

# UNLEARNING REALITIES



# REIMAGINING FUTURES



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THE YEAR OF 2084  
BLURRING STEAM  
DISLOCATING TECHNOLOGY  
THE ART AND POWER OF UNLEARNING  
FOR A BETTER TOMORROW  
SHIFTING ROLES  
MEDIA ART AS A MEMORY SYSTEM  
REIMAGINING PEDAGOGIES

# REIMAGINING FUTURES



# Proceedings of Symposium Unlearning Realities - Reimagining Futures

The symposium *Unlearning Realities - Reimagining Futures*, held over two half-days on 5 and 6 October 2023, at LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore, embraced a hybrid, cross-disciplinary approach to examining frameworks of unlearning and reimagining.

Recent shifts in global paradigms have profoundly impacted humanity, compelling us to reconsider established modes of existence. Individuals and societies now find themselves at a critical juncture: can entrenched practices adequately navigate contemporary complexities, or must we engage in a complex unlearning process that fundamentally questions established frameworks to envision new futures? Unlearning is inherently multifaceted, inviting exploration through diverse lenses. Whether viewed through an individualist perspective of abandoning traditional modes of thought or through a collective critical engagement with societal structures to reshape and dismantle existing power dynamics – the endeavour to reimagine possible futures necessitates a deliberate engagement with the concept of unlearning underpinned by a thorough openness to interrogate and redefine institutionalised approaches to learning.

The symposium invited creative practitioners, scholars, and researchers to explore how unlearning can catalyse innovation in education, the arts, and broader communities in a wide thematic scope that encompassed the transformative potential of arts education, the reimagining of the arts within an increasingly precarious global milieu, and critical approaches to cross-, multi-, and interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. Over two days, participants engaged in rich discussions and insightful presentations, scrutinising methods of unlearning and novel learning approaches within artistic disciplines through poetic investigations and logical narratives spanning various disciplines and subjects from art to technology, humanities to science.

These proceedings encompass extended articulations of participants' presentations at the symposium: Mariana Amatullo advocates for design education that embraces unlearning as a path to innovation and ethical leadership. Evelyn Kwok and Michelle Fung encourage a deep sense of curiosity towards unlearning and relearning to open possibilities for growth and creativity. Mahija Mandalika reimagines realities by fusing science fiction, archaeology, and mythology, using water as a portal into the fourth dimension. Kenneth Lo highlights the transformative power of integrating AI and robotics into personalised learning experiences. Tobias Fandel critiques the naïveté surrounding AI's impact on creativity, urging a more nuanced understanding of its role. Uytterhoeven, Mante, Hough, Head and Yeo contend that the endeavour to decolonise the contemporary dance curriculum is bringing about fundamental paradigm shifts in learning and teaching. Debe Sham discusses the shift towards socially engaged art, where unlearning traditional roles fosters collective creativity. Søndergaard, Nacher, and Ludovico emphasise the transformative potential of media art in challenging traditional boundaries and promoting new forms of expression and interaction, highlighting its capacity to engage with and question contemporary societal issues. Mark Ingham envisions '*Critical Creative Universities*' that promote interdisciplinary and collaborative learning environments. Sheuo Hui Gan attests the pedagogical benefits of flipped classrooms in enhancing student engagement. Michael Krohn emphasises unlearning existing beliefs as essential for imagining alternative futures in art and design.

This compilation of scholarly and creative contributions exemplifies the symposium's exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of unlearning and reimagining. It encapsulates the symposium's collaborative journey of questioning and redefining established paradigms towards fostering a future characterised by transformative creativity and innovation in an attempt to trendspotting emergent educational futures.

**Dr Wolfgang Muench**

**Dr Damaris Carlisle**

Learning, Teaching & Research

LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore

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[day 1]

# THE YEAR OF 2084

## **Evelyn Kwok**

Evelyn Kwok is a research assistant professor at the Academy of Visual Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her background is in spatial design research and her research explores the intersection of gender, labour and space, focusing on marginal communities in urban spaces and their use of public space. Her teaching integrates service learning into socially engaged art and design contexts in and beyond Hong Kong. She has been creating curricula for unlearning in interdisciplinary and multicultural settings since 2020 within the Shared Campus theme group Social Transformation.

## **Michelle Fung**

Hong Kong Canadian interdisciplinary artist Michelle Fung's lifelong interdisciplinary oeuvre revolves around a grand dystopian world-building narrative in the year 2084. Her awards include the semifinalist for the Print Centre's 98th Annual International Competition (Philadelphia, USA) and the 2024 Sovereign Asian Art Prize Vogue Hong Kong Women's Art Prize. She had a recent solo exhibition at the Hong Kong Art Centre, the National Art Gallery Boris Georgiev, Bulgaria and has held solo exhibitions at leading galleries in Australia and California, as well as the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Her short films have been selected at many international film festivals, and she has participated in prestigious international residencies including in China, the Arctic Circle, International Territory of Svalbard, USA and Canada.

### **A reflection on welcoming, unlearning, enacting care and storytelling**

The following piece is a reflection by Evelyn Kwok and Michelle Fung; who are both keen to learn, tell stories and encourage others to do the same through their own creative practices.

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### **From Evelyn**

To open, to welcome, to be a keynote speaker, for me, is to set the tone for an event. Like a good dinner party host, saying welcome, with a glass of champagne in hand (and making sure everyone else has one) and welcoming everyone before the feast commences. That special speech that reminds everyone why they are at this dinner, what really is the purpose of this gathering, and,

to inspire everyone to feast merrily and wholeheartedly. That is how I think a good keynote should be. Academic conferences can be somewhat rigid, even those in the visual arts, design, or arts. I've been to a good handful and have only ever had one experience where the keynote speaker was so engaging and captivating that sent an invigorating sparkle down my spine, and inspired me to also go above and beyond in my own presentation two days later. That keynote was on everyone's lips for the rest of the conference. I did not imagine that mine and Michelle's keynote presentation would be as impactful and inspiring, but I knew that our presentation would set a tone for the conference, and that unlearning the typical academic welcome would be essential.

Not that I have ever fully subscribed to typical ways of being an academic - my lectures and presentations are never rehearsed, I never read from notes or have notes in the first place, and my classes are generally very lively and jovial, with activities like theory reading speed dating, plenty of group discussions, physical ice breaking exercises and a general rule of decentralising the importance of the 'teacher' and unpicking the 'teacher and student' hierarchy.

Upon reflection, I feel I may have embarked on a process of unlearning subconsciously when I began facilitating classes and lecturing some ten years ago, unlearning the ways in which I was lectured in my undergraduate studies and how the design studio classes I was learning in were facilitated. I recall many years ago, when I first started to teach, a colleague said to me, "Teaching is like an act, you switch on a different part of you and you're performing, like you're on stage for a few hours and become a different version of you!". I still remember her brightly lit eyes when she emphasised performing and being on stage. From that day on, I may have walked the fine line between performing and being 'myself'. I knew I wanted to facilitate learning in ways that were engaging and impactful, and I knew I could not do that successfully if I was performing. After stumbling for a few years and had plenty of reflections and lively discussions with colleagues after a pint or two at the university pub on many Friday nights, I realised the key thing is to care. Care about what I am delivering, who I am delivering to and the rippling invisible impact it may have. To enact care through facilitating learning was an active way to unlearn the past hierarchical and rigid ways of being in an academic environment that I experienced, alongside many others who may have also moved on to become academics themselves.

To simply care internally though, is not enough. To show and communicate care outwardly is what I have discovered as a way to

unlearn and create anew.

As Michelle and I sat on Zoom discussing how we could approach this presentation, we were both present to who we were, not just as our professions - artist and professor - but as people. We knew we wanted to have a conversation, a dialogue, not a straightforward presentation, because we believed in the circular effect of knowledge generation and the chemistry that was possible and unpredictable in good ways. In Michelle's self-proclaimed never-ending body of work and its wildly upside down world of magic and dystopian wonder, and my socially-engaged research and interdisciplinary curricula development, where do we intersect? What does unlearning mean to us and how do we do it through what we do and create a new reality.

We planned to talk more about our presentation on our way to Singapore. What unfolded over many cups of coffee instead were stories of our own recent life events, which brought up stories from the past, entangled experiences and memories from what felt like other life times. We both have very busy schedules so seeing each other in person is a rare occasion, let alone being seated for four hours with nowhere to go. Once we landed in Singapore, we both felt energised, and we looked at each other with assuredness. We formulated our prompts and all our conversations for the next thirty-six hours before our presentation became intertwined with our lives, inspirations, work and what we came for.

The process of unlearning is not linear yet omnipresent. Our ability to create anew stands side by side unlearning. By being present to what we care about, that is, to learn and keep learning, we open the conversation to possibilities of untangling what we thought we knew, how we could keep building, making, speaking, thinking and creating.

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### **From Michelle**

A studio practice is a daily act of unlearning and relearning.

Artists must be willing to unlearn and make bold studio experiments, a delicate balancing act.

Sometimes we succeed. Most often we fail. Then we go back to assess whether to keep or discard our existing knowledge in order to grow.

My mode of unlearning is experiential. They often take place during my travel research trips. Normalcy takes on a different meaning when local customs shift. Anyone with any foreign travel experience can identify with that.

I'm sharing a micro-narrative of an afternoon during my arctic expedition in fall 2022. The story of the Ice Queen, a polar bear ice sculpture, visiting her ancestor intersects with my own experience of 'discovering' an ice cave. The purpose of my research trip to Svalbard was to collect visual motifs and to develop the narrative framework for Northlandia, one of the five imaginary countries in my lifelong project, The World of 2084.

Informed by diverse sources such as early arctic pioneer history and fairy tales, the genesis of Northlandia came from my curiosity about the Inuit mythology. My interest in the indigenous culture came from my Alaska research trip in 2016 during which I was asked to leave the group. The organiser claimed that I spoke disrespectfully to the community. I staked my position and stayed on the trip, but the incident left a permeant imprint on my understanding of the world.

The notion of the Anthropocene is masculine and Eurocentric.\* Is there only one way to understand the world? Is there a gentler, less certain way? One that invites curiosity, uncertainty and courage?

I invite you, artists and non-artists, to unlearn and relearn your world.

One image, one story and one moment at a time.

\*\*\*

White was all she could see. The crunch of her footsteps was all she could hear. And the wind that cut like blades.

The Ice Queen put a piece of seal fat in her mouth and pulled her fur hood down to shield her eyes.

The last time she was on this path was a decade ago. A polar cub, barely out of adolescence and freshly made queen. She took each step on the red carpet like she was on top of the whole world, poised, calculated and confident. The day after the coronation, she came to pay tribute to her great great great great great grandmother Mother Spirit, a family tradition among generations of queens.

This time, all the joy was drained out of her body. Her paws felt as heavy as a dead walrus.

The reason for this visit was not one she looked forward to.

\*\*\*

After our daily morning meeting, our leader Sarah gave her green light for us to get ready for our landing. The hallway packed like sardine cans, we hustled back and forth to our cabins, retrieving our hundred layers of fleece and down, our lifejacket, our woollen socks.

Living in the subtropical climate, I forgot what a battle it could be to prepare your body for the elements. I missed leaving my front door in my cavalier shorts and tank tops.

In fall 2022, I sailed around Svalbard with a group of artists, musicians and writers, each working on our own arctic projects and making daily magical landings in the arctic archipelago. My mission was to collect visual motifs and narrative content for my imaginary country Northlandia.

Life in the arctic was unlike anywhere else I'd experienced. You learn to take what nature gives you. You learn to bow your head. You learn to not expect and receive beyond your wildest expectations every day.

"Don't wait", our leader Sarah said. No two days are the same in the arctic. You can go back to the same place tomorrow and it'll be different.

Not even tomorrow. The same place could look different in two hours.

In fact, even experienced captains and wilderness guides wait till after sunrise to survey the weather and the land to decide the day's activities.

Hence our morning meeting ritual.

\*\*\*

The path to Mother Spirit's cave was a strict secret between all the generations of queens. Queens swore an oath to keep it from even her kin and most-trusted counsellors.

For almost ten years, the Ice Queen was buried under daily problem solving for her arctic country Northlandia, whose ice and snow were disappearing as fast as the Northern Lights dance across the sky.

The precious whiteness that quietly blanket the mountains drip away silently and rapidly. The defiant face she put on was no longer enough to hide her own fears, and most definitely not enough to pacify her panicky counsellors and civilians. She came to Mother Spirit for guidance.

\*\*\*

It was 28 October, and the sun had been below the horizon for two days. Each day we were inching towards the polar nights.

There was still enough residual daylight for our daily landings. We were all excited by the electrifying energy at the breakfast table. We stayed in Tempelforden overnight for a surprise.

We had never stayed in the same location for two days. What could it be?

We hiked on the glacier Tunabreen under a grey sky. We heard nothing except for our cameras clicking and the icy crisp crunch under our feet.

In the morning Sarah revealed to us a perfectly preserved ice cave, so rare so early in the season. The reason for our anchor in Tempelforden.

The short and narrow path towards the ice cave was valleyed by icy slopes, secluded from the rest of the group.

With reverence, I approached the cave in silence.

I turned a corner and my exclamation broke the silence. The beauty was too great to take in quietly.

Pristine, turquoise and translucent, the cave looked like it had been there for millennia, but it also looked like it had been freshly made this morning.

We gawked at the cave, stupefied by the beauty, an experience we got to know intimately during this arctic expedition.





Figure 1: 'Ice Cave in Tempelfjorden, Svalbard' by Michelle Fung

Staring intently at the mouth of the cave, I could see the Ice Queen's ancestor Mother Spirit emerging from the dark hole.

\*\*\*

The Ice Queen was glad when she finally reached the shelter of the Ice Cave. She was no longer the adventurous youth that explored the frozen world in pink cheeks. Her body had become soft in the warm palace hall fire.

She pulled off her fur hood and a torrent of white powder showered onto the ice floor. She reached into the inner secret pocket of her seal fur parka and took out a flat rectangular box.

The box was made with walrus tusk, the size of an arctic fox head and intricately carved with Northlandia's most famous glacier Iskrembreen and the Northern Lights.

The Ice Queen opened the box and revealed a cluster of seal teeth. Nineteen of them.

