Expanding from the Small Screen – Arts Practice for Affective Digital Presence

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Abstract

Responding to conditions of lockdown and social distancing since March 2020, the Centre for Arts and Learning (CAL) at Goldsmiths is researching how arts practice and creative processes can sustain an affective presence in digital learning environments. In this article I discuss our research into how artist educators and students have adapted to the necessity for online learning, including the difficulties of doing so. I refer to a posthumanist, Deleuzian theoretical map that connects with the different collaborative, practice research assemblages we are working with this year. In discussion is a project for engaging with artists and creatives and their learning developments since March 2020 called Finding Comfort within Discomfort. Participants speak for themselves from Instagram and Linktee. The CAL online recorded events with myself and Francis Gilbert; Heather Barnett and Sarah Christie; Jane Prophet; Kimberley Foster, Karl Foster and Victoria Mitchell are referred to as 'cultural texts' in hybrid digital/material/embodied arts practice. This research observes ways of expressing emotive release, expanding embodiment from the small screen, and making connections with others that can be adaptive to their different cultural, localised situations. The research seeks to further transferable, affective creative processes.

Keywords

Affective Digital Presence, practice research, Centre for Arts and Learning, posthumanism, Deleuze and Guattari, online cultural texts, proprioception, Covid-19, hybrid spaces, embodiment

Introduction

Emerging from successive lockdowns, in which the small screens of computers and phones have been our connections to the wider world, it could seem difficult to

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feel and think expansively. Our views of artwork, our learning programmes, our social interaction have been shifted into digital modes that were previously only a facet of our social connection and curriculum provision. Arts educators have faced the issues in forming caring, engaging, differentiated and exploratory learning experiences for students. We cannot make light of the difficult and tragic circumstances that many families have had to deal with. How do we then enable fulfilling collaborative and individuated expression? How have we tried to compensate for losses of space and embodied presence? In this article I am going to discuss research connected with the Centre for Arts and Learning (CAL) current theme – Affective Digital Presence, including a creative project in lockdown, and our online events. We have been looking at ways of expanding from the small screen since March 2020.

Affective Digital Presence – What is it? Why is it significant? This term acts as a base for the range of investigative practice research that we are working with this year at CAL. It draws together the relationships between 'affect' – that is, the emotive, empathic, energies that flow through our ways of connecting with others, and the upsurge in digital learning environments, and digital arts practice. These affective connections involve aiming to activate care for the different cultural experiences of students, practitioners and audiences – with intersectional awareness of their different identifications of race, gender, class, sexuality and disability. Studies of intersectionality began with Kimberlé Crenshaw in America (Crenshaw 1996; Cho et al. 2013). Working with intersectionality brings awareness of the need for variance from culturally embedded norms, to challenge institutional prejudice such as structural racism (NSEAD 2021). These structures often work really well for white, middle-class, heterosexual and able-bodied students and audiences, and less well for those whose intersections of identity relate to few if any of those conditions.

For a theoretical map of arts practice that resonates with intersectionality, we are referring to Deleuzian concepts of posthuman 'machinic assemblages' (Deleuze & Guattari 2013), that can help activate understandings of how human beings, non-human lifeforms, technology and environments form a vital interchange in 'the milieu' of the arts and education. Practice interchange in the midst of all this involves, 'lines of articulation', 'lines of flight, movements of deterritorialisation and destratification' (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 2). We are acting spatially – on the ground in localised, and pastoral practice and, of necessity, with more aerial views of digital learning environments and the arts. These gathered factors form rhizomatic, or root-like synergies between the ideas and affective experiences of different collaborations in practice. Deleuze & Guattari (2013, 6) define the term 'rhizome' in its active processes, it 'ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relevant to the arts, sciences, and social struggles'.

We have all been through the circumstances of the pandemic, working to develop new online arts pedagogies as exploratory 'lines of flight' departing from our prior knowledge. In many ways we have been looking forward to the return to onsite practice in schools and universities, and in museums and galleries, and yet there is a 'drift' towards hybrid online and onsite interfaces that release creative possibilities and the potential for more inclusive spaces. The 'drift' in a Deleuzian sense is a significant, and in some cases an irreversible shift, an 'absolute deterritorialisation' (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 64) of a whole molecular multiple, such as a community of practice.

