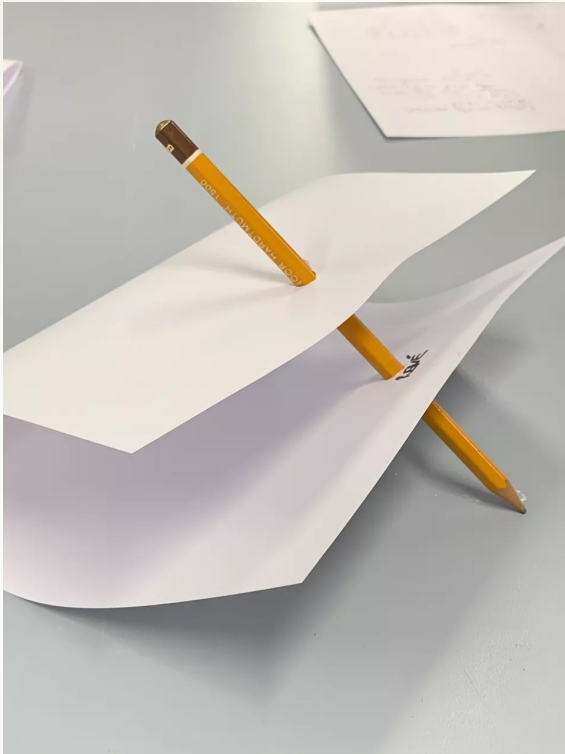




# ***“Who’s in the Room?”***

## ***Crossing cultures, collaborating***



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## *Inspiration: UAL Language-Art Project*

This brings students together in a spirit of curiosity, friendship, and eagerness to learn from one another.

They discuss all things linguistic, and create language-themed art.

<https://www.arts.ac.uk/study-at-ual/language-centre/language-art-project>



*The March of Letters* by Nibras Al-Salman  
(Language-Art Project 2021)



## *What is it?*

A pilot project at UAL: Intercultural Communications Training + MA Fine Art (Year One)

**Format:** 2.5 days of workshops in the Autumn term (spread through Sept/ Oct/ Nov). Timetabled into the course schedule.

### **Rationale:**

- To get a sense of “who’s in the room.”
- Adventures in identity, culture, language, understanding and (mis-)interpretation.





# *Who was actually in the room?*

- **MA Fine Art (Year One).** Over 30 students, mixed nationalities.
- **Facilitators:** Intercultural Communications Trainer; MA Fine Art course leader; postgraduate ambassador.

(Also: a MAFA lecturer; two Year Two students.)







# *Session One: What's in a name?*

## **Padlet activity: Juliet versus Tony**

Karen Harris • 1m

### **What's in a name?**

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet." This is how Juliet tells Romeo that a name is nothing but a name; it's just an empty convention that has no deeper significance. Do you agree...? Post your thoughts here.

Karen Harris 1m

**Here's another perspective...**



West Side Story (3/10) Movie  
CLIP - Maria (1961) HD

West Side Story is a musical update of Romeo and Juliet, set in 1950s New York. In this clip, Tony has fallen in love with the name Maria - because of the woman he's just met...

# + *Sample responses...*

[https://artslondon.padlet.org/kharris208/name\\_responses](https://artslondon.padlet.org/kharris208/name_responses)

As an adult, most people refer to me as "Jodi" (my middle name) but "Tranashea" (pronounced tran-ay-she-uh) is my first name. Up until I went to uni most ppl called me "Tranashea" but I found that when I moved out of my community of Black Americans, it was often mispronounced or met with sighs of exhaustion with little effort to learn it's pronunciation. Most people responded from a place of Juliet's perspective upon introducing myself asking "Is there anything else I can call you?" in exasperation.

Names are a point of reference and often enmeshed to aspects of our identity that we may want to feel closer to or further from, especially as a trans person changing my name has allowed me to come home to myself in a way that can be affirmed every time someone addresses me



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Add comment

Names are like territory, they define a space that you inhabit, but just like territory they can change, shift, transform. The boundaries might change but the notion of a container remains.



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Add comment

Perhaps a code name for a person, Chinese names often have a certain meaning and indicate certain wishes. Some names contain the place, time or natural phenomenon of birth, such as "jing", "morning", "winter" and "snow". Some names indicate a wish to have certain virtues, such as "loyalty, righteousness, courtesy and trust". Some names indicate a wish for health, longevity and happiness, such as "Jian, Shou, Song, Fu".



