuing relevance not just to art and artists but to science, medicine, engineering and education.

Our current areas of focus include:

* Indigenous art and visual knowledge and understanding
* Global dissemination of visual culture, and the world cultures of visual art – the exchange of visual forms between cultures and groups
* Gender and visual cultures
* Encounters with and through art, across empires, territories and histories
* Materials in art, the making and use of art objects
* Histories and practices of display of visual culture and objects – in exhibitions, collections and across media
* Relations between artworks, objects, texts, and designs
* The visual across forms and media- how are images translated across formats and in different mediums, from woodblocks to memes
* The audiences, consumers and publics of visual art and culture
* The history, theory and reception of photography as art and vernacular practice
* Visual cultures at the intersection of history, archives, digital cultures, and contemporary artistic practice
* Fashions, canons and taste in visual art and culture
* Histories and theories of perception, across art, science and psychology
* Art and text, in Books, engravings, paintings, photography, film
* How science, engineering and medicine ‘see’, from deep space to the nano-scale.