

Proposal for MCCT

(Most likely for the *Gentle Gestures* stream, but open to others too)

Title: Holding the line and then crossing it

We propose a performance-paper in 5 voices that will gently challenge how power is held in higher education arts institutions. Playfully exploring with the metaphor of the line, and using string telephones, we will stage a 5-way conversation, made up of speculative questions and silences. We will consider what a radically gentle learning environment might look like, all the time interrogating the real connotations of the word 'gentle', and how it might sit alongside terms like discomfort, tradition, privilege and opacity. How can listening happen in a way that matters? Drawing on thinking about response-ability (Haraway 2008, 2016, Stengers 2014), care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, Baan Hofman 2023), complaints (Ahmed 2021), engaged pedagogy (hooks 2003), and the current social justice work of Tema Okun, as well as our own institutional experiences, we will offer fabulations of alternative spaces for art-making, sharing and educating. How might a Higher Education Institution which prioritises listening, slow work and transparency fit within today's society? More importantly, how might educators and learners, communities and publics, who experience being listened to and who have been allowed to co-imagine their futures, then begin to shape and reconfigure society more broadly?

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