CAL research of Affective Digital Presence has looked for threads of connection across a range of research ventures involving academics at different

universities, international artists, curators and postgraduate students, who could all be seen as working with what Clough & O'Malley (2007) have called the 'affective turn'. Digital arts practices are currently exploring this major drift, indeed the landslide, towards raising the significance of emotive and empathic connection, embodied knowing and creative self-expression. The affective motivation reduces the authoritative conditioning of rationalising, hierarchical structures and limited cultural representation.

In addition to creating spaces for the extension of research ventures in the wider community of the arts and learning, CAL members have developed their research in lockdown, to continue investigating expansive forms of practice. We started 2020 with a theme of Discomfort Zones (Matthews 2020), looking at ways of exploring learning as it occurs in movements out of the passive comfort zones that can limit new developments and create blinkered world views. That series began with a presentation on therapeutic arts practice by Amanda Kipling and Neil Walton in November 2019. Then in 2020 all our in-person teaching and events were cancelled or postponed due to the rapid spread of Covid-19, and we had to move online.

Finding comfort within discomfort

It was the middle of the first lockdown in 2020 when I started an online research project called Finding Comfort Within Discomfort (FCWD). This project aimed to reach out to a wider form of public engagement in research. In the social context of heightened affective conditions, FCWD explores how people have developed new forms of creative practice in lockdown, that have enhanced their wellbeing. Some participants consider themselves to be artists, some are exploring creativity as it is personally meaningful for them.

Fortunately this project had agreement from the Goldsmiths Ethics Committee to include members of the public, as well as academic staff and students. FCWD also had permission to include the real names of artists and creative people, who wanted their practice to be attributed to them. In addition, the submissions could be presented on Instagram and Linktree (Matthews 2021a, 2021b) for public access with participant agreement. These changes in agreeable ethos marked a movement in favour of practice research processes in digital environments. A poster invited all who were interested in participating to respond to the question 'How have you creatively found comfort within discomfort?' The project encouraged reflection on 'the ways in which you have adjusted your practice and lifestyles, learned or taught something new, or added new creative outlets that are comforting and supportive of wellbeing'. Participants were asked to 'send in 'just a minute' of film, or an image and text, to enable sensory connection across artforms.

The CAL Discomfort Zones theme then caught a wave of protest for Black Lives Matter, in May 2020 following the death of George Floyd. The BLM protest movement encouraged white people to feel their discomfort in their privileged positions within global unequal responses to Covid-19 (UKRI 2021). The rainbow of hope and care had to extend, in ways that demanded new levels of compassion stamina for others, and that enabled Black and Indigenous People of Colour (BIPOC) to find some release from educating white people about equality (Eddo-Lodge 2018). To enable global majority artists and creatives to participate in FCWD, I included submissions that provided another public platform for creative

work they had already created in lockdown, without expecting a specially created submission – as with Ola Lanyion's pilot for a full-length animation. I also included the voices of people who had not been able to make creative developments, because conditions had been too difficult for them to start new work.

FCWD Participants also cross generations, and levels of experience in art education, emphasising that creative developments could be made at all ages, and in small-scale or professionalised creative action. I am going to let the participants speak for themselves at this stage, as they express their challenges and their successes, their points of connection and departure from the small screen. Their artwork and accompanying texts are presented for connection and reflection (Figure 1).

It is important to note that this project was interdisciplinary in that the creative developments could be in any artform, or in a way of life that felt creative. Learning occurred in the ways that participants found to express their energies and emotion, and in the practices that added shape and pattern to their lives, through the whole panoply of constraints that were outside their control. Some produced major works in lockdown, others attuned their practice with new methods, materials and ideas, some found new ways of building learning communities online, that also supported their own wellbeing and creative development.

Participants have honestly shared their difficulties and achievements, creating a space of safety and encouragement for others to explore creative dimensions of self, outside what Andy Guthrie called 'the rat race' – the exterior, neoliberal criteria for performativity. It is important to note that the forms of expressive practice that were submitted acted to support other artforms in development, as for example singing could release the affective space for drawing and writing; playing guitar or practising yoga could enable more fluid practice in painting. It was evident that supportive assemblages could be found in the rhizomatic cohesion of arts practice for individual practitioners. Finding Comfort within Discomfort links with other online initiatives to sustain and validate learning in the arts in lockdown, such as the NSEAD Life After Lockdown project (2020) which invited young people to submit work they had made since March 2020 in all artforms.

