



Intersecting Visual Art and Text: Creative-Critical, Transgenre Approaches and Identities in Writing and Teaching

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ABSTRACT

Scholar Cydney Alexis notes that “too often, binaries are leaned on in order to praise one thing and devalue another.” This is especially true in the broader field of English where there is often a strict separation between work that is deemed “scholarly” and work that is labeled “creative.” However, the scholarly vs. creative argument only further emphasizes an outdated binary that doesn’t reflect the reality of writing, researching, and creating.

We identify as (creative) writers, artists, teachers, and scholars, but have struggled to see those constellated identities represented in English as a whole. Because of this, we have always been interested in overlaps and interdisciplinarity, echoing what Ames Hawkins et al. write: “‘Genre...is not so much passé as it is boring.’ Which is to say what I want more than anything is to not have the writing process be rote, to not already know where it is I’m going, sure of my argument, confident of my approach.” As doctoral students in the same program with similarly complex and interdisciplinary identities, we came together to brainstorm ways that our backgrounds in creative writing and art could intersect with the work we were doing as scholars and teachers of writing. Our presentation outlines the ideas, projects, and teaching tools that developed from those brainstorming sessions, how they worked in practice, and how we continue to implement those creative, arts-based approaches beyond graduate school in our current positions as faculty members.

We build upon a multimedia framework for writing introduced by scholars like Claire Lutkewitte, Jody Shipka, and Patricia Sullivan. They note that truly connecting and engaging with an audience can require us to “create in multiple modes” (Lutkewitte 2) and embrace/teach a process-focused approach that values the messiness of the writing itself over the “finished” product (Shipka 3). Further, Sullivan notes that “though the lines dividing different pedagogical projects can be blurry and shifting,...through the ‘freer’ aesthetic space created by experimental and alternative discourses, students may be allowed to express their unique individualities, articulate marginal or underrepresented social realities, and/or critique the limits of dominant sociopolitical discourses” (2).

Our talk not only provides clear take-aways and tools for those wanting to break down the boundaries of genre and intersect visual art and writing in their own work and in their classrooms, but we also showcase some creative projects and tools we have tried and implemented. Ultimately, this session works to re-imagine binaries and think outside the traditional norms of genre and identity. In the process of challenging these norms, we advocate for a cross-disciplinary, collaborative approach between the arts and the humanities and propose new and exciting possibilities for creative-critical scholars and teachers.