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Add comment

The name Agata was popularised by the 3rd century martyr. Growing up in post communist Poland definitely felt uneasy and rather challenging. As a nation we developed a certain type of martyrology and somehow my name reflects the cultural connection with my culture and relates to the martyr who's story was repeated during my early years.



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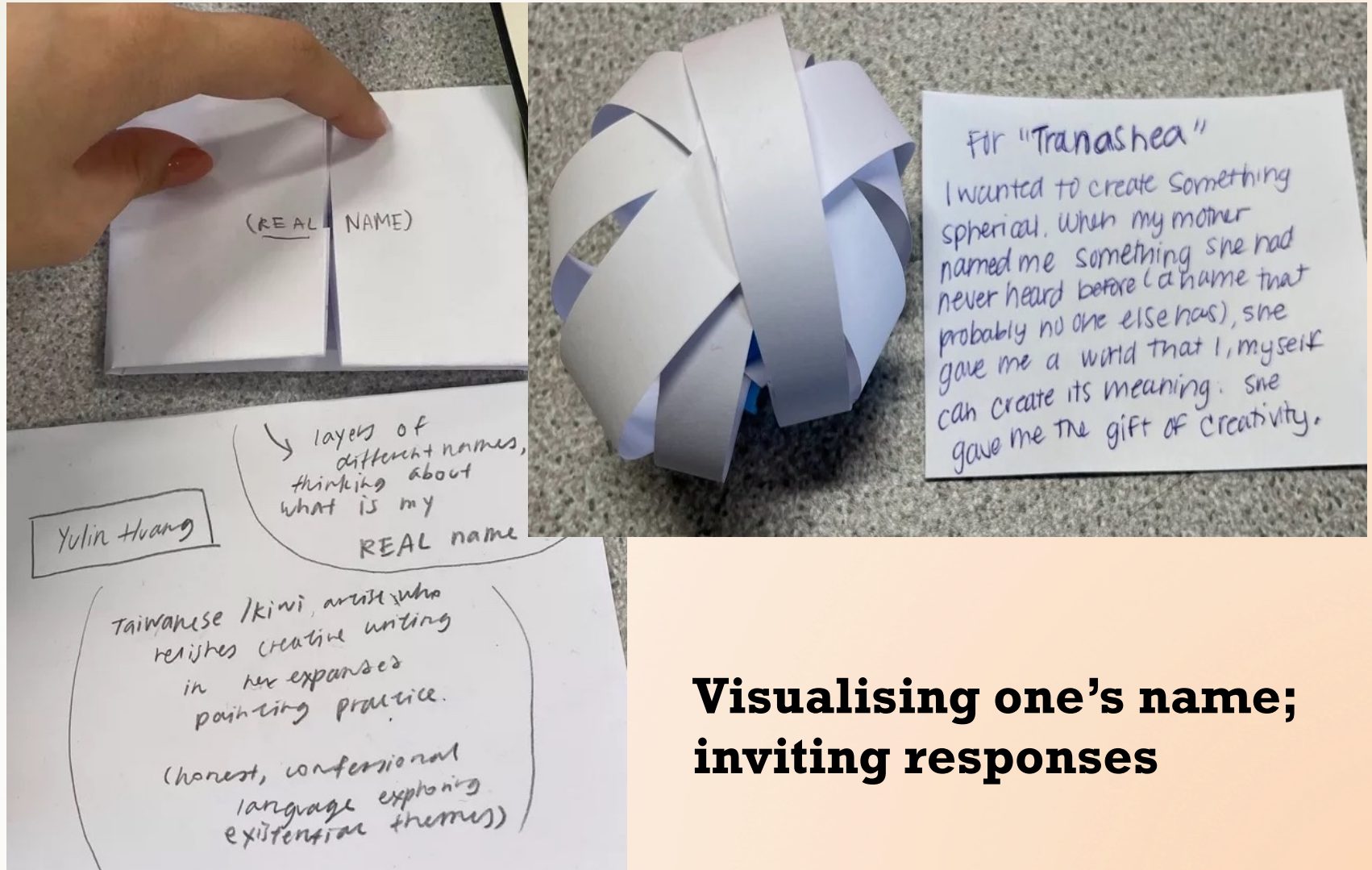
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# + *Name visualisations*



