



Strategic Research Plan  
2016-2019

**NSCAD**  
UNIVERSITY

NSCAD University Research Clusters in the areas of pure research, applied research and knowledge mobilization as they relate to science, innovation, community engagement and fine art.

Library + Learning Commons + Digital Archive

Design Lab (including the Digital Textiles Institute, and the Centre for Health and Aging)

Cineflux (including Immersive Black Box, Electronics Lab, Animation Lab)

The Institute of Infrastructure

The Institute of Contemporary Craft

Art Education Collaboratory and Art + Reconciliation Project

The Drawing Lab

NSCAD Press

Sustainable Materials Centre and Materials Archive

# Media Ecology - Film and Emerging Media

Across all disciplines of the visual arts, research is being done that grapples with the changing world of digital technology. This is a particularly prominent aspect of the media arts where artists and thinkers have had to work on a constantly changing playing field. The 'digital turn' has reoriented the theoretical, cultural and technological apparatus of film, photography and media arts making research and experimentation an essential area of knowledge creation and expertise for practitioners in media arts. *Research in Film and Emerging Media* at NSCAD is involved in both investigations into the emerging media technologies themselves as well as the cultural forms these technologies enable. Our goal, through supporting individual researchers' projects or in our investment in a CRC in Interactive Media, is to bring creative projects into conversation with the new affordances of digital innovation, which involves both the construction of new technical apparatus to be deployed in artistic work as well as re-examining and reusing of available technology in new and unique ways.

Research in Film and Emerging Media at NSCAD has made innovative advances in areas such as motion tracking, adaptive techniques for cinematic production, immersive environments and virtual reality, locative media, net art and web culture, transmedia storytelling and cross-platform production, bio-metric sensing, stereoscopic imaging, big data, video games, 3D printing and fabrication, innovation in documentary narrative and technological obsolescence and sustainability. Over the course of the next five years, we will look to partner with creative communities outside of the NSCAD Community to examine how technologies can be used across a range of artistic fields, expanding on collaborative relationships with local and international architects, dancers, theatre artists, musicians, activists, etc. Research in the area of Film and Emerging Media will continue to create opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration and partnership and well as pathways towards commercialization and development of qualifications and experience in technology development. The support for 'Creative Technologists' from the researchers in this area will have an important impact in the visual arts field and beyond.

# Media Ecology - Digital Materiality

The term digital materiality refers to the array of digital technologies used in conjunction with traditional and new materials to think about, create, manipulate and fabricate new forms. The digital translation of imagined elements into material form means that the production methods and norms of fine art, craft and industry can be merged and opened up in a way that privilege neither speciality, supporting experimentation. NSCAD supports the investigation of material and form in digital technologies within contemporary art practices using 3D modes of production such as in sculpture, ceramics, textiles, multi-media installation, and design. We encourage research questions about digital materiality and multidisciplinary methods of research and creation that we believe are at the core of advancing new knowledge in broader intermedia sector. Digital technology, fabrication, and materiality are at the centre of research-creation initiatives and is expected to create new academic partnerships and industrial and commercial affiliations through NSCAD initiatives. Multi-disciplinary projects will involve art, science, technology and medical collaborations and activities will include the application of computer-assisted design and manufacturing technologies, the development of digital visualization and handling technologies, and the customization of design and fabrication techniques.

# Material Exploration – Contemporary Craft

NSCAD is a leader in Craft. Our diverse research interests involve partnerships with other design institutions and targeted Nova Scotia industries with a focus on local to global impact, as well as the creation of a contemporary craft institute solidifying NSCAD as a departure point for current research in contemporary craft. Today's craft media practices encourage interdisciplinary research as much as they interrogate discipline-based convention, ultimately revealing a greater complexity of conceptual production with material expression in contemporary arts. NSCAD supports research in the modern craft movement as allied with domestic and personal objects, while also supporting contemporary practices that expand the knowledge-base through innovative links between design and architecture. This research stream is in sync with the evolving structures, discourse and socio-cultural responsiveness of fine art practices, which creates new opportunities for designers, architects, manufacturers and entrepreneurial enterprises that operate directly with consumers. The vision for *Material Exploration* is to continue to expand techniques, methods and methodologies leading to new knowledge in faculty research and curriculum development.

For example, Jewellery and Metalsmithing has developed a curriculum that teaches digital design by linking the practice to digital production of metal and other materials. As a result, students are equipped to work with industry professionals with the newest media and industry standard design software. Looking to the future of material explorations is to look at sustainability, a new dimension for the NSCAD textile faculty who are investigating the opportunities to repurpose synthetic fibres while researching alternatives that support sustainable textiles agriculture. NSCAD envisions future research in new approaches to growing and using natural dyes and low waste garment patterning that will lead to the long-term success of manufacturing of fabric and fashion and clothing production. NSCAD craft research projects encourage students to engage new technologies and interdisciplinary thinking.