Through this online research project, CAL events this year and my teaching – on BA, PGCE and MA Arts and Learning programmes, I have been exploring the challenges of Affective Digital Presence and points for positivity and action. I put a question to the iJADE 2021 conference Hybrid Spaces Re-Imagining Pedagogy, Practice and Research, which could perhaps be seen as a provocation for those who want to escape everything about small screens and lockdown. The question was: 'What would you keep of your experiences of online learning and digital practice to take forward into future hybrid on-site and online learning spaces?' I find that there is a sliding scale between the challenges of online learning, and the ways that we could think of taking forward expansive experiences of digital practices. I have a table of some of the main challenges in seeing online practice as progressive, and counterbalancing areas for positivity and action (Table 1).

Challenges versus positivity and action

To unpack points from the table and their scale of connection, I will exemplify how they can be observed in practice. Firstly, looking at the challenges for participation and engagement in learning – it is initially an assemblage of active planning and

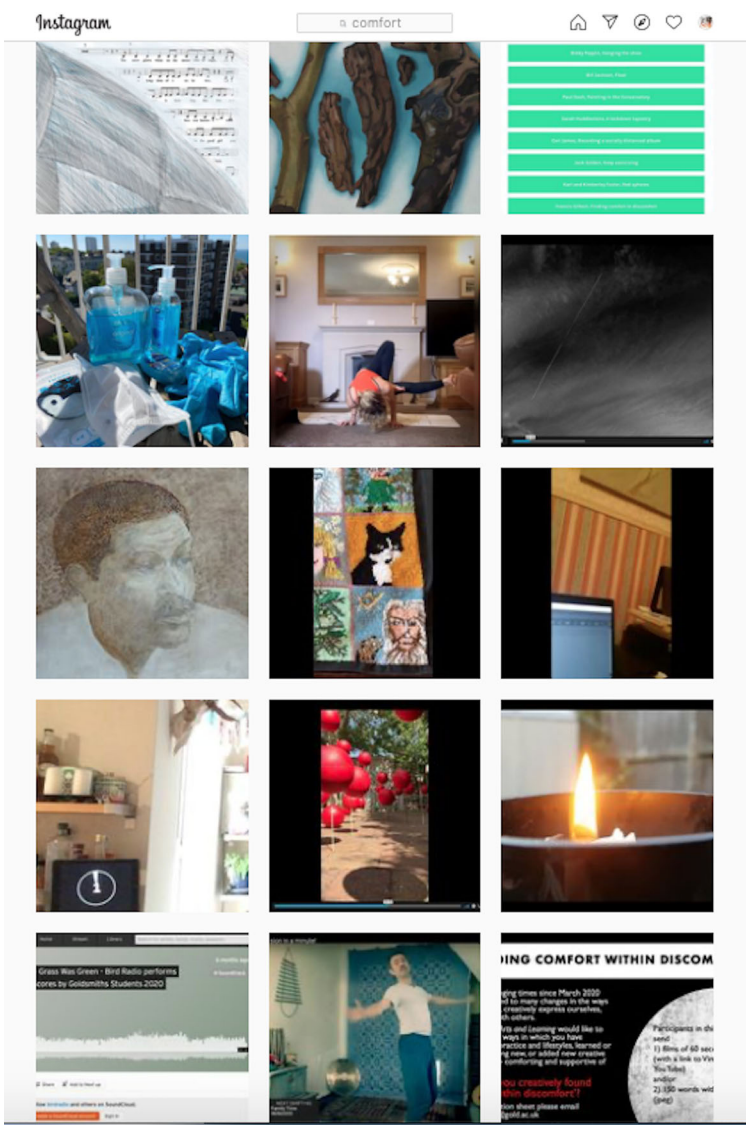

Figure 1
@comfortwithindiscomfort on Instagram

experimentation in responsive delivery, that enables us to find ways of bringing life to online learning. We have observed trainee teachers in art and design carefully crafting timed activities and exploring lively questioning techniques in the chat in Teams and Zoom. In our CAL events and with postgraduate MA Arts and Learning students we have thought about how to pace and activate online spaces. Positive points for action have been raised in consideration of how online spaces can enable more lateral participation for people with physical disabilities, who do not yet have equitable access to many spaces of arts and culture. Also, international participation has increased, and without embodied physical presence the 'body

TABLE 1 Affective Digital Presence: challenges, positivity and action

Challenges?	Positivity and Action?
Engagement in participation	Accessibility – interaction and for disabilities
Altered scale of experiences of others and artwork	Exploration of lateral critical pedagogies
Constant revisiting of familiar locations	Defamiliarising domestic spaces through arts practice
Lack of travel to new places and movement	Including rest, tasks away, different modes of participation
Digital poverty	Spur to make technology equally accessible – understanding the needs of students
Maintaining collegiate interaction	Use of multiple online platforms for connection
Keeping physical spaces and jobs	Publicity of protest movements and activism
Effects on wellbeing	Efforts to keep physically active and practice mindfulness, building empathy for others.
Mishaps with evolving technology	Increasing understanding of capacity
Performativity and perfection	Enabling spaces for self-expression and play

without organs' in our expansive relation to technology and the environment is able to travel economically to many different global learning spaces (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 183).