**Visualising one's name;  
inviting responses**

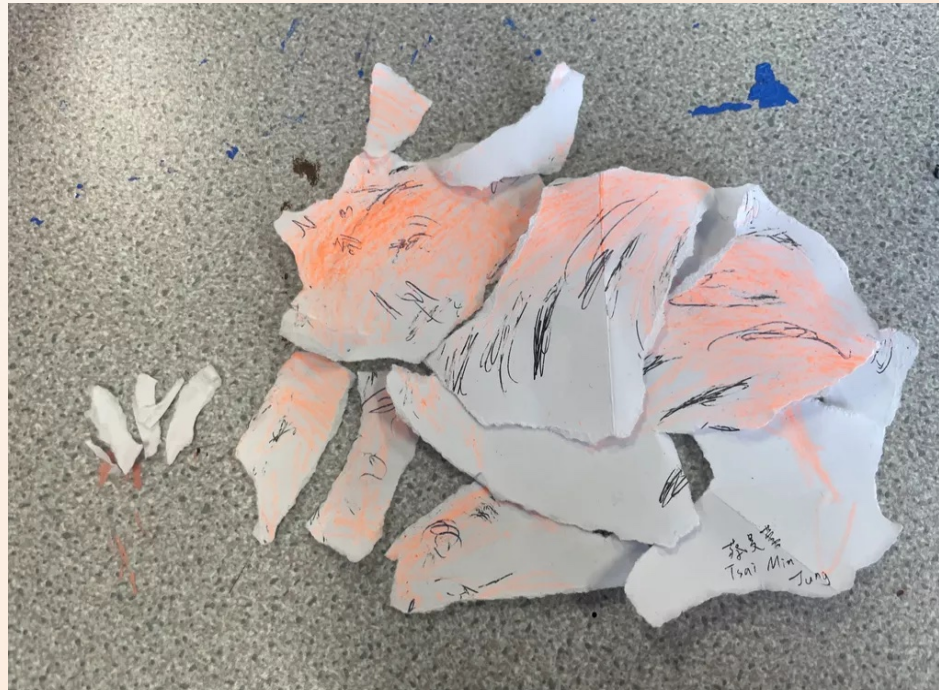




## *Another name visualisation*

蔡旻蓉 Tsai Min Jung(Alice)

My name is 蔡旻蓉 Tsai Min Jung (Alice), which is my parents' expectation and blessings for me. It's quite feminine since there are two “艸” in my name, which means grass in Chinese. I think they expect me to be a good girl as tame as a herbivore, but I actually want to be a tiger, so I draw a tiger and shredded it in pieces, and then putting it back together into a rabbit eating grass.



# + *Session One: Verdict*

*“Thanks so much for yesterday’s session. There was such good energy in the room!”*

*I think Marc and I enjoyed very much being able to stand back a little and see the group working in this way and how you facilitated the discussions.”*

Erika Tan, course leader.



## Session Two a) Language adventures

Discussing language and:

- perception vs. reality
- the liminal zone of understanding/not understanding
- pleasures and challenges.



