Title: *Design West: an assessment of student experience and design outputs in an alternative learning environment.*

Name: Susan Rogers

Affiliation: Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Letterfrack, Connemara, Ireland

Co-authors: Conor Clarke (Design Factory, Dublin) Dermot O'Donovan (GMIT Letterfrack)

Abstract

Design West is a summer school that will take place in rural Connemara, on the Wild Atlantic Way, Galway, Ireland. The school will run over two weeks at the end of June and beginning of July 2018. The first of its kind in Ireland, Design West is a collaboration between professional design practice and education. Design West was conceived and developed by Conor Clarke, director of Design Factory studio in Dublin, in collaboration with the educational institute GMIT Letterfrack. The aim of the school is to offer professional and undergraduate graphic designers, and designers the opportunity to study design in an alternative learning environment. Design West offers participants an environment for studying design in a non-urban environment, away from the noise of the city and the pressures of deadlines. Studying under leading international and local designers, participants will engage in a two-week programme of discovery, learning, reflection, adventure and making. Design West intends to allow the location of rural Connemara to inform the content and final outputs at the end of the two weeks.

This paper critically examines Design West as an alternative educational environment. It traces the experiences of the participants throughout the two weeks and examines the outputs at the end of the programme in the context of the learning and physical environment in which they were designed and created.

In this paper consideration is given to the type of learning that took place. Collaborative learning and group work are intrinsic to the two week programme. Also explored is the participation of learners in local and community engagement. Focused research based on themes of remoteness, silence, ambient sound, the passage of time, less connectivity, walking as research, will be examined in terms of participant's discovery of new materials and creative possibilities.

Biography

Susan Rogers is a Lecturer at GMIT Letterfrack, Co. Galway where she teaches Design History, Design Communication and Design. Susan is currently teaching on the graphic design programme at the GMIT Centre for Creative Arts and Media (CCAM) in Galway. Before joining GMIT Letterfrack she spent many years teaching the history and theory of visual communication at Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT). She studied Visual Communication at NCAD, before completing a Masters degree in Design Education also at NCAD. She holds a D.Phil in information design theory from the University of Ulster, Belfast.

Email ID: susan.rogers@gmit.ie

Presenter Name: Susan Rogers
Type of Presentation: Speaker
Contact Number: +353 872857281

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