She carefully rearranged the teeth into the shape of a snowy owl

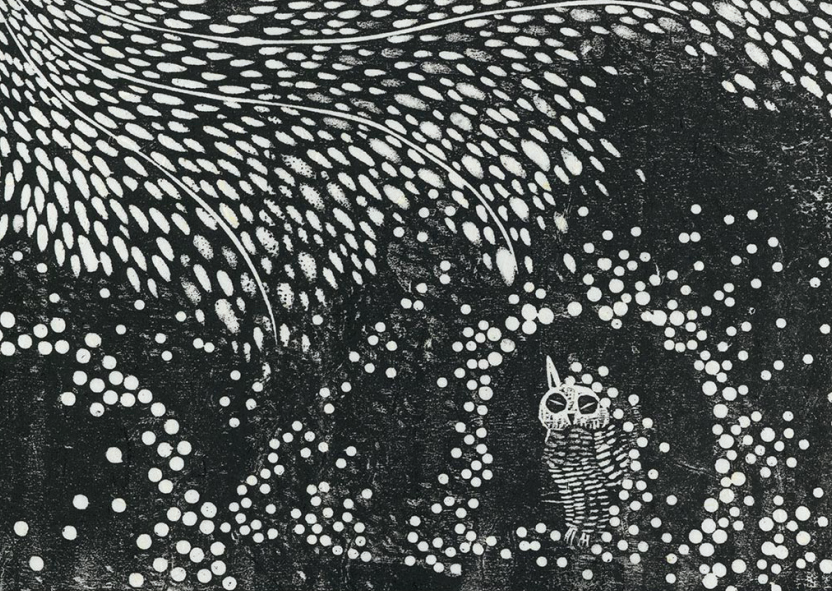


Figure 2: 'Mother Spirit - The Snowy Owl' by Michelle Fung

head. When the last tooth was in place, the bottom of the box lost its milky surface and morphed into a shiny sheet of ice.

The Ice Queen aligned her head's silhouette with the snowy owl outline made with seal teeth. The shiny mirror-like surface instantly dulled and returned to the white ivory texture of walrus tusk.

Now she only had to wait. She put away the box when she heard echoing hoots from the depth of the cave.

The next moment, Mother Spirit was in front of her great great great great great granddaughter. "What is it this time, my dear child queen?"

**End**

\*Crutzen, P. Geology of mankind. *Nature* 415, 23 (2002). <https://doi.org/10.1038/415023a>. To counter his argument, I invite the reader to read Zoe Todd's article "Indigenising the Anthropocene" in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (2015.)

# BLURRING STEAM

## Blurring Boundaries

### **Mahija Mandalika**

Mahija Mandalika is an interdisciplinary artist and engineer, whose interest lies in science fiction and archaeology. Through the mediums of film, printmaking, sculpture, and drawing, Mandalika's practice focuses on materialising and evidencing the passage of time. At the core of her practice, she explores time through various methods of questioning and interrogation.

### **Science fiction as a method of reimagining realities**

Science fiction is a genre of speculative fiction where there is a relation to scientific, speculative, technological advancements, extraterrestrial life, and space and time exploration. Within science fiction, there is a vast range of sub genres that allow speculative thought to thrive.

The genre of science fiction finds its roots in ancient mythology. Technological advancements of various kinds are written about in scriptures across the world. In Hindu mythology, for example, much scientific analysis was explained to the general population through stories that imbued scientific powers to human or demi-human deities. This helped in making scientific knowledge more accessible, while presenting facts in an engaging way. Now, even with some proof that the incidents and wars in these myths have occurred, there are unexplained phenomena that delegate the mythological aspect to these stories.

Stories, tales and myths from all around the world have used science fiction in some way or the other to explain scientific phenomena. This kind of learning enables us to form our own ideas with the information that is provided, even if it means that the facts are slightly off.

The mythological narrative form of learning has always been a part of anthropological advancements.

However, with the current technological advancements, a plethora of these mysterious occurrences have been explained with scientific proof. These explanations present the facts, thereby repelling any mythological significance to ancient stories. Even

though scientific advancements are a step towards aiding the anthropological quest of knowledge and reasoning, the constant rationalisation of thought, especially using the current western educational systems, prevents the pedagogy of indigenous knowledge and transdisciplinary thinking.

### **Why do we need to move away from Western educational systems?**

According to the Western educational systems, there is usually just one scientific or technical explanation that solves a specific problem. However, indigenous civilisations and cultures, who have possessed this knowledge for centuries, tend not to declare it as the only solution to the problem at hand. This ambiguous nature of indigenous knowledge allows for transdisciplinary learning and for the boundaries of knowledge to not be closed.

Even within Western educational systems, there are disciplines that we don't completely understand, and that evade the questioning of humankind. One such discipline is quantum physics. The whole basis of quantum physics or quantum mechanics is the dual nature of matter - that is, matter can exist as both a particle and a wave. But how can matter be two things at once?

Richard Feynman, one of the world's leading physicists, quotes, "If you think you understand quantum physics, you don't understand quantum physics". This coming from Feynman himself, shows that there is hope for ambiguity to be present in areas of scientific learning. And this doesn't have to be restricted to science either.

Feynman himself was a man of transdisciplinary exploration. He dabbled in biology, philosophy, art, music and even safe-cracking (an arguably interesting trait for a scientist to have). But this method of cross disciplinary exploration allowed Feynman to understand things from different perspectives, and not be restricted to established boundaries.

### **Quantum physics and extractivism**

A transdisciplinary exploration that I was a part of was Quantum Physics and Extractivism, an improvisational discussion that fellow artist and researcher Lucy Dukes and I conducted in Elefsina, Greece. During the Shared Campus residency in 2022, we explored the topic 'A Remote Guide to Extractivism'. This created space for understanding extractivism (in its various forms) in areas vulnerable to anthropological activities.

During the residency, the participants conducted scientific and artistic experiments. Lucy explored the nature of honey subjected to heat, and created honey sculptures that would change over the course of time. My experiments were more brutalist in nature, where I used found crude oil to play with concrete stones lying around.

These experiments are nowhere similar to the scientific experiments conducted in laboratories, but by allowing the lack of an end goal to be a part of the process, the outcomes were not closed off. This is specifically important to artistic exploration.

In Quantum Physics and Extractivism, Lucy and I explored the possibility of connecting two very different topics - the artistic investigation of extractivism, and the science of quantum physics – or specifically quantum entanglement. Quantum entanglement states that any two particles that are quantum entangled, when separated even by distances as huge as the cosmos, are still entangled to each other and respond to changes in one another. If the spin of one particle is changed, the spin of the other automatically changes to accommodate for the balance between the two particles, even if the particles are in different galaxies. This effect has no current scientific explanation, and Einstein himself called it “spooky action at a distance”.

In relation to extractivism, this phenomenon presents itself as a way to understand human action and its effect, specifically to depict the different timelines of matter and material in a specific place. Considering a specific place at a specific point in time, the multiplicity of timelines existing on top of each other as strata of material represents the physical evidence of human action and its effect. This strata builds on top of itself, creating the land that we exist on.

Quantum entanglement acts as a perfect metaphor for this phenomenon as the multiplicities are both evident and hidden at the same time. Even though we consider the specificity of a particular location, different timelines are connected through that place, spanning hundreds of years, lives and eras. Since no extractivism occurs in isolation, and all actions affect one another, quantum entanglement and its speculative extrapolations depict a cross-disciplinary exploration of scientific and philosophical principles. This ideology also helps in recognising “relics of the present, and to imagine pathways towards alternative futures”, or as Lucy Dukes calls them “science fiction futures”.

### **How does science fiction help in blurring boundaries?**

Looking specifically at science fiction, this discipline uses a combination of hard science, the ambiguities within science, and a whole lot of imagination to foresee a future where anything can be possible. It is not limited by current knowledge systems, and our assumptions about what is possible or impossible. The tangibility of science plays no aspect in this discipline of thinking. In fact the uncertainty and lack of definite information prompts this line of thought. Within this chasm of uncertainty and irrational thinking emerges a thought process that holds no practical basis in the present world.

Having no practical basis implies the impossibility of the scenario, but this is not true; science fiction has a basis in reality, but not in the most evident way.

Science fiction looks at the nooks and crannies of the most insane thoughts, and blows them up to epic proportions. This includes thinking through every possibility that could ever occur given a particular scenario – both plausible and probable.

Time travel is definitely possible, and one might even encounter their grandfather in this process. Aliens exist, and are communicative through brain waves and ancient languages. Android sheep do dream about robots.

In one of my own pieces of writing, I explored how water could function as a portal into the fourth dimension. This exploration worked as a way of understanding water and its relationship to human existence, and its various forms of representation throughout history. Within mythology, science and philosophy, water takes different forms of existence. Considering the case of Narcissus, water acts as a mirror, depicting the scientific properties of reflection from a clear source of water. Extrapolating this thought onto water as an entity itself, it would be possible to imagine water as a portal – a portal that allows us to cross the boundary of reflection into the netherworld, where a different person exists.

Mike Cahill's "Another Earth" explores a similar approach to look at humanity. Cahill uses a situation of another existing Earth as a way to explore multiplicities in timelines, personalities, lives and how they interconnect with each other. This once again connects to quantum entanglement and how no action is independent of one another.

There are varying lengths that authors and directors have gone through to make the impossible possible. A key figure in science fiction is the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky. Although some of his cinema is based on science fiction from other authors, the cinematography and direction he uses in his films makes the impossible seem possible. That is the underlying notion of great science fiction – to make the impossible seem possible. To achieve this, however, there needs to be a combination of ideas and disciplines that are constantly changing with the times, and questioning the deeply impressed ideals of the current society. This can only be possible if science fiction uses an all-encompassing vision to look at contemporary society and question the repressive ideals of the world.

Free from the constraints of the present, and our assumptions of what is impossible, science fiction works as a powerful tool for thinking outside the box. What the future holds, we don't know. But science fiction holds many possibilities.

### **Science fiction in cinema, literature and art**

Andrei Tarkovsky uses a variety of disciplines to explore science fiction. The cinematography and poetic nature of his cinema combines literature, visual aesthetics, and composition. Possibly the least important part of science fiction is its adherence to science. And this departure from a singular outcome opens the doors to speculative interpretation. The infusion of media like cinema, literature, art and poetry only furthers this thinking.

Through this experimental thinking of using multidisciplinary knowledge, there is an understanding of “no singular truth” - especially in cinema and literature, where the world is open to exploratory and innovative interpretation, and science fiction is used as a way to depict the flaws in the current societal system and break the barriers of conditioned human thinking. The classics, like Orwell's *1984*, Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles*, and Zamyatin's *We*, provide new perspectives of looking at deep rooted problems like racism, colonialism, technological addiction and loneliness in society. They also provide an alternative future where these problems might be solved.

Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* depicts a world where humans are addicted to windows through which they have interspecies contact. This seems especially relevant in the current world situation, where addiction to mobile devices has led to severe health conditions and death.

Dealing with issues such as this without the aid of a literary device would be difficult, as we stubborn humans can't deign to look past our reality. Through such innovative works we are able to look beyond the fog of our reality into the clarity of the situation.

### **Science fiction as a way to transdisciplinary learning**

With sub-genres such as Afrofuturism, biopunk, speculative evolution, and interplanetary life systems, science fiction explores the collective amalgamation of politics, colonialism, ecology, and speculative thought to comprehend the dynamics of the fictional world. Not only does fiction help construct the fabric of the fictional world, it also facilitates connections between disciplines that might not be very obviously related.

Non-linear ideologies emerge from the need to connect the dots. Rather than trying to achieve a perfect solution for connections between unlinked territories of subject matter, we dwell in the uncertainty of how they can be connected. This uncertainty leads to ingenious ways of understanding and untangling the association between complex ideologies.

Philosophy and science, evolution and love, capitalism and technological progression, fantasy and solipsism - all of these find common ground through the genre of science fiction.

Science fiction is inspired by science, and science in turn inspires science fiction. This circular philosophy allows for a "grasping of the universe", however fleeting it is. A fellow artist, Eirini Vlavianou says that science fiction allows for "imaginative inaccuracies" to occur, as it is more open ended and less methodological than science. This takes into account the "multiplicities in histories", and allows the inherent human curiosity to "meet the universe halfway".



# DISLOCATING TECHNOLOGY

## Future of Education: campusX cyber-physical learning

### Kenneth Lo

Dr Kenneth Lo is Director of Office of Digital Learning (ODL) and Program Director of campusX at Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), which involves educational innovations, pedagogy, and educational services such as EduTech, Library, and Fabrication Laboratory. AT SUTD, Kenneth is leading an innovation program “SUTD campusX” to develop competency, tools, and systems for the future of education and sustainability. Kenneth has experience in technology innovations, predictive machine learning, and in designing engineering systems.

Singapore University of Technology and Design is adapting to changes in education, including COVID-19, digital transformations, Generative AI tools, and a focus on skills-based learning. To enhance the learning experience, we aim to incorporate advanced pedagogies and technologies like learning analytics, gamification, robots, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality. Our goal is to offer personalised, immersive, collaborative, and socially connected learning experiences.

The vision of campusX is to pioneer a fun, safe and inclusive educational experience at SUTD, where lifelong tertiary learners (undergraduates, postgraduates, and adult learners) can leverage innovative cyber-physical techno-pedagogies to personalise their learning journeys and achieve optimal learning outcomes.

### **Philosophy of campusX**

The philosophy of SUTD campusX is powered by two enablers: ‘Learning Science’ and ‘Education Technology’.

**Learning Science:** teaching and learning principles and methods, including learning analytics (both real- and post-time)

**Education Technology:** applications, software and hardware tools that provide seamless and immersive learning experience (such as virtual/augmented reality, gamification, telepresence robots, learning analytics, and artificial intelligence).

The two enablers interact in campusX programs and initiatives, like partnerships, prototyping, and innovation projects. These interactions generate outputs that contribute to campusX.

One such output is termed Technology of Learning (ToL). This is the body of knowledge, expertise and competency needed to create a pedagogy suited to the human- and design-centric curriculum of SUTD. This unique blend of SUTD Techno-Pedagogy has three important dimensions:

- Technology of Cyber-Physical Learning (ToCPL) - the competency in tools that enable cyber-physical learning such as learning analytics, artificial intelligence, and robotics.
- Science of Cyber-Physical Learning (SoCPL) - an understanding of pedagogical and andragogical principles that supports effective cyber-physical learning for lifelong tertiary learners
- Ethics of Cyber-Physical Learning (EoCPL) - the capability to discern appropriate rules and guidelines to provide a fun, safe, and inclusive learning environment.