*An Introduction to Square Word Calligraphy by Xu Bing (1994-6)*



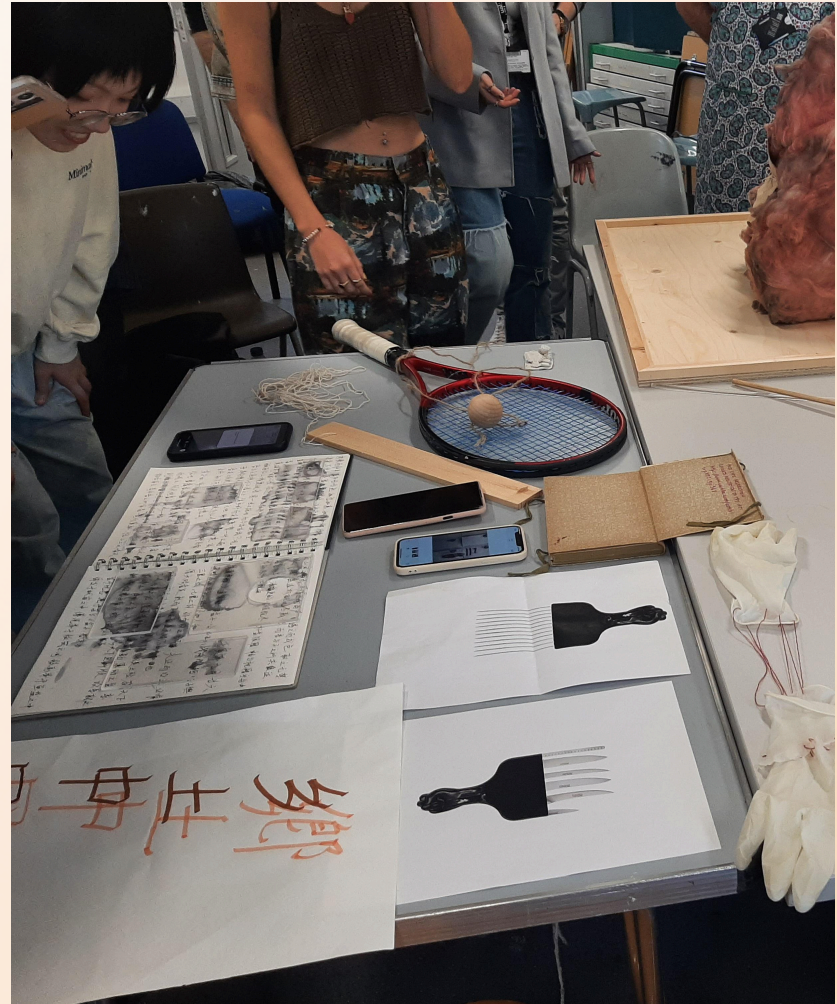


## *Session Two b) Object analysis*

**“There’s no such thing  
as a boring object!”**

This experiment shows  
how different layers of  
meaning can co-exist.

Each individual brings  
a unique interpretation,  
creating a shimmering  
multidimensional  
richness.





## *Session Three: The best laid plans...*

What *should* have happened:

-Playfulness with language: **experimental poetry**

- Take a phrase/ sentence (just a few words).
- Change the emotions by playing with its punctuation and creating the rest of the verse around it.
- To sound joyful, sad, doubtful, reflective, etc.
- Compare/ contrast/ combine.

**But** it didn't happen. Unforeseen circumstances!





## So instead...

An alumna and a Year Two student gave talks on their own language-based artwork.

*“I wander through passing conversations that are sitting in the atmosphere.”* –Ellie Day, Yr 2 student.



*As Long As I Can Dance* by Ellie Day (2022)

<https://elliedayart.wixsite.com/website/>



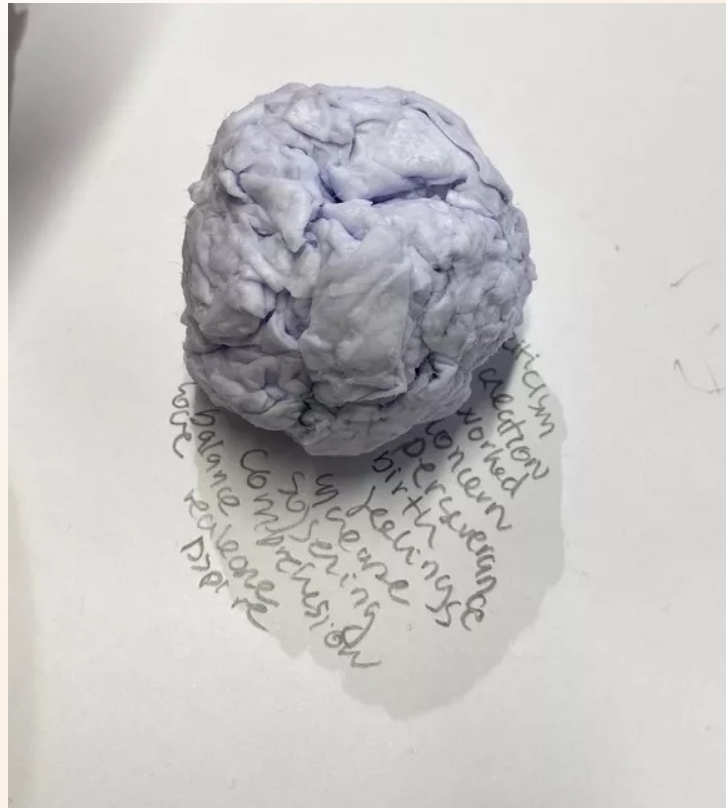


## *Reflections and future considerations*

- Cohort? (Undergrad vs. postgrad/ subject discipline...?)
- Timetabling constraints?
- Temptation to overpack the session?
- Spoken vs. non-spoken communication (e.g. Padlet)

Ultimately, “Who’s in the Room?” is about using language and storytelling to surmount barriers.

+ *Thank you for listening!*



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