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## Serious Play

““If the mind wants to be involved in the process of making”, writes design theorist Lars Spuybroek (2011: 160), “it must not only be open but forward-looking, in the direction of as-yet-unknown creation.” This is a matter not of predetermining the final forms of things and all the steps needed to get there, but of opening up a path and improvising a passage.”  
Tim Ingold, *Making*, 69.

A traditional workshop exists to construct solid ‘copies’ of technical drawings, with any unknown quantity constituting a failure of the system. Within this industrial fabrication model the operator is merely an extension of the machine – the finger that pushes the button. This model cannot apply to an Art School workshop. Here we require the machine to become an extension of the artist; enabling a correspondence between maker and material which embraces the unknown, and allows for experimental making as an open-ended state of deep play. The main driver for material research and creative making becomes the students’ own curiosity, enthusiasm and lateral thinking.

The challenge for the Art School is ensuring this creative making approach is sustained and supported, in light of recent changes to health and safety legislation in New Zealand, and the ensuing regulatory framework. Using the University of Auckland’s Elam School of Fine Arts as a case study, this paper explores building a workshop culture which fosters creative freedom, openness, and a little disobedience, while operating within externally imposed limitations. In this environment, technical support could be seen not as restrictive policing of behaviour and equipment, but rather as scaffolding, to support students, and extend their reach.

Ingold, Tim. *Making: anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. London: Routledge, 2013.