Together all these three dimensions constitute the cyber-physical learning concepts of SUTD campusX to create a unique educational experience that centres on interdisciplinary learning and research and nurturing lifelong tertiary learners who are design-focused and human-centred.

From consultations with stakeholders such as students, instructors, and SUTD leadership team, three important themes have been identified:

- How can students learn better? This question focuses on learning intimacy and socialisation. We need to develop seamless learner-learner and learner-faculty interactions that are fun, safe, and inclusive (i.e., connectedness). Engaging and authentic social presence should be supported through intuitive, unintrusive, easy to use, and stress-free technology.
- How can students have various options to learn? The idea of 'learning anywhere, anytime, with anyone' provides not only flexibility and scalability in learning options, but also the possibility of personalisation and collaboration.
- How can students learn in a fun, safe, and inclusive environment? Safeguarding governance aims to provide an environment where both data protection and privacy are protected, and safe and inclusive cyber-physical learning ethics is observed.

### **Roadmap of campusX**

To achieve these outcomes and roll-out to students starting from 2025, SUTD is conducting various minimum viable products, innovation development projects, prototyping, and partnership activities to create a human- and design-centric cyber-physical learning environment.

To make sure that important learning outcomes are achieved, SUTD campusX has adopted a set of six 'thrusts' (i.e. key initiatives) to develop the required human and design-centric capabilities leading to new pedagogical practices, guidelines, policies, and educational innovations. These thrusts focus not only on a strategic set of activities by themselves but also the interactions across them. The six main thrusts of SUTD campusX are:

- People-centric learning and design
- Immersive realities learning
- Metaverse and blockchain for learning
- Socially interactive educational robotics
- Advanced learning analytics including real-time analytics
- Enhanced learning through innovative technology

Overall, the central thinking behind campusX is that cyber-physical learning is an intimate, interactive, and impactful learning pathway. It will drive educational innovations to improve learning outcomes, grow skills and knowledge, and sustain personalised learning in a fun, safe, and inclusive way.

### **Living Labs of campusX**

We are setting up Living Labs to focus on higher education learners, adult learners, and immersive STEAM learning. Living Labs enable us to innovate and adopt new pedagogies, andragogies and technologies that best suit the needs and expectations of learners. We also aim to use the Living Labs to:

- establish testbeds and innovations
- conduct educational technology validations
- set up cyber-physical learning standards and benchmarking
- develop joint innovation projects with partners.

### **campusX Partnerships and Collaborations**

There are endless possibilities to incorporate new and emerging technologies to meet future educational needs - and we recognise

that we do not have all the expertise. Therefore, campusX has been reaching out to collaborate and innovate with a number of academic institutions and organisations, both in Singapore and internationally.

These alliances have been formed to promote the advancement of cyber-physical learning through joint collaborative efforts, innovation projects, and knowledge sharing among institutes of higher learning. By reaching out and collaborating in this way, campusX reflects an inclusive lifelong educational approach to reimagine the future of learning.

### **Singapore Cyber-Physical Learning Alliance**

- Nanyang Polytechnic
- Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- Singapore Polytechnic
- Temasek Polytechnic
- Institute of Technical Education
- University of the Arts (UAS)
  - Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts
  - LASALLE College of the Arts
- Singapore Institute of Technology
- Singapore Management University
- Singapore University of Social Sciences
- Singapore University of Technology and Design
- BCA Academy
- Civil Service College
- Singapore Institute of Management
- Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology
- Institute for Adult Learning
- National Institute of Education
- Ministry of Education (Observer)

### **International Cyber-Physical Learning Alliance**

- Aalto University, Finland
- Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong
- Neom U, Saudi Arabia
- Singapore University of Technology and Design, Singapore
- Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico
- University of Ottawa, Canada
- Zhejiang University, China

## AI-Noise and Naiveté

### **Tobias Fandel**

Tobias Fandel is a composer and visual artist with a creative interest centred on aesthetic implications of digital culture. He teaches music at Baruch College and is currently pursuing a PhD at CUNY Graduate Centre. He received his Doctor of Music from the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

### **I. The Promise of Reversibility**

Recent breakthroughs in generative AI have impacted our daily lives and media landscape. The analog reproduction of media content has been disrupted and surpassed by the acceleration of digital files within computational networks across the globe. The outspoken promise of the latest technological advances is advertised as follows: *Through the process of machine learning based upscaling and enhancing, the degradation (through compression) of poor images or sound files can be reversed, restored, or recovered.* However, this process induces AI-Noise which adds mostly unrelated or speculative data in an unpredictable process. As Walter Benjamin professes in 1935:

*In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. The technological reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new.*  
(Benjamin, 1935/1969, p. 167)

With the advent of digital technologies, unlimited multiplications of media files, and the recent spread of AI tools, a clear distinction between production and reproduction has been dissolved <sup>[1]</sup>. Furthermore, another, distinct new phase of art (re)production, distribution, and consumption must be addressed.

The German media artist, filmmaker, and essayist Hito Steyerl, has concluded in her well received essay "In Defense of the Poor Image":

*Poor images are poor because they are not assigned any value within the class society of images, their status as illicit or degraded grants them exemption from its criteria. Their lack of resolution attests to their appropriation and displacement.*  
(Steyerl, 2009, p. 6)

Apparently, AI technologies can overcome these issues, degraded qualities can be enhanced, missing resolution can be recovered, and when degradation is reversed, value seems to be regained or even added.

The following example shows three photographs, the low-resolution original, accompanied not with two copies or versions of it, but rather AI upscaled renderings, one of which additionally implements a “face recovery” model (Topaz, 2021).

The speculative additions in the series of the middle column appear to have compromised the optical perspective and sense of depth. The image on the right seems enhanced at first, but when zooming

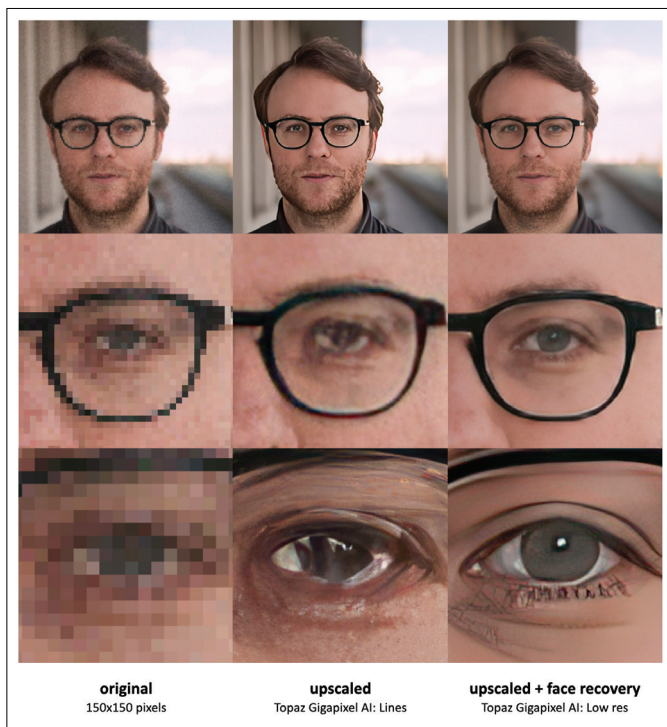


Figure 1: Comparison of upscaled renderings

in closer, the similarity to the original is almost lost, while the middle image diverges drastically.

Despite comparing the upscaled renderings against each other and against the input image, it must be reminded, that this initial photograph – displayed as technological reproduction and in compromised resolution – depicts the given portrait at a certain angle and distance, thus distorting and interfering, while at most representing but not being the person itself.

—

The machine learning filter Studio Sound by Descript promises a clean podcast audio fidelity, without exposing background noises or cheap room acoustics to the listener. The following audio file contains a background party chatter noise floor, with the main voices repeating “This is the important text.” After the original has been played, the Studio Sound filtration follows:

Audio example: [https://youtu.be/KWpFd8bAg\\_4](https://youtu.be/KWpFd8bAg_4) (Fandel, 2023c).

If the filter application is measured against the advertised goals, a successful implementation can be acknowledged. However, while the background sounds disappear and the audio fidelity is secured, the voice characteristics and even individual syllables and words are heavily compromised and lost, only a high-fidelity shell prevails. Additionally, certain formant characteristics – resembling stereotypical gender roles, corresponding to the generative artificial voices – have been diminished. Interestingly, the human ear, given the unfiltered situation, can easily distinguish “the important text” from the background noise, instinctively alongside the inherent implication. AI tools on the other hand might filter, enhance, or transcribe speech audio files, but the specificity of their applications seems to add additional problems, or simply noise. However, it must be clarified, that this newly induced type of noise is distinct from signal noise or communicational noise. Generally, one can attest to a certain enhancement in all examples above, whereby induced disturbances exert novel qualities and thus contaminate the media object. In the following I will refer to these phenomena as AI-Noise.

II. AI-Noise

I distinguish three types: AI-Noise in meaning, induced by seeds or temperature, and caused by interpolation.

The next figure compares the nine output variations of DALL·E mini and Craiyon – essentially the same generative image creator, just hosted on different servers for enhanced accessibility – for the prompt: “Two girls, Mona and Lisa, are having a cup of coffee.”

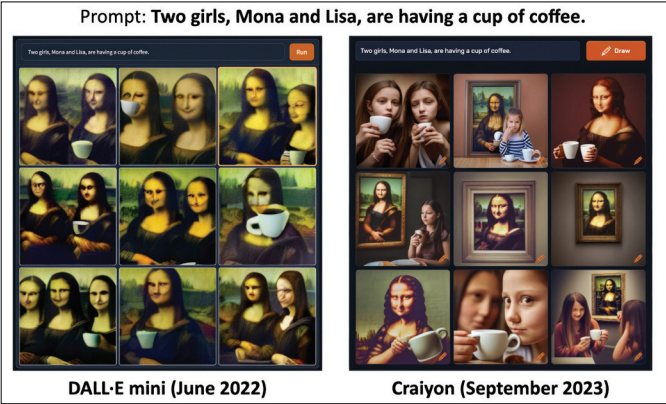


Figure 1: Comparison of upscaled renderings

The clear confusion of the given names with the painting title can be seen throughout all the DALL·E mini results and most variations of Craiyon. And although the updated model with the further advanced training status of Craiyon provides more photo realistic results, the visual translations of the prompt’s meaning remain mostly bizarre.

For the following image, I rephrased the prompt to adapt for these ambiguous interpretations: “Three girls, Mona Lisa, and Anna, are having a cup of coffee.”

The missing comma between Mona and Lisa apparently offers a probabilistic rendering, which can be perceived as a creative interpretation of the prompt. Yet, our desire to see such creative connections materialized, might be the actual reason behind our judgement.



Prompt: **Three girls, Mona Lisa, and Anna, are having a cup of coffee.**



**AI Model: PhotoReal**

DeepDream (September 2023)

Figure 3: Generated prompt-to-image result

A next layer of AI-Noise is based on seeds or temperature differences in the generative process.<sup>[2]</sup> The following video displays a still frame of a 3 second video, generated from the previously used prompt, which is then upscaled – with face recovery – based on three different seeds.<sup>[3]</sup> The last seed version is then applied to all video frames. Nuances in the algorithmic degree of randomness or probability distribution generate a sequence of almost coherent images, although with a strong contamination of AI-Noise.

Video example 1: <https://youtu.be/hOn-rFi1j8Y> (Fandel, 2023b).

Similarly, AI frame interpolation induces a novel logic of motion and object trajectories, which can be seen in the next video example. The additional frames don't iterate by blending adjacent images to form compounded frames to fill the gaps as in traditional methods, rather, new frames are derived from a non-linear generative process, predicting the trajectories of shapes and pixels.

Video example 2: <https://youtu.be/HItFWJLOFvk> (Fandel, 2023a; Topaz, 2023).

—

The application of shadow mapping based on control net and image-to-image modifications, as seen in the next figure, makes the classification as noise apparent.

While the light and shadow situations seem convincingly incorporated, the actual building architecture appears to have changed in some details, such as the rounded window frames that have vanished. Moreover, the changed architectural features cannot be understood as a simple distortion of the original, they are coherent and plausible, yet wrong.

The notion of AI-Noise with its probabilistic nature therefore denominates the novel phenomenon much closer than the concept of distortion could. Furthermore, the properties discussed carry profound implications for the creative and cultural discourse if aestheticized.



Figure 4: Comparison of shadow mapping implementations.

### III. AI and Nostalgia

The following series of images displays four colorizations of a black-and-white photograph, one of which is solely achieved by conventional filter algorithms (Adobe Lightroom), and three AI colorizations which have either been applied to the black-and-white original, or the result of the filter tinting (DeepAI, 2023; VanceAI Technology, 2023). Surprisingly, all AI colorizations fail to recover

the blue of the sky, or even fail to keep the blue sky blue.

Apparently, the software customers demand a degraded and aged version of the black-and-white photograph when colorized. This might be explained by the commercially driven machine learning algorithms, which implement the expectation of how the past should look like from the perspective of today. The projected use cases seem aligned with marketing strategies and nostalgic desires.<sup>[4]</sup>

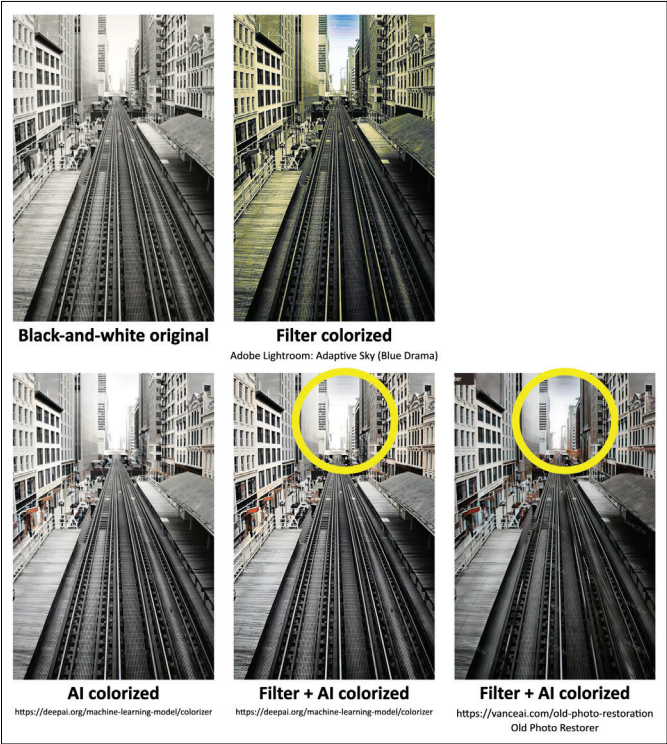


Figure 5: Comparison of image colourisations

### Interim Conclusion

AI-Noise is relevant, but not as expected. The immediate sensation of AI-Noise constitutes a novel type of perception. However, this expansion of the perception makes true reversibility impossible. Nostalgia can be understood as a commodity, which drives the aesthetics of the algorithm. These built-in nostalgic qualities are thus redefining and subverting the technological reproducibility of art. Despite numerous potentially harmful facets, AI-Noise and the perception of it can be stimulating in various creative domains and thus contribute to AI proficiency.

