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A Focus on Pedagogy 2026

MADRID Spain



Dr Cindy Shearer

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Wednesday 24th June, 2026 | 9.30am

TALK

Dr. Cindy Shearer

Stories for Now and The Future: Where Complicity and Transcendence Can Coexist?

This presentation will focus on the potential of storytelling in educational contexts. It will suggest that storytelling is a valuable pedagogical tool that can be applied meaningfully within any field but will focus on examples in creative (art-focused) fields. In them, work by architects, designers and artists is already leading us to what education needs now and can rely for the future: stories (and those who tell stories).

Elizabeth Roberts, Teju Cole, Ai Weiwei, Tessa Hull, and many others, are showing us how vital story is: Stories that inform or undergird artists' work are as important as the stories artists create. How stories are being told, particularly via text and image, is opening interdisciplinary and inter-arts dialogue. In *Collected Stories*, architect Elizabeth Roberts shares "works in progress, unfinished stories" that others will develop further. The book includes drawings, historical records, and flash fiction as well as photographs. Teju Cole in "Reframing Vermeer," *Best American Essays 2024*, tells us a painting is "an artifact inescapably involved in the world's messiness—the world when the painting was made and the world now." Aware of the "honest context" all paintings hold, Cole lets us know we can take in and engage all that a work is and isn't. What's visible may not be the whole story but can invite us to look within or beyond what we readily see. Through these works, graphic memoirs by Ai Weiwei, Tessa Hulls (and others), and text-image work by Mark Haddon, Jona Frank, Es Devlin, and Nora Krug, I'll explore how the invitations stories offer can help us reframe possibilities for learning now and for the future, as valuable work in progress where, just as in a single "frame...complicity and transcendence can coexist." (Cole 2024, 31).

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. [Cindy Shearer](#) is Professor and Program Chair for the MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts and Writing at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS). She also co-designed and co-leads the Creative Dissertation Pathway, focusing on art practice as research, for the PhD in East-West Psychology. She is the author of *Stay With Writing: Practices for Sustaining the Writer's Work and Life*. Her essay, "Thirteen Acts of Seeing Further: Creative Writing as Text-Image Art and A Quest for Care," recently appeared in Harper, Grame, ed., *Empathy in Creative Writing: Ethics, Diversity and Communication*, Palgrave. In 2024, she co-chaired the AMPS conference, "Learning, Life, Work," in San Francisco. She is a writer, text-image artist, curator, and writing coach/consultant.