# Material Exploration – Design and Maker Innovation

NSCAD envisions increasing its research engagement in the visualization of big data and public and private information and monitoring issues, having already engaged in a series of projects including the build of a geodesic immersive cinema dome, and a multi-projector theatre installation and entered into a new funding partnership focused in Big Data. Our value is in our ability to make things either as a means of exploration and expression or as a means of commerce, as well as our ability to use artistic, creative and design thinking methodologies and apply them to problem solving. We will increase NSCAD's research engagement as 'makers' through increased exploration of new methods of production such as rapid prototyping, continued involvement with production partnerships through involvement of future CRCs in the DIY community, and others and build new relationships to commerce.

Regional partnership will be strengthened with Indigenous environmental groups and mental health and healthcare communities for research into media ecology and sustainable creation. Textiles/Fashion research at NSCAD integrates three key areas of research: structure, surface and form. This unique approach to textiles research balances conceptual concerns with the technical and design skills required to understand the textile traditions of weaving, dye and print and garment making. NSCAD researchers examine the relationships between materials, processes, and the maker, as well as the critical role that textiles and fashion have played in world cultures. With a focus on sustainable and organic materials and techniques, the program maintains handcraft values and incorporates appropriate digital methodologies conducive to research such as innovation in wearable technology.

# Visual and Cultural Literacies – Indigenous Studies and Reconciliation

NSCAD is committed to responding to the recommendations put forward by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015 with a 10-point action plan within NSCAD's *Academic Plan: Toward 2020*. These goals are also reflected in this Strategic Research Plan in order to participate in a national dialogue on transformative change toward understanding, commemoration and reconciliation.

As such, our Research Plan will contribute to the mobilization of knowledge creation regarding Indigenous experience, histories, and epistemologies. This includes regional, national and international relationships between our researchers and Indigenous artists, curators, scholars and community members. We have established a significant number of art history courses at the undergraduate level and aim to continue to build an Indigenous-oriented curriculum over the next five years that engages contemporary scholarship in Indigenous studies and research creation methodologies. This includes innovative and socially relevant research that examines the histories of Indigenous art, material cultural and contemporary curatorial initiatives.

NSCAD has a central role to offer toward the visibility of indigenous peoples and indigenous art practices in the Atlantic region during this urgent period of reconciliation. Research in Indigenous studies contributes to the impact that Indigenous culture has on cultural policy in Canada. We will also continue to partner with Indigenous communities as well as local and national universities to foster opportunities for Indigenous researchers and students. Research will be a vital step toward developing an equitable curriculum that acknowledges the distinct contribution that Indigenous art and culture provides to an inclusive understanding of the diversity in Canadian culture.

# Visual and Cultural Literacies – Art History and Critical Studies

NSCAD pursues a wide range of scholarly, critical and creative research activities including award-winning scholarship on historical and contemporary art history, exhibition curation, social and cultural theory, gender and queer studies, visual and related literacies. This includes craft and folk art, contemporary international and Canadian film, research creation, creative and non-fiction writing, Indigenous art and culture, as well as the relationship between art and education and pedagogical practices in fine arts and cultural studies. Our research in the scope of Art History and Critical Studies displaces master narratives and includes a focus on individual works of art as well as the cultural, economic and social systems and institutions through which art is produced and exhibited in both a contemporary and historical context. This research takes the form of peer-reviewed published books and scholarly articles with external funding, curatorial essays and exhibition catalogues, public lectures, conference presentations and creative activity in the form of films, readings, visual art, creative writing and performances.

# Building Sustainable Networks – Learning Commons: Library + Digital Archives

The visibility of practice-based research, knowledge creation, collaboration and partnerships is a primary objective for NSCAD University. Cultural rhizomes provide a model for the multiplicity and complexity of outcomes that research partnerships and collaborative networks generate. In the next five years, NSCAD will encourage and expand internal research centres and institutes that encompass, but are not limited to facilitating collaborative research, especially multi-disciplinary and multi-university initiatives, fostering emerging and established curatorial practices, and also encouraging art historical re-visitations and repositioning of the archive.

NSCAD is creating a Learning Commons concentrating library and technical services within the university to maximize student participation in research initiatives. The Learning Commons is inclusive, accessible and will provide additional resources and visibility to research creation within the pedagogical mandate of the university. The Anna Leonowens Gallery is a primary location within the university for research and creation visibility and student participation and experiential learning through exhibitions, public lecture series, artist residencies and curatorial internships. The mandate of the gallery has expanded over the last year to become an important adjunct to the development of the Learning Commons within the university.