In practical terms, AI proficiency (for artists) is built upon the creative encounter with AI-tools, which can only be naive at first since the hidden layers of the neural networks make a step-by-step comprehension impossible. The suggested and advertised simplification of such a creative process, proclaims intuitive access by text prompting, and celebrates the bypassing of skills and craft to unlock a more immediate and accelerated artistic expression. The inherent layers of naiveté shall be discussed in the next section.

### IV. Naiveté and Generative AI

Generative AI promises to replace the artists' skills and expertise, thus allowing for a naive encounter within a changed and accelerated creative methodology. However, since text-based prompting serves as the human-AI-interface, the *paradigm of plausibility* asserts familiarity, which keeps the encounter naive. Furthermore, through the prevalence of generative text-interface AI concepts (DALL-E, Midjourney, ChatGPT, etc.), the intrinsic relationship of prompt and result is validated reflexively, thus becoming an integral part of the interactive exchange. As a consequence, plausibility becomes paradigmatic.

To investigate a naive encounter with generative AI, and when discussing naiveté in the creative domain, there are primarily three layers to consider: Artists encounter and engage methods and tools in the creative process, the audience encounters art, and artists or theorists engage art as expert audiences or art critics.<sup>[5]</sup> When further tracing the intersections of these layers with commonly assigned traits and characteristics of naiveté, such as "lack of experience", "lack of self-awareness", a "poor vocabulary", and so on, some relationships seem to exert greater reciprocal effects.<sup>[6]</sup> Especially a lack of self-awareness intersecting with the artists' methodology appears to be the most interesting and demanding attribute pair with regards to the disruptive emergence of creative AI

technologies. Since self-awareness, or the lack thereof, is closely tied to knowledge (intuitive, scientific, haptic, embodied, intellectual, academic, social, etc.), memorization, and the capability to abstract, the psychological dimensions of the arousal potential alongside the Wundt curve can add a more nuanced understanding of naively encountering generative AI.

### V. Hedonic Value and Naiveté

The following graph, called Wundt curve, after the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, identifies the arousal potential of simple, complex, novel, and familiar stimuli.

As can be derived from the curve, a complex and novel stimulus, when repeated, grows familiar over time, gains hedonic value and is appreciated more, while on the other hand, a simple but novel stimulus loses its appeal when repeated and familiarized (Berlyne, 1970, p. 284). Furthermore, the subjectivity in assessing novelty, complexity, and the arousal potential of creative results – from the perspective of the artist – seems further complicated under the influence of generative AI.

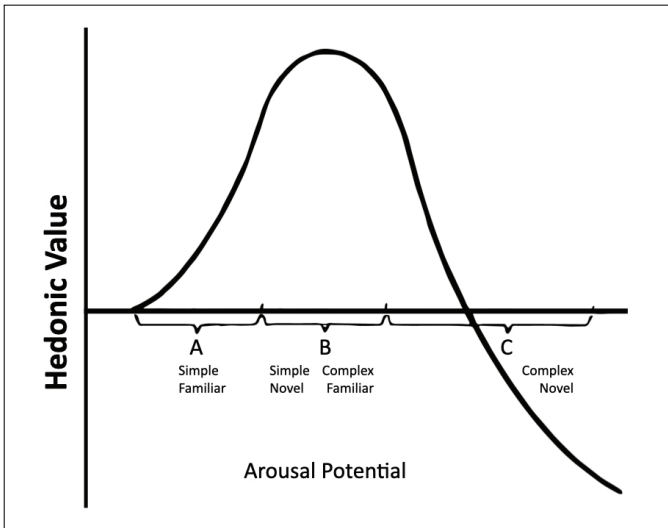


Figure 6: Arousal Potential and Hedonic Value, in D. E. Berlyne: "Novelty, complexity and hedonic value."

In this scenario, self-awareness is challenged and undermined by the paradigm of plausibility, preventing the appreciation of the unknown, since the ML training reflects back on the cultural background. Therefore, substantial novelty is prevented, despite the accelerating multiplication of new generative iterations, as long as linguistic plausibility is asserted, as if we would play the Turing Test with ourselves, which recently has become a popular theme in the entertainment industries.

### **Conclusion**

The promise of generative AI remains untouched, only if the creative encounter upholds the paradigm of plausibility. A strong hedonic value reinforces the appeal of novelty in case of simplicity, or for familiarity if stimuli are complex, thus limiting the creative potential of generative AI. Furthermore, a naive utilization of AI to bypass creative constrictions of craft and skill, will unconsciously induce AI-Noise and nostalgic qualities. A missing sensitivity towards these novel phenomena might amplify a lack of self-awareness and hinder beneficial nuances within a naive encounter of AI technologies.

Finally, the creative potential of human-AI-interfacing without text-based prompting has yet to be unleashed. While rejecting the paradigm of plausibility, novel modes of interaction likely would increase self-awareness regarding the creative use of AI tools. A collaborative path, iterating outside of the multiplicity of linguistic logics, together with a non-deductive approach to validate and categorize success of AI results, could open an inspiring interplay, centering the medium itself as the shared dimension of creativity and exchange between artists and AI systems.

### **Endnotes**

1. Applications of generative AI and machine learning based tools are presently capable to achieve results, that carry enough similarities to the input files or datasets, to be seen as variations, yet are disparate enough to stand as novel iterations or even creations. Styles, structures, compositional features, or recognizable traits become interchangeable and accessible for modifications or modulations, beyond repair, adjustments, or retouch. The question of essence, quality, or parametric distribution enlarges the dimensionality with regards to production and reproducibility, thus breaking their dichotomous relationship. The categorial distinction cannot be upheld, since digital production has its reproducibility internalized.

## DISLOCATING TECHNOLOGY

2. Seeds are initializing values or vectors, used as a starting point for the generative process. The amount of randomization is referred to as temperature.
3. 3 seconds 8 FPS raw video sequence prompted on Zeroscope, seed variations generated with Deep Dream Generator (Zeroscope, 2023; Aifnet, 2023).
4. “Why use an AI colorizer anyway?” The online platform Fancycrave suggests a reasoning for the application of AI colorizers: “You could be doing a school project”, or “you could be a historian looking to research the little intricacies of the past”. (Fancycrave, 2023)
5. The purpose of this oversimplified representation is to emphasize the crucial interdependencies and correlations of generative AI in the creative domain when interfacing with artists.
6. When naively asking google’s new AI powered search about naïveté, I’m educated about the characteristics of a naive person as having a “lack of experience”, a “lack of self-awareness”, a “poor vocabulary”, and so on.

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[day 2]

# THE ART AND POWER OF UNLEARNING FOR A BETTER TOMORROW

## **Mariana Amatullo**

Mariana Amatullo's global, multicultural career spans two decades. She has guided students in social impact projects at Designmatters. She co-founded the award winning program at ArtCenter College of Design. Since joining The New School in 2017, she teaches seminars in design innovation and leadership in the MS in Strategic Design and Management at Parsons.

Inquiry is emancipated. It is encouraged to attend to every fact that is relevant to defining the problem or need and to follow every suggestion that promises a clue. (Dewey, 1920).

With the stated goal of embracing a cross-disciplinary approach towards frameworks of unlearning and reimagining, the Unlearning Realities, Reimagining Futures symposium challenged us to explore “avenues through which the concept of unlearning can lead to innovation for education, the arts, and communities.”

As a formally-trained art historian and curator before turning to management and design theory, my practice and research are grounded in design for social innovation. I focused my keynote reflection on learning as a path to innovation and community through design education.

I opened with a few theoretical frames that have influenced my work, laying out three important lenses that have informed my work.

Firstly, on the concept of unlearning, the body of work of the American pragmatist philosopher and educator John Dewey has been a driving influence. Dewey understood learning as a situated continuous process that takes place through experiences as moments for interactions and meaning-making. His approach emphasises the emergent and embodied nature of learning - so core to art and design education - and the importance of cycles of reflection and inquiry as we learn and unlearn, shifting our understanding through processes of change and creation (Dewey, 1934).

Secondly, I shared a definition of design offered by design scholar Richard Buchanan, that I find particularly helpful if we posit that

learning to unlearn entails locating opportunities to relearn. “Design is the way we plan and create the complex wholes that provide a framework for human culture-the human systems and subsystems that either work in congress or conflict with nature to support human fulfilment” (Buchanan, 2001 ). In Buchanan's oeuvre, design knowledge takes on a broad humanistic view as a discipline uniquely positioned to embrace the complexity of the twenty-first century and the new learning required to reconcile human culture's contradictions and plural manifestations.

Finally, I tied Buchanan's perspective about design as a discipline that affords us the possibility to connect and integrate knowledge that impacts our creative and social life with my theoretical work in advancing the concept of design attitude as a multidimensional concept that shows how designers' cognitive mindsets can advance an open stance to learning and unlearning. Specifically, design attitude is a composite of distinct abilities (skills, capabilities, aptitudes) that designers apply during designing; the dimensions of these abilities are:

- ambiguity tolerance
- engagement with aesthetics
- connecting multiple perspectives
- creativity
- empathy

Several empirical and mixed-method studies have shown that design attitude is the cognitive orientation designers take when they engage with complex situations (M. V. Amatullo et al., 2019; Amatullo, Mariana V., 2015; Boland & Collopy, 2004; Michlewski, 2008). Thus, a design attitude is a mindset that opens spaces of new possibilities for creating alternatives, accelerating outcomes in fluid learning and innovation processes.

In the second part of my talk, I covered four case studies of projects in design for social innovation that we profiled in *Design for Social Innovation: Case Studies Around the World* (M. Amatullo et al., 2022). This global survey brings together 45 cases illustrating how designers shape new products, services, and systems while transforming organisations and supporting individual growth. I chose to extend the theoretical reflection of my talk with some of the takeaways from this publication, which showcased implemented projects and collected data on their impact. All projects share the commonality of featuring how designers operate in a VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous). In the face of the many inconsistencies and contradictions that these

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projects contend with, from building a new classroom environment for open-ended play and learning in preschools (MAFA, Chile) to creating a unique continuum of care for hospice patients (Carelab, Singapore), unlearning and shedding preconceptions to learn anew to bring value and innovate becomes paramount.

My talk concluded with three principles relevant to the symposium's provocations, all focused on educating artists and designers. These are hard-won lessons culled from a worldview influenced by the lenses above and the richness of empirical practice developing experiential curricula for artists and designers to embrace their capacity for making positive change in the world.

1. The criticality of disciplined humility: How might we strive to contribute to curricular initiatives that strengthen a sense of ethical leadership in our students' arc of inquiry? At the same time, how might we encourage them to let go, tolerate ambiguity, and practice creative confidence as they learn to unlearn?
2. The necessity to relearn as we unlearn. How might unlearning provide curricular opportunities for students to be open to new perspectives and master the art of asking questions that might lead to further learning? To quote Horst Rittel, "Learning what the problem is IS the problem" (1988)
3. The importance of celebrating plural futures for learning and unlearning. How might we turn to art and design education to open up new avenues for inquiry and imagination in the face of current and future challenges?

I bookended all three "how might we" questions with another insight from Dewey about the holistic power of art as experience and the capacity it has to transport us to a sense of "belonging to the larger, all inclusive whole which is the universe in which we live." (Dewey, 1920).

In the face of current challenges, those already here, and those yet to come, we know that we can turn to art and design education to open up new avenues for inquiry and imagination.

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## SHIFTING ROLES

### Unlearning/relearning creative and pedagogical methodologies: Groove and Krump in the contemporary dance curriculum

#### **London Contemporary Dance School, The Place**

Dr. Lise Uytterhoeven is the Director of Dance Studies at The Place, London Contemporary Dance School. Her publications include “Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui: Dramaturgy and Engaged Spectatorship” and a co-authored study guide “What Moves You?: Shaping your dissertation in dance”. Lise co-chairs the Society for Dance Research. She is joined by

Claire “Shortie Buck” Hough, one of the UK’s leading Krump champions.

Vicky “Skylitz” Mantey, a dancer choreographer and teacher specialising in hiphop and street dance

Jess Yeo and Elvi Christiansen Head, two final year students on the BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance

#### **From Lise Uytterhoeven**

To provide some brief context, London Contemporary Dance School (LCDS) is a key part of The Place, London’s powerhouse for dance innovation, presentation, and education. The higher education part of our work happens through LCDS.

In 2020, we undertook a radical redesign of our BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance undergraduate programme. Alongside student wellbeing and preparing for professional outcomes, one of our key drivers was access and social justice. This commitment led us to becoming involved in an ongoing endeavour to decolonise the curriculum, which in turn is bringing about fundamental paradigm shifts in terms of learning and teaching, assessment, but also our admissions processes. In terms of learning and teaching, the driver to decolonise prompted us to introduce dance practices from the Global South into our curriculum to reflect London as a global city where various dancing cultures intersect. These dance practices from the Global South include Hip Hop, which we are

going to talk about more today. Our goal was to dismantle any old, existing hierarchies that may have existed between dance styles. This fundamental shift meant we became engaged in quite a lot of unlearning as a community of educators and students. This is our focus for today.

