

## *Research by design: the refereed studio*

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RESEARCH IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE is an issue of increasing concern and priority for landscape educators. As an editorial in *Landscape Journal* observed, 'The difficult quest of what constitutes the parameters, methods, and standards of research in landscape architecture is ongoing' (Editor's comment 1995, p.159). Increasing pressure is being placed on landscape architecture educators to publish more research, in addition to teaching design. While this is sometimes seen as an impossible goal, both requirements can be met simultaneously. The model of the refereed studio has been trialled in the architectural arena, but is relatively new to landscape architecture. The idea was discussed at the recent *Emerging Paradigms in Design Education* meeting at the University of New South Wales, and was developed further at a recent research meeting of the Department of Landscape Architecture, Lincoln University. Professor Helen Armstrong from the Queensland University of Technology, who facilitated the meeting, noted that the refereed studio incorporates the often underrated creative and investigative work which goes into designing studio projects into a broader research framework. Students become research partners and are actively involved in the research project. The studio may be part of a larger project which reflects the educator's interest, with the studio providing the opportunity to explore a specific issue in detail or investigate a case study. Importantly, the result of the studio which is submitted for review is not simply a report on students' responses to a particular design brief. Nor does it use students as design guinea pigs, being tested for their responses under certain conditions. Rather, the refereed studio follows the model of any research project carried out with a team of willing and active researchers. However, in this case, research equates with design.

Considerable planning is needed to design the studio as a research project, paying special attention to both the broader research issues and the detail of the studio brief. In essence, the criteria for refereeing a studio would be consistent with any assessment of research findings or, in fact, any design critique. For example: clarity of objectives; relevance and insight; creative and innovative process and presentation; and outcomes which are coherent, original and fruitful. The 'manuscript' submitted for review would require:

1. Statement of objectives
2. Critical review of substantive focus (What is the proposition and why is it significant?)
3. Presentation of process (How and why was the studio project designed? Why was it designed as a studio project?)
4. Outcomes (Results and critical discussion. What were the results and what did they mean? Where does this lead us to next?)

*Landscape Review* is seeking expressions of interest in the idea of the refereed studio, with the possibility of an annual special edition of the journal devoted solely to the topic. Submissions on both the notion of the refereed studio and proposals for actual projects are welcomed.

#### REFERENCE

Editor's comment (1995) *Landscape Journal* 14(2): 159–160.

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