Going back to the challenges, our lack of physical connection with artwork as primary sources in gallery spaces took away much of the immersive experience and enjoyment of being in places much larger than ourselves and our domestic environments. We were not able to bring students to see life-size and larger-than-life work. We could not view the work from a range of angles, explore the changes of light and colour over different textured surfaces, zone in to view brushstrokes, or stand far away to see space curated around artwork as part of an experience of the work. This altered scale of artwork can be put into perspective with the global scale of the pandemic, however other than experiencing public artworks in large open spaces, small scale and small screen is something we have had to put up with for a while – without much delight.

It has been so challenging for many of us who were used to travelling to new places and the embodied changes and movement involved in this. Often it is the trips to galleries and museums that lift students out of patterns of unreflective inertia, their sensory vocabulary, body language and reflective gestures in practice have not had these wider cultural aesthetics, and new unexpected discoveries. In the first phase of lockdown, one immediate response was to try and provide online learning spaces with as many sensory stimuli as possible, to compensate for the lack of travel to new experiences. We have since had to reflect on how attention is mobile, alternating, and not always a direct stream-of-contact time. Adaptation has included rest spaces, tasks away from the screen, physical activity and arts practice

in local green spaces, with layered modes of presentation and attention that zip between personal/affective and altered/protective backgrounds, full audio-visual visability and avatar self-images.

Looking towards positives in the small scale of online learning, there are perhaps advantages in the size of different humans being equalised to some extent in learning environments. Young children, and people in wheelchairs, who were less likely to find exhibited artwork at their eye level, are currently in the immediacy of onscreen work with a lateral perspective. There are also other effects of lateral pedagogies in online learning: strategies for fair inclusion of student voice could be assisted by the ease of writing in the chat while someone else is speaking, instead of letting go an important point or a quiet voice because there is not enough room to express it.

Finding room to separate the personal from the professional is a challenge that in some ways has demanded a review of how and why these boundaries are created. In any particular home there are often a number of people trying to do different online activities at once. The constant inhabitation of the same domestic spaces can be demanding. For those families who have had to home school children, and work at the same time – or try to find new work at the same time, the first lockdown in particular was incredibly tough. In our CAL explorations of Affective Digital Presence we have found that arts practice can act to defamiliarise domestic spaces with new creative uses to rediscover that space (Mannay 2010). Going to overlooked places, finding belonging through practice and making with materials to hand can refresh attention, call forth positive memories and sensory connections.

There also needs to be recognition that the blended sensory participation that is possible for hybrid digital/material arts practice is often reduced by lack of resources. Vast differences in the availability of technology have dramatically demonstrated the digital divide in learning environments (Mihelj et al. 2019). Sometimes students have no computer, or access to the internet, sometimes they do not have a smart phone to participate. This digital poverty has called learning providers into action to make technology more accessible (Ayre 2020; Mulyaningsih et al. 2021). The government's provision of laptops to students in schools and in further education is still being rolled out. Students at university unfortunately have not had the same provisions. In this persistent inequality of access, arts educators have had to think really well about how to differentiate for the needs of students, and have tried to make space and time for finding accessible forms of provision. Some of the great benefits of hybrid learning spaces will not be economically possible in a maelstrom of cuts and deficits.

Then we have the challenge of maintaining fluid social connections. Perhaps we are on Teams or Zoom, and we want to reach out of this pressurised environment, to make sociable and productive small talk that builds towards networking and collaborative planning; but instead we need to 'Leave' the event. We are in our domestic spaces again, not in networking collegiate space. How have arts educators maintained these more expansive forms of interaction? How do students who make friends and connections for life at school and university establish affective relationships? There are of necessity a multitude of extracurricular spaces on social media, social events and so on, but connections have been abbreviated and reliant upon speedy phone applications – 'apps'. Some arts practitioners are emphasising slowness this year (Oshin et al. 2020–21), to give the sense of more significant relational experiences. Looking towards the positive areas of digital practice that

will no doubt continue after Covid, social media networking has also enabled quick mass communication for protest movements and activist arts practice, for example in protest against the casualisation of labour, against inequalities of race, gender and class, and about the vastly delayed distribution of available medical resources to key workers in frontline professions – such as teachers.