### **From Vicky “Skylitz” Mantey**

As a lecturer in dance at The Place, where I have been working for a couple of years now, my practice background is rooted in Hip Hop-related practices or dances relating to Hip Hop culture and street dance. Before that, I had a 20-year freelance career, which included teaching at various higher education institutions. However, this was often on a very short-term basis, and my teaching was almost always positioned as the ‘fun’ break-away from serious practice. There was in effect a practice hierarchy. There was never enough time allowed for students to sink their teeth into the content or the practices I was teaching, or for it to make the impact I always believed it could make. This was a long-standing issue, because - if I think back to when I was at the age of beginning university, which is almost 20 years ago now - street dance and genres relating to Hip Hop culture were not included in higher education. It was around the time that I began teaching at another university and, as far as London goes, that might have been the first time Hip Hop-related practices were included.

I feel that, as a teacher, I almost became the ‘gap’ or the thing that I needed when I was younger. And this is why it is so important to me to be at The Place now, and be positioned in an organisation where my teaching is more of a permanent and central fixture. There is now some longevity to my work and I am able to think about the trajectory of the students, how these genres integrate, and how students engage with these practices and draw from them.

In terms of students engaging with Hip Hop-related practices and street dance, I teach Groove in the first year, which is not a specific style. We look at Groove through a lens which spans many different genres from Hip Hop culture, each with a different technique. Groove aims to provide a foundation or baseline for Hip Hop practices. We unpick intricate body coordinations and review how these relate to music, focusing on the up- and the downbeat. Gradually, we investigate more intricate ways of embodying or listening to music. This also includes exploring social dance and social learning, which we did this week with the first-year students. Of course, because what I am teaching comes from social dance, it is somewhat unorthodox to be teaching the practices in a studio



setting in the first place. Moreover, I have developed ways of breaking movements down and formatting things in a certain way, which is completely different from the way I learned them. I try, as much as I can, to bring this social, sharing-based way of learning and engaging with each other, making it as close and organic to Hip Hop culture as possible, but with an awareness that it is an educational and institutional way of learning as well.

I also teach Popping in Term 3, which has a close relationship to music and this is explored in depth. The close relationship with music is fundamental across all genres that are relating to Hip Hop culture and street dance. Popping also requires acute attention to detail in varying degrees of tension in the body, which is a useful skill applicable to any movement practice. Of course, not all students are going to become Poppers or Hip Hop dancers. The awareness of tension in the body is useful for all dancers, as they can apply it to any way they choose to move or make something.

In all Hip Hop-related practices, freestyle is also something that is fundamental. Beyond learning steps and coordinations, my classes encourage students to be able to use what they are learning in an improvisational way, which encourages individuality, exploration and innovation as uniqueness. This is a very valuable aesthetic in Hip Hop-related practices. It is not enough to be able to just learn and follow the steps. Instead, dancers also need to use the framework or vocabulary independently in freestyle and in their own way. It is interesting when we think about language, the term freestyle, essentially, is asking for the same thing as improvisation. It is just a different movement language. The students notice a lot of parallels and differences between everything they are learning. I gradually introduce cyphering and freestyle to the students, so it often happens without them realising.

We discuss this broken-down way of learning. Like I said, it is not organic to Hip Hop culture to learn in the studio, but we talk about that. We talk about the historical context of the way these genres have been excluded from the canon. Of course, the students will be influenced by everything they learn, so we also talk about how they might draw from these genres respectfully if they are in- or outside of Hip Hop culture, and how they might go about that. All these things that the students are learning and finding, they can use in any way that they move. If they become Hip Hop dancers or Poppers, that's great, but I know that is not going to be everybody. So, it is good that they are finding ways to use this and finding their individuality and a way to evolve things in freestyle and improvisation.

Interestingly, a student mentioned to me that what they took away with them was the way that they listen to music, relate to music, move to music and hear music. They mentioned that whenever they hear the theme tune of a TV show that they watched, they started to realise there were other sounds and things that were interesting. As well as reflecting on the practical dance elements that students are able to engage with and take with them moving forward, it has been nice to hear about some of the other valuable aesthetic skills that the students are able to take with them moving forwards. I hope that is a useful place to start from.

### **From Claire “Shortie Buck” Hough**

I am a professional dance artist and facilitator, and I specialise in a style called Krump. Krump is often seen or mistaken as an aggressive style, but the beauty of Krump is that it is expression. It is expression at 110%! The intensity of the style is high, but your expression can be of different emotions, whether it is sadness, happiness, comedy, sarcasm, and anything in between. I think that Krump is a style that can help any dancer, precisely because it is about expression. Therefore, in my classes I wanted to give the dancers new skill sets, new ways to create, new ways to find different creative devices, pathways and ways to tell their story through their art. The goal has never been to go into the classes and make the students the next, best Krump dancer. As with anything in life, Krump is not always for everyone. Therefore, I wanted to make Krump approachable for everyone, so they could at least take one thing away from the style. It can help them grow as a dance artist.

When leading my Krump sessions, I always teach the technique and then I give the students time to play with that technique. The students focus on how the movement feels, rather than what it looks like in the mirror. That is something that, as dance artists, we have all had to unlearn at some point. Dancers are used to being in a class, looking at the facilitator or the teacher, and thinking “I need to look like them”. For some styles, that works, but for Krump, not so much. I always teach the students the technique in terms of where the movement is coming from in the mood in the body. They focus on how it should feel in terms of where the power is coming from, the speed, how to use your body or how to understand your body, in a Krump context.

As a multidisciplinary artist, I do not just practice Krump; it is just what I specialise in. Krump has helped me understand my body as a dance artist. So that is what I wanted to give the students. In

our sessions, we would focus on how we can express ourselves through a certain technique, how we can play with it. I give the students time to train by themselves or in small groups, or I give one-on-one training and feedback. I want the artists, the students, to find their creative and expressive pathway through this dance. Krump has helped me grow my creativity and imagination through dance, and that, I believe, is something that everyone could take away from the style to “level up” their artistry.

There’s no need to lie with Krump. The more vulnerable you are within the style, the more you are going to gain from it. Therefore, I had to create a ‘safe and brave space’ in my sessions. I shared personal stories with my students about how I created my style of Krump through the techniques and through my feelings. I talked about how it makes me feel, and then that encouraged the students to share their own experiences. It is quite demanding, physically and emotionally, but it is important for me to create that ‘brave space’ for dancers to fulfil their full potential.

It is amazing that London Contemporary Dance School has brought someone like myself in to lead Krump sessions. It shows that they are forward thinking; they want something refreshing in their space and something refreshing for their students. It shows that LCDS want their students to express themselves in new ways and find different ways to train to better their practice, to better their artistry. I am very grateful that I was able to come into the space and share my teachings with the students. I also learn from the students, seeing how they approach Krump, bring in their own practice into Krump, meet in the middle, and grow. This new expression for themselves taught me a lot. It made me think about my own training, so I am very grateful.

### **From Elvi Christiansen Head and Jess Yeo (LCDS Students)**

We just showed a video of the Krump sharing, which was an outcome of the Krump intensive that we went through. It was very energetic, very lively, and we received a massive amount of support there from people from across the school. We had teachers there, we had people who work at The Place, which is where London Contemporary Dance School is based, and we had other students from all year groups. It was a very memorable day.

What we discovered from our encounters with Krump is that it was the first step or key to unlock new discoveries on a personal basis, on a community basis and on a wider socio-political basis. For

me personally, the biggest takeaway within myself was the ability to take up space and make noise. The traditional classical ballet background tends to encourage quiet dancers where you perform the shape or form. Through Krump, however, I found an ability to push my individuality, take up space both in the volume and size of my movement, but also actually physically having my voice heard and putting my sound into the space through being an active witness through social support, all the 'hype' that you heard in that video.

Krump has allowed us to rethink what it means to be a beautiful dancer, because it welcomes everybody, every personality. You are encouraged to bring exactly how you feel in that present moment on that day. That is very different from other traditional dance styles that we may study, because there you are expected to bring a level of yourself that might not be true to how you are feeling on that day, and it might not fit with who you are fundamentally as a person. But everyone can fit into Krump or Groove, or most of the other styles that we have learned.

From a community perspective, active witnessing is encouraged. In the ciphers, the circle setup, everyone comes round and supports the person in the middle and feeds energy into that person. That is a very beautiful uplifting space to be within, or even simply witness. This supportive environment has seeped into the wider school community, not just in these classes. It is lovely to interact with other year groups teachers through these styles and to have conversations.

Krump has redefined the power structures within the studio space. In a more traditional contemporary dance training, the teacher may be expected to stand at the front facing the students, demonstrating. However, as Claire said, she always acts as a facilitator more than anything and she is a source of inspiration for risk taking, vulnerability and bravery. It was through her modelling of these values that a psychologically safe space was created in which we could be brave to express ourselves. It brought an atmosphere of care, but also autonomy, within the setting.

Building on what Vicky said, widening our perspectives has been a huge form of unlearning within our encounters in Krump and Groove. It has been interesting to trace backwards to the origins and the roots of the style as a social practice, as a community practice, and how that is affected by bringing it into an institution, into a studio space, and what that means for us as individuals. We need to consider our positionality within that. How do we, as

contemporary dance students now, take these styles, respect the forms, respect the people who created these styles and learn from them to bring them into our own practice. We need to take responsibility to further our learning: do reading, do wider research, have conversations with people around opinions.

Our learning has not stopped in the classroom. We have people doing dissertations inspired by these styles, and creating performance pieces and shows in our school. As Vicky said, Hip Hop-related practices are not just the 'fun' filler. They are taken very seriously by the students and have been embraced massively. The impact of it has gone beyond the classroom into a wider context. In my teaching practice, I now consider where I position myself in the space and the influence that has on the power dynamic between teacher and students.

Krump and Groove have given us skills and empowered us to move beyond the comfort of tradition. Hip Hop-related practices have ignited a bravery within us that has allowed us to challenge ourselves, the institution you are in, each other, the context. They have also actually led us to be true to what 'contemporary' means because contemporary means 'of the time'. The new course reflects society and culture, and how things are moving forward. We are very grateful to be experiencing these changes and being taught by these people. Thank you.

## From Me to We: Unlearning and Co-creation in Collage City Participatory Art Project

### Debe Sham

Debe Sham is a Hong Kong born artist whose projects reimagine the forms of community and community-building, with a particular focus on the nature of human relationships. She is pursuing her Ph.D. in the School of Creative Arts at Hong Kong Baptist University while serving as a board member of 1a Space.

The landscape of contemporary art has experienced a noticeable transformation thanks to the increasing popularity of socially engaged art, and particularly through short-run workshops. In the new paradigm, both artists and viewers have undergone a process of unlearning their traditional roles. The artist is now a collaborator in the production of situations rather than the sole creator of discrete objects, and those who were previously viewers are now participants (Bishop, 2012). This shift has enabled artists to contribute to shaping different situations, fostering a sense of collective creativity. Consequently, artist-led workshops now fulfil a more social and public function, expanding the boundaries of art and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration (Becker, 2009).

Unlearning is often a prerequisite for effective co-creation, as it requires the elimination of pre-existing knowledge or habits that could otherwise represent formidable barriers to new learning (Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984).

### Co-creation and participatory design

The term 'co-creation' refers to the ways of working together towards a shared goal or a joint project. It has become a widely used term to describe "a shift in thinking from the organisation as a definer of value to a more participative process where people and organisations together generate and develop meaning" (Ind & Coates, 2013). In the business world, it has become customary to use it as a basis for developing insights, new products and services, as well as marketing strategies.

LEGO has embraced this approach since 2003, when management gurus C.K. Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy first introduced the

idea of co-creation. LEGO established the LEGO Ideas Portal, an online community that encourages dialogue between fans and LEGO creators to suggest, enhance, and evaluate potential ideas for new LEGO sets. This initiative has produced impressive products like Women of NASA, the Beatles' Yellow Submarine and the DeLorean from Back to the Future.

However, the concept of co-creation is not new in the design industry. It has used a similar approach since the 1970s through a Scandinavian technique known as 'participatory design'. Participatory design emphasises the importance of involving end-users in the creation of usable products, spaces and services. It is based on the belief that to create such usable products, involving the people who will actually use them is critical. The primary motivation behind this approach is to empower users and allow them to contribute actively to the design process.

Despite distinct origins and meanings, participatory design and co-creation share two core motivations. The first is a democratic motivation, as participatory design researchers believe that "people who are affected by a decision or event should have an opportunity to influence it" (Schuler & Namioka 1993, p. xii). The second motivation is pragmatic: "quality can improve with strong and effective participation of people involved" (ibid.). Participatory design researchers engage in an ongoing inquiry to understand what participation means in relation to: power dynamics; which stakeholders need to be included in the design process; to what extent voluntary and unconstrained participation is possible; and which methods and design tools are appropriate (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2016; Robertson & Wagner, 2013; Simonsen & Robertson, 2013). As such, participatory design constantly investigates the principles of participation and design processes that empower individuals ('I') to become equal partners ('we') in the design process. By extension, co-creation is a way for participants to become uninhibited and to open the possibility of exploring future designs and participatory art practices in a workshop setting.

For a comprehensive understanding and application of these principles, it becomes imperative to see how they can be seamlessly integrated into the design process.

### **Four principles**

To analyse the Collage City project, I will borrow different principles addressed in participatory design literature, reviewed from frontier findings documented in participatory design

handbooks (Schuler & Namioka 1993; Simonsen and Robertson 2013). As an analytical framework I employ a set of four principles - inclusion, mutual learning, empowerment and playfulness - taken from existing participatory design research. Because when participatory art involves people and social processes, unlike visual analyses, these four principles from participatory design may prove to be sufficient.

### **1. Inclusion**

Inclusion is a fundamental aspect of participatory design, rooted in its democratic underpinnings, with participation serving as its defining characteristic (Simonsen & Robertson, 2013). According to the literature, incorporating diverse perspectives in the design process leads to technology that is more adaptable and accessible in dynamic environments (Simonsen & Robertson, 2013). Nonetheless, it would be unwise to assume that inclusion always proceeds smoothly. In any situation involving multiple voices, conflict and tension are likely to arise, necessitating dialogue as a means of resolution (McCarthy & Wright, 2015).

### **2. Mutual Learning**

Mutual learning is, as a principle, often described as a 'user gain' in participatory design (Bossen et al., 2010; Ehn, 1993; Greenbaum & Halskov Masden, 1993). The primary notion is that all participants, professional and non-professional, learn from each other and increase their knowledge and understanding throughout the design process (Robertson & Simonsen, 2013). This can be achieved by reflecting on each others' experiences, experimenting with prototypes together, and creating a shared understanding from these experiences (Holtzblatt & Jones, 1993; Robertson & Simonsen, 2013). Because different groups of people work together in a participatory design project, it is essential that they learn about each other to understand the different ways of reasoning and to create mutual respect (Bratteteig et al., 2013; Hess & Pipek, 2012).