The public significance and visibility that research activities provide to the university is significant in activating community engagement in research. In addition to current events such as Research Hangouts and symposium days where research takes centre stage, NSCAD aims to strengthen how we integrate internships, practica, work-study, and exchanges into program offerings. As well, NSCAD will continue to facilitate paid student assistantships and research experience. The interdisciplinary explorations and partnerships that occur at NSCAD through investigations in conventional and emerging technology are relative to creative and imaginative innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and are substantial to the identity and future of Canadian culture.

# Infrastructure

NSCAD University's Strategic Research Plan acknowledges the dynamic and changing technological environment where research and creation occurs and the infrastructure needs to make these goals a reality. These goals are at the forefront of the NSCAD Strategic Research Plan and prioritize access, congeniality, dynamic facilities for learning and research, as well as studio and lab support for instructional technology and the adapting needs of research, state of the art digital and fabrication technology, and contemporary approaches to conventional materials and media in craft and the visual arts.

NSCAD has a long history in applied research where knowledge, methods, techniques and theories have had practical applications and value not just within cultural and creative communities but also within the wider community. Applied research initiatives and its needed infrastructure over the next five years will focus on building and integrating NSCAD's strengths with the geographical strengths of the region, needs, and funding opportunities. The objective of infrastructure investment at NSCAD is to grow its Tri-Council research and funding capabilities; increase collaboration and partnerships with a larger community of academic, professional, business, government, and social organizations; and highlight the value of NSCAD's research by engaging a wider community through an enhanced online presence and public outreach initiatives.

Applied research initiatives will focus on leveraging and applying NSCAD's existing strengths in Media Ecology, Film and Emerging Media and Digital Materiality; Material Exploration, Contemporary Craft, Design and Maker Innovation; Visual and Cultural Literacies, Indigenous Studies and Reconciliation, Art history and Critical Studies; Building Sustainable Networks, Learning Commons and Library.

The purpose and vision of NSCAD's research clusters are to advance critical and creative thinking in the areas of pure research, applied research, and knowledge mobilization as they relate to science, innovation, community engagement and fine arts.

# Infrastructure

NSCAD University Strategic Research Plan 2016 – 2019

Research at NSCAD University begins with intellectual and artistic inquisitiveness.

NSCAD's research agenda is to demonstrate its leadership in

**Media Ecology**

**Material Exploration**

**Visual and Cultural Literacies and to**

**Build Sustainable Networks with**

**Infrastructure** underpinning those modules.

Together, these goals support emerging and established arts researchers who can mediate between digital and analogue processes, are creative innovators who problem solve within profound constraint, and are both intrepid and entrepreneurial in seeing an idea to fruition. We commit to support research centres, institutes, and clusters, including those well established, emerging, or proposed. Building on current and established success in student and faculty-driven research and creation, we are committed to being a university that promotes and supports nationally and internationally significant research and creative production.

NSCAD has a pivotal and advantageous position as a leader in post-secondary research and creation related to the arts and culture of this region. NSCAD makes a decisive contribution to university research in Atlantic Canada within national and global contexts. The diversity of methodologies in visual art and the humanities is a primary asset of NSCAD University. This includes multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methodologies including investigations that are pervasive to practice based research in Art, Craft and Design, with effects in the health, wellness, innovation and cultural sustainability sectors that are have significant impact. With the support of the Office of Academic Affairs and Research Services and other university-wide administrative offices, NSCAD faculty, students, and staff are engaged in a range of individual and collaborative projects relevant to the research modules identified in this plan.

Values: NSCAD can achieve its inspirational long-term goals and extraordinary results through a collaborative approach and creating the conditions for institutional success. The four key values will frame critical decision making through a period of transition and enable a positive, vibrant culture to prosper.

PRIDE

RESPECT

Leading  
the way forward  
with the four core Values  
and the four Pillars of  
**NSCAD University's**  
**Strategic Framework**  
2015-2020



COLLEGIATITY

TRUST



Solidify our position as Eastern Canada's premier university of the visual arts and strengthen our reputation for excellence both nationally and internationally.

To achieve all of these goals in a financially sustainable manner.

Continue to be a leader in creative and artistic innovation.

**Vision:**  
NSCAD University will set the standard for a 21<sup>st</sup> century university of the visual arts. It will improve and inspire the lives of every student by providing the highest quality education in the visual arts, craft and design. NSCAD will be a transformative force for society by delivering an education that produces critical and creative thinkers with the ability and desire to change the world. In fulfilling the Vision, NSCAD University has a commitment to our **8 Mission** goals:

Reinforce our position as a vital component of Nova Scotia's creative economy.

Build effective financial mechanisms to ensure the long-range viability of programs and facilities.

Become widely recognized as a leading contributor to Canada's creative economy.

Set a new standard for being accessible to all students and responsive to their expectations and needs.

Continue to build vital new links between diverse communities both locally and globally.