Isolation, stress, confinement, and of course experiences of having Covid, and of being bereaved while distanced from family, all take a toll on wellbeing. If there is nothing positive happening, we begin to think of actions we can take: there is still some human agency in those decisions. It becomes increasingly essential for arts educators, practitioners and students to care for one another in our learning spaces. FCWD participants share their creative ways of maintaining wellbeing, of practising mindfulness and building empathy for others. Our critical practices become more supportive, and as educators our observation of strengths to praise becomes more important.

The human errors made in learning – the points for development, are offset by technological mishaps. I have found that tolerance levels are increasing for these technological happenstance growth zones. There is also a need to enable more expressive learning spaces, that allow for the 'overspill' (Manning & Massumi 2014, 87) of affect that is not always easily packaged in a smooth, brushed steel computer interface. We know that we learn through risk and mistakes (Biesta 2016); our life experiences that used to be called 'grist for the mill' – an expression relating to the industrial revolution – are now increasingly combined with raw spaces, as virtual 'sketches in technology' that create interwoven textures of positives and negatives.

Textural sensory responses to problem-posing questions explored in arts practice can help to materialise 'striated' spaces (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 573) that add grit, tooth and humour. If all our online experiences ran 'perfectly' they would fit into performative, auditing cultures (Churcher & Talbot 2020). Through the mishaps of technology, the malfunction of our virtual surfaces, we begin to further understand human capacity – what is possible in real time, and how to imagine playful investigations into future possibility. Indeed, play has kept the life forces of arts practice, and of school, university and gallery spaces, going beyond the limits of the small screen.

CAL Affective Digital Presence Online

New hybrid spaces are making new 'cultural texts'. I will now refer to the CAL events in 2020–21 as sensory 'cultural texts' that all have an evolving methodology of being with others in practice, as it is becoming intriguing affective, matter, forming new questions and approaches to learning. This is a similar approach to 'A/r/tography' (Irwin et al. 2006), in which art, research and teaching all have an equal input to the assemblage. In the first CAL Affective Digital Presence workshop in November 2020, Francis Gilbert and I brought our practice research of free writing and drawing to an online audience of students, artists, educators and interested public. We explored affective sensory expression with a hybrid creative practice, and a blend of digital and material interfaces. Our collaboration has investigated the potential for building inclusive learning environments that release practice from expectations of perfect performativity.

With postgraduate students on the PGCE Art and Design and MA Arts and Learning, we use a range of emancipatory drawing exercises that are intended to

liberate expression, reconnect body/mind and allow goals and intentions to form lines of flight. Every year collective input increases the range of possible drawing tasks that could unpack predefined expectations for drawings. Students take their imagination of new exploratory practice forward into their learning settings as arts educators. These drawing exercises for releasing creativity can be used at all levels of education, for building freedom of expression and sensory literacy.

In the first CAL workshop on Affective Digital Presence in Creative Practice, I introduced two activities for warming up and releasing creativity in drawing. These activities were followed by free writing emerging from the drawing – with Francis Gilbert, who leads the PGCE in English and the MA in Creative Writing in Education at Goldsmiths. I asked participants to draw an event that had happened in the day in mark-making, expressing the tonal, linear and textural qualities of the event – without text or any expectations of figurative representation. We can come to online learning experiences holding tensions of other situations that affect our attention; this drawing exercise intended to liberate those affective tensions.

The second drawing task investigated how we can bring multiple facets of self into online practice, including different relations between the senses. We all had significant objects with us, that trigger memories and emotive responses. Those objects were placed on the table surface, and paper fixed underneath – representing potential layers of consciousness beneath the surface. As no one can see the lines being made there is a release from efforts for perfection, and drawings become more exploratory of possible space, lines more intuitive (Figure 2). The sensory distancing of hand–eye co-ordination in this drawing became apparent, my co-ordination of the presentation slides also experienced a sensory distancing, an error that became part of the affective experimentation.