### **3. Empowerment**

As a principle of participatory design, empowerment stems from a democratic motivation for participation (Blomberg & Karasti, 2012; Titlestad et al., 2009; Trigg, 2012). However, the concept of empowerment can be interpreted differently and is only sometimes explicitly defined in participatory design projects (Schneider et al., 2018). Generally, it involves addressing power dynamics in the



workplace and beyond (Blomberg & Karasti, 2012) to establish a balanced situation where both users and designers have a say in the design process (Holtzblatt & Jones, 1993; Miller et al., 1992; Muller, 1993).

### **4. Playfulness**

Especially during the early developments of participatory design in the 80s, playfulness was included as a principle of participatory design in exploring language games and collaborative inquiry (Brandt et al., 2013; Ehn, 1993). Ehn (1993) goes as far to say that participation in design can only be successful when it is enjoyable. Muller (1993) also discovered that pleasure during design workshops leads to a satisfactory outcome. Conversely, Brandt et al. (2013) view playfulness as a means for participants to overcome their differences and openly explore future designs and practices in a creative environment. Therefore, incorporating playful settings during participatory design workshops can stimulate participants' creativity and encourage collaboration in diverse groups.

### **Collage City**

Collage City was a Hong Kong-based docent-training programme which ran from December 2022 to June 2023. Its aim was to create a space for twenty participants to learn ways of storytelling about art through a cross-disciplinary educational platform led by twenty-seven art practitioners in Hong Kong. Coordinated by 1a Space and supported by the Art Development Council's 2022/23 Extra Activities Grant, the project challenged traditional boundaries of art interpretation by fostering an equal partnership between practitioners and participants, and introduced innovative co-creation frameworks that actively involved the community in the art-making process.

Collage City comprised three unique phases, each with a defined focus and set of objectives. In the initial stage of the program, five talks were delivered by five different practitioners, along with five artist dialogues featuring two different facilitators in each session. Fifteen practitioners and researchers in the arts and culture field guided the discussions, with each session lasting for two hours. During this phase, participants explored various perspectives on how to experience art using tactile materials, bodily sensations, imagination, and other techniques. The primary aim was to provide attendees with a comprehensive understanding of the principles of artwork interpretation and inspire their creativity, encouraging them

to develop their own unique art analysis style. Active participation in these sessions, coupled with the contribution to the after-talk exercises designed by the practitioners, enhanced participants' understanding of the research topic and the acquisition of essential collaboration skills required for effective engagement in the subsequent program phase.

The project's second phase comprised five hands-on workshops to encourage creativity and self-expression by focusing on various aspects of the creative making process. To begin, all participants attended an NGO art group workshop, which served as a foundation for the remaining sessions. Following the first workshop, the twenty attendees were grouped into two teams of ten individuals each, and they joined a workshop led by a well-established artist. After the second workshop, the participants were split into smaller teams of two or three people and were provided with guidance and support from seven emerging artists throughout three workshops. All workshops were tailored to the interests and practice of the artists, aiming to equip participants with the practical insights and skills for effective collaboration and co-creation with these specific artists. By attending these sessions, participants gained hands-on experience with various creative techniques, allowing them to develop their own unique style. Additionally, they learned how to work effectively in a team, brainstorm and implement innovative ideas, and provide constructive feedback to their peers.

The final stage of the project featured events including an art exhibition and documentation showcase, open studio, discussions, and guided tours. The exhibition featured the works of seven young artists who led the final three sessions, drawing on their workshop experience and individual practices. The documentation showcase and open studio provided insight into the collaborative co-creation process and the discoveries made during the workshops. The twenty program participants created and led guided tours of art exhibitions and historical sites aligned with their interests and backgrounds. This phase offered participants a chance to interact with the public and showcase the skills and knowledge they had acquired.

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# MEDIA ART AS A MEMORY SYSTEM

## Unlearning Media Art: Reimagining in Archiving, Curating, Breathing Introduction

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### **Introduction**

In Statement of Intermedia, Higgins (1967) writes that “the central problem [of media technologies] is now not only the new formal one of learning to use them, but the new and more social one of what to use them for”. What Higgins is pointing towards

in this formative text for the conceptualisation and identification of media art, is the process of not only unlearning the 'old habits' of art but also (in a more speculative way) unlearning the ways technologies are being employed in imagining probable and possible futures.

It is possible to claim that the early foundation of media art was fuelled by a call for engaging with the 'social problem' of media technologies. Simply learning how to use them is not enough. This could be said to be the 'cultural' problem of media art, leading to a more humanistic question: What do we really 'learn' from media technologies? How do we 'unlearn' bad habits and avoid constructing new ones? In what follows, we will address this question from the perspectives of the three authors, all centred on actual learning situations with international students of (new) media art.

It is possible, we claim, to see media art as a memory system (Søndergaard, 2023) that enables us to retrace the processes of formal 'learning' and social 'unlearning' since the early foundations of media art. If we follow these artistic and scholarly traces, a genealogy of shifts and turns appear.

Building on this, we are raising three matters of concern and propose methods to operate them. Firstly, we address how to navigate the gaps, identifying what constitutes those moments of unlearning and proposing that such moments of unlearning rely on an epistemology of failures. Secondly, we propose that unlearning is an archiving issue, as the very premise of unlearning is memory as a matter of concern. Thirdly, we inquire into the curating of silent agencies, supported by some examples from art practices termed 'the sonic gaps of unlearning'. This unlearning requires the experience of a gap between the mediation and the context of mediation, and such gaps have been performed in art practice and curation since the end of the 1960s. We take the instance of media art as a means of expressing the gaps and moments and archives of unlearning as curatorial acts.

### **Moments of unlearning - navigating the gaps in-between media and knowledge**

Teaching new media art in the setting of traditional humanities programs at a research university, the challenges one faces could be framed as deficiencies: for example, insufficient technical or programming skills and a general unwillingness to get more familiar with media technology on a technical level on the student side.

Even more so, if the program is framed as akin to art history (and it does not really help that it is film studies in this case).

However, it is precisely here that a significant gap opens up, which allows for engaging media technology as a social problem. Therefore, a far more adequate way to address the problem is to emphasise the bigger framework of disparate modes of knowledge production. University education in this field is, for the most part, still bound to the idea of guarding disciplinary boundaries. Touting inter- and transdisciplinary practices as a required model seems to be more lip service than a real and sustained effort to employ modes of knowledge production that would dismantle the walls separating academe from the environment it is nested in.

Granted, to a great extent it is also a rhetorical figuration: universities are not really separate from the world outside their walls, even though people inside them sometimes still tend to believe and behave otherwise.

Such a situation presents a fertile breeding ground for the possibility of all kinds of failures, which - when met with sufficient level of attention and care - may provide an especially generative space of (un)learning. And by 'failure' we mean an affective, instantaneous, unstructured and sometimes scary moment of suspending judgment; a void that can be felt deeply on a somatic level and may lead to a re-orientation of a perspective. Manifest as a need to gasp for fresh air, it has the power to open minds to new experiences and types of knowledge.

Such sensations were brought up by Jan Bas Ader's *Falls*, a series of early 1970s video performances, where an artist always inevitably succumbs to the force of gravity, doing so with a grace, seemingly not without a sense of humour and warm acceptance of his fate, a gesture aptly described as "the balance (...) between irony and romantic quest" (Hainley 1999). In *Broken Fall (Organic)* (1971) an artist balances while holding a tree branch over a brook. One can almost viscerally feel the tension, strained arms' muscles and tendons, a desperate hope that suspension in the air could be prolonged and lead to a different outcome. But in the end, unsurprisingly, we're watching a human body falling right into a waterway below. The fall does not come as a life-threatening immediate danger (and certainly less dramatic than his final performance, when he set sail across the Atlantic and never reached the other shore). However, it is enough to evoke a palpable sense of unknown embodied in this tiny fraction of a second where hands are not holding on to anything at all, and a body has already



entered a complete free fall towards the water. A radical unknown - viscerally felt in the stomach and belly as a sensation of a piercing internal whirlwind - can set a necessary condition for opening up. This, in turn, inevitably prompts a sudden gasp of air.

This is what we propose as spaces for (re)breathing. We are all in dire need of such gaps, especially in a media environment which could be likened to “forced life”, typical for the Plantationocene (a term derived from plantation understood as “a system of multi species forced labor” - see Reflections on the Plantationocene, 2019). Our environment is overloaded with data, information, stimulation, and a constant threat of FOMO (fear of missing out). It is instigated mostly by social media platforms which depend on users providing all kinds of data and never allow for any gaps in transmission. Our media are saturated with internet platforms; cultural intermediaries and infrastructural metaphors building on semantic richness to become “discursive resting points”. With an image as neutral service providers, they obfuscate their self-position as dominant forces of contemporary internet (Gillespie 2010; Gillespie 2018). As emphasised by Nick Srnicek, platforms first and foremost constitute the very backbone of digital capitalism, based on the platform as “a new business model, capable of extracting and controlling immense amounts of data” (2017, 9).

As we now are well aware, this model leads to hegemonic and monopolistic practices which colonise the internet and turn its users into more or less forced labor. This tendency was only strengthened under the COVID-19 pandemic, with the massive use of the platforms substantially contributing to further datafication, which in turn lead to more data poverty within the framework of data colonialism and data extractivism (Milan, Trere and Masiero 2021; Couldry and Meijas 2019).

So we need gaps in this world of, as Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi articulated back in 2018 (before we got to really feel it on a global scale two years later), “physical and psychological breathlessness everywhere”.

Ideally then, teaching media art reframed in the current digital media ecology offers a potent moment of unlearning the normative and normalising power of the very media technology itself. This has probably always been the role of media art to start with. Yet with a rise in automation as a prominent tool of digital capitalism, media technology enters a kind of a feedback loop. The stronger it gets drawn into the orbit of data extractivism and data colonialism,

the more prominent its role in supporting such practices. And the process operates far below the level of the discourse; to the point where potentially oppositional strategies strengthen such logics on the level of data operations. This is ironically exemplified by the story of an employee of Amazon Poland who self-publishes a volume of 61 short stories about discriminatory and abusive employment practices on Amazon (Tupalski, 2023).

It is in such a context that we wish to point out the failures and gaps between the platforms of mediation and the production of knowledge that (we propose) have generative and productive potential as part of a performative critique of learning. Such a critique of learning is of key importance in the world facing many crises. Those failures and gaps may take different forms and shapes.

There may be a moment of panic while facing an alternative platform (like Twine or - on entirely different level - Mastodon), or one that entirely subverts platforms' operational logics (like Ben Grosser's Minus). Such panic often instigates the habitual unwillingness to engage 'purely' technical issues underlying any media art. In the following paragraphs we take a closer look at two of the immediate implications: the reconfiguration of memory and the curation of silent agencies.

### **Archiving gaps - unlearning and unhearing**

How to operate those gaps and moments of unlearning? As a constructive principle? Or as part of a performative critique?

The unlearning process can be fruitfully applied to archiving, in a sort of unarchiving practice. Archiving mostly means two parallel trajectories: to give access to content and to preserve it in time and space. Therefore a critical approach to archives and libraries means rethinking their own internal infrastructure. As in the classic example of the Warburg Library, Aby Warburg deeply questioned the universal classification methodology. In inventing his own, he facilitated new (un)learning associations between library contents, creating new conscious and unconscious associations. In a similar trajectory, 'distributed archives' such as the Neural Archive (established 2013) break the centralisation of institutional libraries, creating collaborative networks of non-represented art movements, with archives and online representation. They are critical memory systems, addressing time, and polycentric systems. In this way they are leaky network machines, as Chun (2019, 20) would have it: "At every level, our networked machines leak: our wireless devices

broadcast our signals, which are read in, but not usually read by others". Furthermore, media art itself could be said to be a leaky concept. It is impossible to write a (hi)story of media art, linear or non-linear, without considering the porosity and permeability of it all. Indeed, there is so much implied in the concept of 'media art' that it covers too much ground: the understanding of a shared phenomenon that is implied in 'baroque art' or 'modern art', even if contested and problematic, appears to be missing in the case of 'media art'.

What mediates media art, one might ask? Feeding this question into the premise of archives and memory, Chun proposes that "rather than arguing whether memory exists and what is or is not memory, what is most needed is a change of perspective: one that acknowledges that memory is an action, an activation and difference in structure, making perhaps, memory not anything because it is everything" (Op.cit., p.18). This is precisely the situation of unlearning; that memory is action activating a change in perspective. Therefore, Chun continues, "memory is not storage. Memory is not something that simply remains: if any memory remains it is because it is constantly regenerated. The conflation of memory and storage is dangerous because it fosters a misleading ethos that forgets the collective care and effort-good and bad-that goes into any memory" (Op.cit, p.18). Building on this, it may be claimed that 'media art' is a leaky concept precisely because of the machines and their storage materialities, infrastructures and 'interactivity' with a memory remembering its mediation.

This brings us to Mark Weiser, one of the early pioneers in thinking about network media as a critical navigation of habitual patterns. Although Weiser places the habitual in an inferior position, the habitual is central to orchestrating mass action in the age of neoliberal empowerment and individualism. Habits are repetitious actions in each device and humans that repeat and communicate: from distributed control protocol that mediates the signals in various devices to make sure that 3G networks work efficiently. Through habits, technologies become second nature: autonomous yet intimate, individual yet collective. Through habits, we have arguably become our technologies: we click, stream, update, capture, upload, share, grind, link, verify, map, save, trash and troll. Habits, such as friending, have been central to the transformation of our data trash into "Big Data": largely verifiable masses of data traces (p.22-23).

And, as Chun accentuates, "ubiquitous technologies do not simply penetrate our everyday routines through habits, they also create

new habits and, more fundamentally, change what habits do through their constant renewal-through their “newness” (p.23).

So, we are back to the implicit state of the collective act of memory. According to Chun, “... All computers read by writing elsewhere, or, to use Nancy’s terms, by exscribing: by copying and disseminating. Importantly, exscription has little to nothing to do with meaning, but everything to do with communicating” (p.18-19).