We found that participants really liked the embodiment and surprise of making drawings under a table surface. This process challenges expectations for skills-based expression that can become too limiting. Sensory release happened particularly in juxtaposition with the first drawing that required concentration on an event

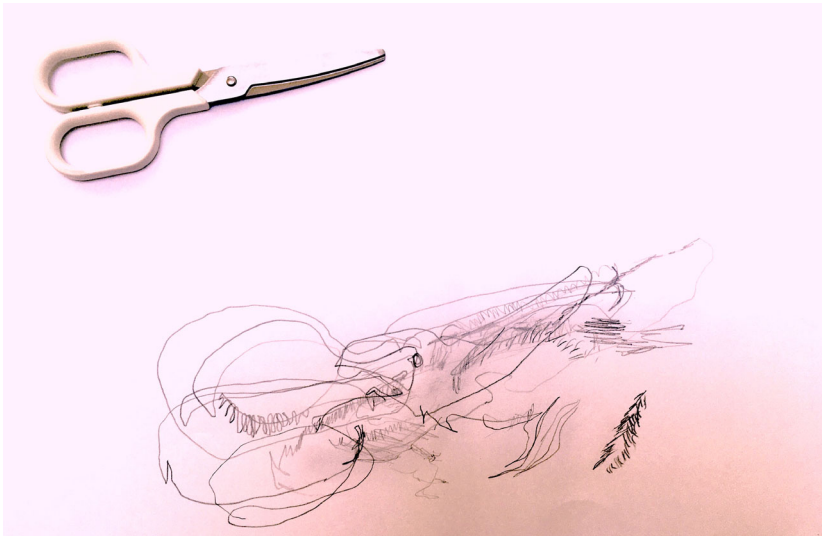

Figure 2
Sensory distancing drawing

that may or may not have been affective in a joyful sense. The lateral and inclusive factors of the chat function in online events enabled participants to express their frustrations at the first drawing being conditional and 'diagrammatic' (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 164) focused on particular elements of drawing, and including their tensions of being online.

The intentions of building interdisciplinary affective breakout zones, and a more holistic understanding of sensory literacy, continued with reflective free writing. In all of our ADP workshops so far we have worked with the matter of arts, communication and collaborative connection through sensory material investigation and through affective speech and also connections to written texts. Event recordings becoming cultural texts is one of the additional benefits of online practice, and events can be referred to as one might refer to an article, a book, or an artwork (CAL 2020–21).

Exploration of evolving practice research continued in our second Affective Digital Presence event in November 2020. One of the wonderful things about having a research centre is that we can link with other exciting collaborative practices that have their own multiplicities (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 7) and extended spheres of connectivity. Small Acts of Being presented by Heather Barnett, artist and Pathway Leader of the MA in Art and Science, at University of the Arts London - UAL (Barnett 2021), and Sarah Christie artist and lecturer at Kings College, UAL, and Imperial College London (Christie 2021). They brought in a participatory practice event that defamiliarised the domestic spaces we have all become so used to in lockdown. In this online investigation, one of a series developed with philosopher Betti Marenko who co-edited *Deleuze and Design* (Marenko & Brassett 2015), the workshop participants were asked to 'go to the edges' of embodied and sensory experience. Perhaps we have been on edge at many times during lockdown, but the instruction to find existential or physical and embodied 'edges' in our environments created an abstract concept for testing limitations and looking at spatialised boundaries.

For one of the workshop tasks, the artists asked participants to make a connection with a non-human life form, a plant, a pet or an incidental creature like an insect, in ten minutes of contemplative rest time away from the screen. This was a brave and interesting space created to decentralise the focus on the human. In lockdown reflection could often be an anxious focus on the self, Small Acts of Being moved towards a meditative and mindful awareness of other affective presences. Participants spent time with these non-human lives, then returned to the main group to answer questions about their focus life form. Instead of focused still-life observation, we had breathing space with other living things. The questions we were asked to respond to were

- How does it [the life form] perceive the world and make sense of the environment?
- How does time behave in the organism's world?
- How do you relate to it? What does it mean to you?
- What does it want? (CAL 2020–21)

Like other artists we have worked with this year, Barnett, Christie and Marenko have playfully extended and creatively subverted Zoom. We were asked to put responses to their questions in the chat, and these brief existential and material observations were then assembled to make a freeform poem. This gathering of

Figure 3
Small Acts of Being, Heather Barnett and Sarah Christie

poetic reflections developed our research into how we can form assemblages of new, empathic and collaborative processes. The event enabled participants to both stimulate and rest attention, exploring meditation, reviewing and defamiliarising domestic spaces so that they became vibrant with new matter (Bennett 2010) (Figure 3).

Our December 2020 event with Jane Prophet, Associate Dean for Research, Creative Work and Initiatives at Stamps School of Art and Design, University of Michigan, focused on co-design of Augmented Reality apps with community participants. Jane said, 'In thinking about this concept of co-design, the co-constitution of meaning happens once the work is apparently made by the artists and the participants. It's co-constituted meanings that take place in the gallery, the setting or whatever context the work is disseminated through' (CAL 2020–21).

Augmented Reality is a very popular area for current learning developments – moving from coding and gamifying pedagogies in online classrooms (Dichev & Dicheva 2017), three-dimensional digital creations and printing (Jeong Song 2020), and innovations in the online exhibition of arts practice, such as those created by Kenjiro Kirton (Kirton 2021). Jane has considered in depth how to build intersectional inclusivity in digital arts practice, and in research ethics, working in partnerships with scientists, medics and engineers (Prophet 2011; Prophet & Ayoung 2018; Prophet 2021). She has the belief that women artists can do anything and views herself as 'a maker who writes' (CAL 2020–21). In describing her methods for intersectionality Jane said:

> *We did have dual language all the way through . . . we made mobile devices available to people who didn't have their own smart phones, we ran demographic information early because at that point the smart phone penetration in that market*

was much, much greater than in the US and in Europe. So we geared the project in some ways but I think we could have geared it a lot more. (CAL 2020–21)

There is always more that we could do to relate to the intersectionality of our practice research, and factors for development reveal themselves in the course of the research. Relating back to the table of challenges, positivity and action in Affective Digital Presence, Jane Prophet researches how to make technology globally accessible, and how the inclusion of digital arts can improve quality of life for humans, non-humans and the environment. Her practice relates to mindfulness, and the understanding of different human capacities, building in the engaging element of play.

The aesthetics and user interfaces of her designs such as 'Pocket Penjing' (2021) (Figure 4), which measures air quality in Hong Kong, are formed in co-learning processes with local communities. She thinks about how the aesthetics of her work relate to the familiar environments of global majority communities, for example including a cherry blossom tree as a culturally recognisable symbol.

Jane Prophet has also created an app to address how chronic pain is racialised, referring to data that indicates the different treatment of people of colour who speak to medics about their condition. For people with sickle cell anaemia, Jane developed creative technology to assist in liberating their movement. The on-screen images digitally respond to movement. Jane talked about needing to plan in the movement of the body with and beyond the small screen. She refers to the term 'proprioception', meaning the movement of the body in space (Prophet & Pritchard 2016), and her digital artwork anticipates and assists proprioception. She said: 'We can see and hear proprioceptively, by feeling our way around the visual world of the panorama' (CAL 2020–21). Jane Prophet presented a fascinating insight into the 'becoming possible' of digital arts practice.

For our first CAL event in 2021, Kimberley Foster (Goldsmiths and OCA), Karl Foster and Victoria Mitchell (University of the Arts Norwich), presented their lockdown collaboration 'AND/BUT', in which they used Zoom as one of their materials

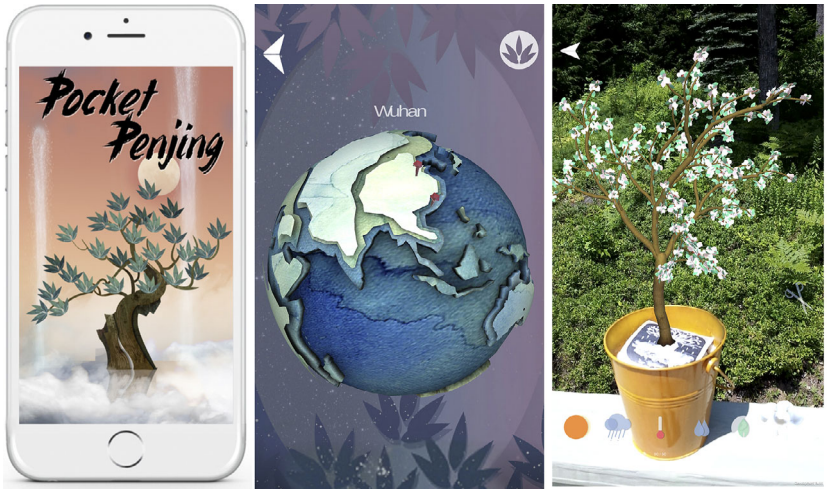

Figure 4
Pocket Penjing, Jane Prophet

for sculptural play (Figure 4). Building our understanding of Zoom as a medium, we learned how to hide all the audience and their initials in settings, so just the interrelation of the artists' screens was visible. Kimberley Foster said: 'We have asked you to keep your cameras off and the reason for this is so you can see some of our material making rather than the screens being abundant with each other's initials' (CAL 2020–21).