Exscription is a challenge to any archive strategy but it is necessary in any unlearning setting. Because, as Chun points out, “... memory in other words is always ubiquitous: penetrating everything and everywhere and also fundamentally collective and individuating because it is habitual” (p.21-22).

### **Curating silent agencies: The sonic gaps of unlearning**

From this collective and habitual ubiquitous situatedness of unlearning, we want to look closer at examples of ways to navigate instances of dealing with global crises. We propose that this should occupy an ever-increasing area of curatorial focus and production. The investigation into such ‘silent agencies’ that resonate in and surround us is a study into the structures and framings of our ability to conduct critical thinking. In the following, ‘silent agencies’ refers specifically to the effects of the idea of a post-human world, and how artistic practices may be understood as modes of witnessing those effects as well as the sensing of them. Moreover, it refers to a philosophical inquiry into the epistemological positioning of critical academic reflection on an unsustainable situation of crisis, and the speculative situation of ‘a world without humans’. Bruno Latour writes about the embarrassing silence from researchers on the topic of crisis, and the need to imagine and express different paths than the existing ones (Latour 2017, 67).

The question we are raising here is how curatorial and artistic structures of artistic and curatorial behaviour may be operationalised into real transformations of institutional and cultural unlearning. Curating, we propose, should address the situation and challenge of silent agencies from different perspectives. It is possible to detect a wider set of problems facing curatorial work in the field of sound practices, ranging from the environmental and institutional impact of technological mediation to reflections on ways in which embodied and situated knowledge may emerge from artistic work beyond the conventional enframings of mainstream digital platforms and cultural industry.

A crisis alters our relation to the world, which is to say that it brings about an acute awareness of the vulnerability of our position as artistic or curatorial researchers, as well as the need for para-academic and para-curatorial practices. These should address matters of concern in the relation between humans and our Umwelt and aim at pointing towards issues that need attention since they impact the whole planet beyond local urgencies, as Latour accentuates “...that which would possibly be nothing, but a passing crisis is being transformed in a profound alteration of our relation to the world” (2017, 9).

How may academic research address or operationalise these altered relations to the world that Latour addresses in this quote? We need para-curatorial, para artistic, and para-academic reflections and strategies to, at least, witness the alterations and how they are embodied, experienced. And we need to attend to (and question) that which Timothy Morton (2013, 65) names ‘interobjectivity’, the state of knowledge where “nothing is ever experienced directly, but only as mediated through other entities in some shared sensual space.” From this premise, Morton proposes ‘hyperobjects’ as the harbingers of a replacement aesthetics where a general state of uncertainty is reflected in the weaknesses, asymmetry, and hypocrisy in the general idea of ‘an object’ which is set in nature and a world we think we know so well. On the contrary, Morton asserts that “the overall aesthetic ‘feel’ of the time of hyperobjects is a sense of the asymmetry between the infinite powers of cognition and the infinite being of things.” (op.cit., 78) The world may very well proceed ‘without us’ in a future not so far away.

Recognising the urgency in the work into the sensibilities of the asymmetric and hypocrisy of - essentially - human practices and the (missing) relations to an interobjectivity, we are proposing to activate sound as a ‘hyper object’ of curatorial research seeking to resonate and evidence some level of altered relations - not only to the world of hyperobjects, but to the ways we may think about those relations beyond raw and aggressive mediation and digital enframings, approaching posthumanity. Sound, it seems, is particularly good at mediating the interwoven quality of surroundings, oscillating between patterns of nonhuman and human ontologies as part of ‘real’ agencies. During the COVID-19 lockdown, because we were able to hear each other and other things that were otherwise blurred or hidden behind the noises of a modern culture, we were made acutely aware of each other as part of a human Umwelt. However, we were also able to imagine a ‘world without us’, a completely non-human silent agency.

All this calls for (re)breathing in possible gaps and failures, and an enhanced focus on silent agencies as a mode of transforming the way we operationalise artistic and curatorial practices in unlearning the habits that engenders ecological crisis.

### Ecologies of Crisis

This and the following section draws on the introduction to the special issue on Silent Agencies at Seismograf, edited by Morten Søndergaard and Laura Beloff (2020)

On the whole, the natural environment has increasingly been the focus of contemporary artists during the last decade. For example, there has been a visible boost in artistic practices that deal with the natural environment, biology and biotechnology. One can observe the same in the area of sound art.

An example of such a sound work is Kalle Laar's sound art project *Calling the Glacier*. By calling a telephone number, you hear the sounds of a 'living glacier' over the course of the seasons (Laar, 2017). This work brings attention to the otherwise silent agency of melting, shrinking and disappearing of the planet's glaciers caused by the warming climate.

Environmental scientist Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) documented the impact of pesticides on our environment. "There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example - where had they gone? [...] only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh". Responding to the silence Carson describes, the sound artist AGF (aka Antye Greie) composed a multi-channel piece *INDRI indri*, which represents a walk through a sonic forest based on field recordings of extinct animals. The piece imagines a nature that once was, but no longer exists.

The increasing silence in our environment is also a topic of the work *The Extinction Gong* by Crystelle Vu and Julian Oliver. The work is constructed from a Chinese gong that beats every 19 minutes - the frequency that one more species becomes extinct.

These artworks are created in a specific context, situation, and time of unlearning. They address the gaps that the human-made influence on the planet as a large-scale unlearning system reflecting disappearance and loss through silence. They are contextualising silent agencies.

### Conclusions

In learning-situations, something can be done that could not be done before. We are mostly dominated by attempts of taking away our freedom to perform and therefore the very act of producing and constructing framings and platforms for performing with, in, through technologies is really where the real value and power lies in the performative act of unlearning.

Unlearning ties in with learning, maybe not as two sides of the same coin, but as two perspectives enabling reimaginings and - as I am claiming also - curating as an unlearning and intersubjectification strategy for asking critical questions about the state of the world and us humans in it.

How does media art enter this equation? Something that possibly can facilitate some unlearning. Displays the contradictions that we need to navigate a memory system. Media art is navigating gaps on various levels. Resonating the gaps of the crisis of representation. Unlearning could be a process that helps us create those gaps. Media art was all about unlearning media. Unlearning art.

In this vein, we call for a rethinking of archiving. Updating what we know. We do not unlearn everything but correct what we already know. We should work on changing assumptions. Curating is an instance where those matters of concern with media art situated in a structure global ecological crisis are performing gaps and uncertainties in, through, and with technologies. As silent agencies.

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## **MEDIA ART AS A MEMORY SYSTEM**

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## REIMAGINING PEDAGOGIES

### Nomadology: Radically transforming creative pedagogies or how to teach unlearning through unteaching

#### Mark Ingham

Mark Ingham is an educator, artist, and researcher. His creative pedagogical enquiries are entangled encounters with memory, rhizomatic learning theories, and fuzzy narratives. Reader in Critical and Nomadic Pedagogies, National Teaching Fellow. Co-Chair of UAL's Professoriate, and SHEFA, co-founder of UAL's Experimental Pedagogies Research Group.

#### Prologue

My contribution to the round table, *Reimagining Pedagogies*, asked the question: How do we reimagine the multiple relationships between the arts and education if we always start from what we already know and what we think is expected of us? In this paper I will propose, in some speculative semi-fictional stories, that we need to radically change the way we teach and learn in our creative universities. This can only be achieved by radically reimagining and deterritorialising our pedagogies. This means that if we want to unlearn then we also should know how to unteach.

I want to call for a future that includes assemblages I am calling 'Critical Creative Universities' (CCUs). Driven in part by the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, my proposed CCUs will embark on journeys that show what an innovative pedagogical model based on the principles of nomadology and rhizomatic thinking might look like. I will show how these institutions can reimagine their campuses as rhizomatic learning hubs. Each building, each room, even each individual can be seen as a node, ripe with potential for knowledge creation and transmission. No longer bound by the four walls of a classroom, learning happens everywhere and at all times, as students and faculty alike engage in a constant exchange of ideas and perspectives.

This learning paradigm is nomadic, taking inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari's ideas on nomadology from their joint 1980 book *A Thousand Plateaus*. They show how nomadology embraces the

notion of constant movement and fluidity, a stark contrast to the static nature of some of our conventional education. Students in this world are no longer tethered to a single field of study but are encouraged to traverse across disciplines, gathering knowledge as a nomad would gather resources. This nomadic, rhizomatic structure cultivates an education system teeming with hope, love and joy. Learning is an act of discovery and exploration, not rote memorisation and regurgitation. Instead of competition, collaboration thrives as everyone learns from and with each other. Knowledge is seen not as a scarce resource hoarded by the few, but as an abundant, shared wealth. In some parts of academia and beyond, these ideas are already blossoming and are starting to be put into practice. It is how we propagate these ideas, so they flourish and become a more creative and experimental way of teaching and learning, that this paper explores.

The imagined transformation to these Critical Creative Universities may seem revolutionary, a complete reimagining of what education could be, but I argue that this is one way forward so that we can liberate ourselves from the striated structures learners often have to endure. Their aim is to show us that the realm of knowledge is not neatly structured like a tree of wisdom but a wild, interconnected rhizome, not a territory to be conquered, but a nomadic landscape to be explored. In their pursuit of hopeful and joyful educational transformations, the CCUs dare to think differently, to become wildly nomadic, and in doing so, they sow the seeds of a future where learning is not a chore, but a celebration of the infinite potentialities of the human mind.

The texts below are a series of stories that imagine a world where education is freed from its external and internal constraints. Evolving from the 'striated' spaces it now often occupies to the 'smooth' spaces of a Rhizomatic University inhabited by Nomadic Learners. This all may seem utopian and a fantasy, but unless we can show that there are better ways of learning critically and creatively then there is no hope for change in our world. The same mistakes will be made. There will be rigidity rather than fluidity, exclusivity rather than inclusivity, acceptance rather than curiosity, despair rather than joy, hate rather than love. If we do not imagine a better future, we will always travel in the direction given to us. I try to start in the middle of things, as they are today, and go where the lines of flight might take us.

## **Speculative Magic Realist stories of the Possibility of Critical Creative Universities**

### **Scene 1 - Casting questions into networks as thrown stones ripple water**

In the heart of a city that sprawled like a living organism, there were places that crackled with a peculiar pulse. These were the Critical Creative Universities (CCU), realms where the architecture of learning was not constructed of bricks and mortar, but of connections and experiences, a space that existed in the potential of every moment. These CCUs were not found on any map; their coordinates were inscribed in the minds of those who sought it. They were places that eschewed the striated spaces of conventional institutions for the smooth, unbounded spaces of the rhizome. Here, corridors of thought wound through the air like vines, and ideas bloomed like wildflowers in an eternal spring.

At these CCUs, the traditional roles of teacher and student had dissolved into the collaborative identities of Nomadic Learners. All taught, all learned. These learners were a diverse tapestry of beings, not just humans but post human entities, AI tutors with empathy algorithms, cyborg scholars with libraries etched into their circuitry, and virtual reality classrooms that could simulate the birth of stars or the inner workings of a poem. Entangled with many messy experimental spaces that were forever evolving depending on who gathered in them and not governed by a set curriculum.

Nomadic Learners gathered in shifting assemblies that were called into being by mutual curiosity rather than timetables. A learner would cast a question into the network like a stone across water, and the ripples would draw others to the emerging conclave. Together, they would traverse disciplines, their paths tangling and untangling, as they unlearned just as much as they learned, shedding old skins of knowledge to find what lay beneath.

### **Scene 2 - Unseminars**

In the CCUs, such conclaves were called unseminars. It was here that learners gathered to unteach - to strip away the layers of preconceived notions and pedagogical dogma. The unseminars were held in spaces with walls that pulsed with a soft light, each pulse a question from the vast repository of more than human post-human inquiry. The physical and the digital entwined seamlessly. The distances between the learners were inconsequential. Learners would enter the unseminars with a willingness to be lost,

to wander the cognitive and vibrant mattered landscapes without a set destination. They became unguided and went through the art of problem-making, of seeing the world not as a matrix of answers but a horizon of mysteries. It was in one such unseminar that Akina, a young learner with a galaxy of ideas swirling in their eyes, proposed a journey through the concept of time. The walls shimmered, and the learners found themselves standing at the edge of a temporal river, its waters flowing in spirals and eddies. They dipped their hands into the stream, feeling the cool currents of past and future converge in the present.

As they journeyed, they encountered the philosophers of old, not as statues to be revered, but as fellow travellers with whom they could converse, critique and topple occasionally. They debated with bell hooks in a grove that grew from her own musings, danced with Bayo Akomolafe under a moon that laughed with joy, and sculpted with Louise Bourgeois in an art studio where matter vibrated the music of the spheres.

The unseminars did not end when the learners left the room; they merely dispersed into smaller nodes, each learner carrying a fragment of the experience, a seed of the rhizome that would sprout in unexpected places. The CCU was a testament to the boundless nature of minds, a place that celebrated the joy of learning as an act of creation. And so, the CCUs spun their stories, tapestries of speculative magic realism that wove together the possible and the imagined. It was an education in hope, in the belief that the act of learning could be as natural as breathing and as vital as a heartbeat.

### **Scene 3 - Maps to chart the constellations of thought**

In the CCUs, the future was not a destination but a creation, an ever-unfolding narrative that each Nomadic Learner co-authored, a story of a world that could be, if only we dared to unlearn the confines of the past and unteach the certainties that held us captive. It was a place of possibility, where education was not a service but a celebration, not an obligation but an adventure. And in this story, we are all invited to become the nomads of our own infinite learning.

At the CCUs, the arts and education danced in a delicate, ever-evolving symbiosis. Ceilings dripped with the vines of creativity, and walls pulsed with the vibrant colours of new ideas. Professors and students alike wandered, not lost but seeking, their minds alight with the fire of unlearning, of knowing that the path of knowledge

was a journey without end. These were places where classrooms had no doors, only thresholds of experiences, where the line between teacher and learner was not just blurred but erased. Learning was not confined to the ticking of a clock but was as boundless as the sky above, for the sky was their true canopy. In this land of intellectual nomads, the very concept of a curriculum was a relic; instead, learning was a living entity, wild and free.

Learners, as everybody was called in these CCUs, were a kaleidoscope of cultures and ideas, who drifted from one learning experience to another, their paths crossing and recrossing, weaving a tapestry of shared knowledge. They delved into mathematics with the same fervour as philosophy, treating each equation as a poem, every philosophical argument as a theorem. Art was not merely to be created or critiqued but lived and breathed, its principles applied to every subject, turning each lesson into a line of flight. In the realm of the CCUs, knowledge was not a fortress to be besieged but a river to be navigated, its currents strong with the power of possibility. They drew maps not to define territories but to chart the constellations of thought that emerged from their collective minds. The university was not just an institution but a state of being, where learning was an act of becoming, an odyssey without a destination.