AND/BUT as a collaboration creates unfolding posthumanist textual spaces – combing sensory responses to materials, time, human response and environment. The artists made posthumanist happening of something always evolving, always on the brink of becoming, working with the agency of analogue matter and building in error as a point of growth. 'We are interested in the supposed slick clarity of screen becoming analogue, and potentially clockwork, so if our transitions bump and crash this evening it is nearer to us being in a material space' (Kimberley Foster, CAL 2020–21).

The artists moved household and found objects in small installations, curating domestic scenes. The task for the audience was a playful experimentation with materials in balance with the body. We balanced made and found objects on our thumbs, creating individuated sculptural emoticons in a collective living gallery (Figure 5).

In addition to the CAL online events, we have also built innovative digital critical pedagogies with the curators of public programmes at Tate. Richard Martin and Jennifer Shearman responded to our Affective Digital Presence theme. They introduced MA Arts and Learning students on the Critical Pedagogies in Contested Spaces module to workshops on digital critical pedagogies, communities and histories, with a range of guest speakers including artists, curators and historians of digital arts practice for learning audiences.

Péjú Oshin, Liz Gre and Enam Gbewonyo shared the rich qualities of their performative collaboration on Lynette Yiadom-Boakye 'Stillness' (CAL 2020–21). Liz and Enam had enacted a live streamed, socially distanced, choreographed performance in the Tate Modern around Yiadom-Boakye's paintings (Tate 2021). Enam

Figure 5
AND/BUT, Kimberley Foster, Karl Foster and Victoria Mitchell

Gbewonyo languished and rested, while Liz Gre walked slowly. In the second and third UK lockdowns, this experience of giving mind and body space and rest in hybrid digital and physical environments recalled energy from snappy apps and screen fatigue, and created conditions of extensive flexibility in practice that could be seen as a form of peaceful protest.

Place markers

There are some key aspects of Affective Digital Presence that I would like to locate as place markers here, and some provocations to raise. In this article I have talked about how we could view our hybrid approaches to online and materially embodied arts practice through Deleuzian concepts of 'machinic assemblages', 'lines of flight', 'drift' and 'body without organs', and being in the 'milieu' of new developments. This theory places practice research in the arts and learning in the rhizomatic, collaborative and supportive practices that have developed since March 2020. In the vast array of online learning applications, new technology and institutional cyberstructure, we have registered the need for breathing space – as one would see curated space around artworks in galleries and museums. These spaces enable affective responses to find expression, and create share points for empathy with others.

Yet the affordances of alternating rest and activity, playful investigation of technology and materials, and affective interdisciplinary connections across art-forms need to be made more accessible to people in the global majority. The affordances of space and time that were so appealing to some privileged social groups in lockdown could be distributed more equally. Artists such as Péjú Oshin, Liz Gre and Enam Gbewonyo have slowed down the performative march of hyper-anxiety and frenetic responses to 'cancel culture' (Ng 2020). With an intersectional view we could see how people of colour, the working classes – and economically disadvantaged, women and non-binary practitioners and students, and parents – would need more considered points of access to hybrid learning spaces, and more flexible conditions for practice.

In our CAL Affective Digital Presence workshops we have found the significance of the body in space, the deterritorialisation of domestic spaces through making the familiar strange again; for example Heather Barnett and Sarah Christie asked us to go to a place we never usually go to in our households and to sit there for a while, away from the screen. In contrast, Jane Prophet brings the expressive movement of the body, or 'proprioception' to new technology, so that smart phones actually can enable expansive, gestural response.

With a focus on the 'affective turn', the mindful, empathic connections we make with others, including our differentiated understanding of the learning needs of students, are built in association with care for the self. If we consider ourselves as working within machinic assemblages, practitioners cannot form an optimum relation with others when running on empty. Regenerative, replenishing and refreshing hybrid practices acknowledge the need to value sensory connection. There are multiple ways of 'finding comfort within discomfort', and to notice what we overlook of our own creative developments.

The possibilities of hybrid online practice are exciting, recordings of events that are now cultural texts add to our reference points for practice research. Movement away from the institutionalisation of working time, that started as a necessity, now has makings of a systemic change to levels of trust in practitioner

responsibility working away from the office. However, sites of learning and culture – schools, universities, museums and galleries – are struggling to provide hybrid online and on-site programmes. So, this discussion returns to questions of what we would argue to keep and take forward of our recent experiences.

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