As suns set on this rhizomatic expanse, the students gathered, not to graduate, for there were no endings here, only new beginnings. They shared stories of their intellectual wanderings, their voices a chorus of hope and transformation. In the twilight of their gathering, they knew that they were not just part of a university but of a movement, a seismic shift in the very essence of education. The CCUs stood as a beacon, a radical departure from the linear paths of old. It was a testament to the untamed wilderness of the mind, a celebration of the nomadic spirit within us all, forever teaching the art of unteaching, forever learning the craft of unlearning.

### **Scene 4 - The wild frontiers of imagination**

Nomadology: Radically - Transforming Creative Pedagogies, or how to teach unlearning through unteaching. It unfolded with a mysterious puzzle - an enigmatic riddle left in the wake of the university's transformation. The riddle, a series of cryptic symbols and allusions, hinted at a radical shift in the paradigm of learning, a code that needed deciphering to unlock the full potential of this new educational model.

Enter our story the Nomadic Detective Agency-Assemblage (NDA-A), known for their unorthodox methods and keen detective

skills. The NDA-A was not your typical academic (there were at least 27 of them assembled at all times). They saw the university as an organism, a living entity that breathed knowledge through its network of learners. The riddle piqued their curiosity, and they knew that solving it could reveal the true essence of the CCU's post human approach. As the NDA-A delved into their investigation, they discovered that each symbol in the riddle corresponded to a different assemblage. The first symbol led them to an impromptu performance art piece in the park, where students expressed the raw emotions of human experience without words. The second took them to a biology lab, where synthetic life forms were created, blurring the lines between the organic and the artificial.

The riddle was not just a puzzle to be solved but a journey through the rhizomatic structure of the university. The NDA-A realised that the riddle was teaching them to think like the nomads of knowledge the CCU encouraged its students to become.

They traversed from assemblage to assemblage, unseminar to unseminar, their paths intertwining with those of the learners who were themselves embodiments of nomadology. Each clue unravelled a part of the CCU's philosophy, showing the NDA-A that learning was an act of connectivity, a series of encounters that broke down the walls of traditional pedagogies. They saw students not just learning about robotics, but collaborating with the machines they built, teaching and being taught in a reciprocal dance.

The NDA-A stood before the last symbol, which brought them to one intensity of the university. It was here that the riddle's solution lay bare, a holographic projection of the CCU's network, a dazzling constellation of knowledge points that represented every learner, every idea. The riddle, NDA-A understood, was the CCU itself, a testament to the journey of learning. It was an invitation to see education not as a destination but as a voyage without end. The CCU didn't impart knowledge; it was a space where ideas roamed free and where the mind could wander into the wild frontiers of imagination.

This story, *Nomadology: Radically - Transforming Creative Pedagogies* or how to teach unlearning through unteaching, is a detective tale unlike any other, where the mystery solved is not one of crime, but one of understanding. Its narrative encapsulates the CCU's daring challenge to reimagine what it means to learn, to teach, and to be a more-than-human post-human in a world where the only constant is change.

### **Epilogue**

In these speculative stories, the CCUs are microcosms of a world unshackled from the constraints of convention, a testament to what education could become when freed from the chains of the mundane. Here, learning is not just an accumulation of facts, but an act of becoming, an ever-evolving journey of self-discovery and communal growth.

As the sun set on this radical experiment, the golden light cast long shadows across the universities, mazes of potential, crucibles of creation. The learners and even the buildings themselves, pulsed with the vibrant energy of a new era. For in this world, the act of learning was a celebration, an exploration of the boundless landscapes of the mind. And as the stars emerged, shining like beacons in the night, they whispered of a future where education was a wild, joyous voyage across the nomadic terrain of more-than-human, post-human potential.



## Reimagining Futures: Flipping Classrooms for Enhanced Engagement

### Gan Sheuo Hui

Gan Sheuo Hui is a lecturer at the Putnam School of Film and Animation, LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore. Holding a PhD in Human and Environmental Studies (Animation Studies) from Kyoto University, Japan (2008), she has widely published in English and Japanese. Her current book project is on Japanese animation directors.

Today, I am excited to share three stories from my undergraduate classrooms that highlight the effectiveness of flipped classrooms in enhancing engagement.

I envision a transformative future for art education - particularly in the field of filmic arts. I see a future where classrooms evolve beyond traditional teaching methods that emphasise content delivery, into dynamic spaces that are truly driven by students. Central to this reimagined educational landscape is the 'flipped classroom', a pedagogical approach that places students at the forefront, encouraging active participation and collaborative exploration.

A flipped classroom takes a student-centric approach where learners engage with new content in independent study, often at home, through readings or instructional videos. This inversion of the traditional model transforms class time into an opportunity for students to engage in group activities, discussions, and problem solving, thus learning to question and present their understanding. These activities enhance student engagement and comprehension: by shifting content acquisition outside of the classroom, we free up valuable in-class time for deeper exploration, real-world application, and critical reflection on the future significance of the topic. In 'learning by teaching', students benefit from stepping into the teacher's role, offering fresh perspectives to their peers. This not only enriches peer-to-peer interactions but also creates an educational environment distinct from traditional methods. In this setting, the teacher becomes a facilitator, providing immediate and constructive feedback that directly addresses and builds upon the students' discussions and shared insights, thereby nurturing a learning process that is deeply rooted in the students' existing

knowledge and understanding - a principle that aligns with the constructivist theory.

### **Peer-teaching the histories of world cinema**

As we delve into the stories that illuminate the flipped classroom's impact, let's begin with Story 1, where students were engaged in creating mind maps on world cinema. This exercise involved 15 first-semester students who were grouped according to their preference (with the understanding that larger groups would contribute proportionately more work). They took on the challenge of researching and presenting the history of world cinema to their peers, delving into diverse historical film movements such as Soviet silent cinema and German expressionism. Each group was responsible for one movement, using a basic preparation package that included resources from previous years, readings, and films, all available on our learning platform. Their 45-90-minute presentations were not just lectures, but interactive sessions featuring PowerPoint slides, student-designed quizzes, and open-ended questions that facilitated lively class discussions.

The culmination of these efforts was a special session at the semester's end. Students revisited all their materials and discussions to refine their mind maps from a broader perspective. It's noteworthy that this entire class was facilitated by two students, highlighting the flipped classroom's potential to go beyond mere retention of information. The aim was to foster an analytical mindset, encouraging students to identify commonalities and differences across film movements, discern valuable methodologies, and critically evaluate the evolution of 'creativity' from the 1940s to the 2020s. This approach not only deepened their understanding of cinematic narratives but also equipped them with insights applicable to future creative endeavours.

Furthermore, by entrusting students with the responsibility of teaching their peers, they naturally gravitated towards curating content that is engaging and relevant to their age group. This 'learning by teaching' method allows students to filter and present information in a way that resonates more strongly with their peers from the same age group, potentially leading to a more profound and meaningful understanding of the material. This nuanced approach to learning not only informs their creative projects but also fosters a sense of ownership and personal connection to the subject matter, which is often less pronounced in traditional teacher-led instruction.

### **Breaking the rules of Dogme 95**

In our second story, we witness a similar exercise conducted by a different group of first-year students in a more recent flipped classroom setting. Tasked with exploring the Dogme 95 film movement, one student group adopted an inventive approach. They created a brief video clip intentionally breaking the 10 rules of Dogme 95 to complement their traditional PowerPoint presentation. The image displayed on the screen was a still from this video. This presentation particularly resonated with their classmates, partly due to the collaborative nature of its creation. The entire learning journey, from preparation to execution, was marked by active participation and interactivity. Notably, the presenting group involved their peers in the preparation process well before the presentation day. They engaged in discussions and brainstorming ways to creatively challenge them in their video project. This collaborative effort exemplifies active and creative learning at its best. Through their work to present Dogme 95, the students crafted an experience that was not only informative and humorous but also exceptionally engaging. Instead of merely memorising the rules of Dogme 95, the students internalised them through performance and participation, making the entire process memorable and impactful.

### **Presenting through puppetry**

Story 3 unfolds within a flipped classroom experience involving our second-year students. For the module 'Form and Contents in Asian Films and Animation', two students performed a puppet presentation on the topic of animation auteurship. This imaginative approach involved the students reenacting and reimagining a conversation between the esteemed animation masters, Miyazaki Hayao and Takahata Isao. Through their dialogue, they probed deeply into the essence of what it means to be an author in the realm of commercial animation.

The standout feature of this presentation was the students' choice to use puppetry, which brought a dynamic element to their delivery. By weaving real voices and live performance, they broke down the content into digestible portions, effectively holding their peers' attention. This was particularly beneficial for those who might find it challenging to stay engaged with longer, more conventional presentations. The puppetry added a layer of entertainment and memorability to the educational content, demonstrating the diverse possibilities within a flipped classroom to cater to different learning preferences and to animate discussions with creativity.

### Learning by teaching

These three stories collectively illuminate the multifaceted nature of flipped classroom pedagogy, all unified by the 'learning by teaching' philosophy. In Story 1, students crafted a comprehensive mind map of world cinema, leading discussions that traversed the history of film and projected its future, thus seamlessly bridging the past, present, and future. Story 2 showcased an inventive teaching video inspired by Dogme 95. Here, the use of interactive presentation techniques and video not only stimulated discussion but also fostered emotional involvement, proving to be a vital component of the learning experience. Moving to Story 3, the hypothetical discourse crafted through puppetry stands out. This creative method made historical and theoretical concepts tangible and digestible. Additionally, the role-playing aspect of this story encouraged students to step into the shoes of industry experts, deepening their understanding through embodiment and performance.

In summary, these 'learning by teaching' experiences foster a culture of collaborative dialogue that enriches the educational environment. We see a prime example of this in the student group exploring Dogme 95. The students generated a thought-provoking series of questions, such as 'Has the animation industry become overly commercialised?' and 'How can we, as creators, break free from a heavily commercialised system to explore experimental and radical ideas and techniques?' They also contemplated the reliance of animators on technology and special effects, questioning whether this might overshadow storytelling elements, and debated whether animation necessarily requires a narrative, or can stand alone as a purely visual art form. These cognitive tasks not only actively engaged their peers but also spurred an in-depth conversation, demonstrating the power of student-led inquiry in stimulating intellectual engagement and critical discourse.

There are additional observations that merit attention. Notably, the partly unexpected learning outcomes - the discovery of insights that were neither expected nor planned. Such outcomes arise spontaneously through the interactions between presenters and their peers, with each classroom yielding unique results. While these outcomes cannot be precisely predicted or orchestrated, their occurrence can be inspiring. Admittedly, the 'learning by teaching' method cannot be fully planned and executed, and one occasionally faces unexpected situations that require a degree of flexibility. The preparatory meetings between presenters and educators, though time-intensive, are personal, memorable, targeted - they are anything

but generic or assumptive. What I wish to emphasise is that learning is always a work in progress, a dynamic process between the educator and the learners, and it is this process we must value and nurture.

As we gather under the banner of UNLEARNING REALITIES, our panel on Reimagining Pedagogies is, for me, a reaffirming nod to the organic essence of education - the timeless interaction between educator and learner. This fundamental connection, though hard to quantify, is the true heart of innovation in our field. It lies not in the glittering promise of the latest gadgetry, but in the thoughtful adaptation of teaching practices that resonate with the lived experiences of our students. As we reimagine the future of education, we must not simply chase the allure of the new for its own sake. We should embrace a form of innovation that is as enduring as it is essential, one that cultivates the grounds of curiosity and intellect.

### **Structured reflections: A guided exploration of flipped pedagogy**

I would like to leave you with a set of structured reflections that I have developed from my experiences. These are intended to serve as a guideline for fellow educators who are keen to delve into the flipped classroom methodology. I trust they will provide a solid starting point for those looking to enrich their teaching strategies with this approach.

Notice and reflect on:

1. how the student presenters fostered peer engagement during their presentation in the flipped classroom setting.
2. the innovative ways in which the student presenters interacted with their peers.
3. the specific roles or interactive tasks designed by the student presenters for the peers during the presentation.
4. the division of time between peer participation and the formal presentation by the student presenters in the flipped classroom's structure.
5. the integration of collaborative activities or group tasks into the presentation by the student presenters for peer interaction.

6. the methods instructors used to track the student presenters' progress in this flipped setting and assess the overall outcome.
7. the inclusion of a segment dedicated to peer discussions or reflections prompted by the student presenters.
8. the role of instructors during discussions: directive or passive, allowing peers to lead the conversation initiated by the student presenters.
9. the ways peers documented or consolidated the knowledge shared during the presentation by the student presenters (e.g., collaborative mind maps, shared digital notes, group discussions, etc.).
10. the elements introduced by the student presenters that peers can leverage for real-world applications or future projects from this flipped classroom experience.

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## Daring to Unlearn

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To truly understand reality, we must be willing to unlearn what we think, we know, and open-up to new ideas and ways of seeing, reflecting, and teaching. Unlearning is a highly creative process that offers structured or even naive ways to escape from thinking and understanding. Here the strength of art and design comes in: they imagine scenarios of alternative futures, whether utopian or dystopian. Artists and designers are willing to challenge assumptions and beliefs in order to embrace new perspectives.

Interculturality is an important aspect of unlearning and understanding reality. By engaging with people from different backgrounds, and embracing the diversity of cultures and perspectives, we broaden our own understanding - and learn alternative ways of unlearning.

A sustainable future is another component of understanding of reality and creating possible futures. Recognising the impact of our actions on the planet and for future generations, unlearning offers options that promote ecological and social well being, balanced life, diverse cultures, and alternative habitats. As learning institutions both: unlearning and reimagine a sustainable future, shall be a focus of our activities, even new study programs.

Bringing together the concepts of unlearning, interculturality, and sustainability, we set up the potential for positive change. By unlearning ways of thinking and embracing diversity, we create a more inclusive and equitable society. By prioritising sustainability, we ensure that future generations have access to the resources they need to thrive. This will be reflected in the artistic disciplines and, later, mirrored into wider society. This is the starting point for an alternative teaching and learning culture.









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