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GUEST EDITOR: ANTHONY FARIS



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Agile Pedagogies: Cultivating Equity and Community through Remote Teaching with Art

By Roksana Filipowska and Liliana Milkova

Introduction

The Yale University Art Gallery's encyclopedic collection, exhibition spaces, and object study classrooms offer a rich environment for teaching, study, and research. Each year, the Gallery welcomes hundreds of class visits from departments and schools across campus and other academic institutions. This year, the Gallery's mid-March closure due to COVID-19 and Yale's concurrent shift to online instruction necessitated a swift transition to digital curricular engagement. As educators, we approached the impossibility of an in-person encounter with objects by adapting our teaching methods to the new digital conditions. In this paper, we draw on our collaboration with Yale's Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning to reflect on the unexpected opportunities we found within this moment of disruption, namely, a certain openness of faculty to branch out of entrenched ways of teaching subject matter and thinking about student learning. We argue that carefully thought-out remote teaching can facilitate the integration of museum pedagogies into the very foundation of course design and can also be leveraged to cultivate both equity and belonging. Linking theory with practice, we share examples of agile pedagogies that have emerged from our use of Zoom as its own teaching medium. Though different from in-person object-based study, these digital pedagogies cultivate close-looking and an awareness of perspective through a remote engagement with art that is applicable to many disciplines.

Background

Zoom Video Communications, Inc., or Zoom, is a communications technology company developed in the United States that provides videotelephony and online chat services through a cloud-based software platform.¹ Since the outbreak of COVID-19, most peer-to-peer interactions across Yale University, including meetings, workshops, and classes, have taken place over Zoom. The Gallery plays an important role in Yale University academics with faculty and students engaging with the collection alongside their classroom study. In the spring, Gallery educators and curators led Zoom sessions for more than 20 courses, but it became clear that museum staff needed to examine their approach to virtual interactions with collections and modify their teaching methods prior to the start of the remote fall 2020 semester.

As educators, it was imperative to adapt our museum pedagogies to Zoom by learning how to optimize the platform and by considering how our work fits within broader discourses on equity and accessibility within remote teaching. Building upon an existing relationship with Yale's Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), we met with our CTL colleagues to brainstorm ways in which we could support one another. We also worked with Yale faculty and graduate students, who were looking for assistance with translating their teaching online. This meeting resulted in a mutually beneficial partnership. Our CTL colleagues invited us to enroll in "The Theory and Practice of Online Teaching," a virtual course on accessibility and equity in remote teaching, and we agreed to offer virtual office hours and workshops for Yale faculty working with CTL to help them prepare for remote teaching in the fall. The summer months before an all-virtual fall semester at Yale presented us with the opportunity to develop Zoom-specific pedagogies and to train Yale faculty from across the humanities and the sciences in weekly online office hours and workshops such as "Art as Primary Text" and "Creativity in the Science Curriculum."

While enrolled in "The Theory and Practice of Online Teaching," we observed two trends that helped us think about how to translate our pedagogies in a way that addressed both the isolation and trauma of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the ongoing epidemic of systemic, institutional, and interpersonal racism within the United States. Research focusing on student retention shows that online learners who feel isolated are more likely to disengage from their studies while those with a greater sense of community with their fellow students and their instructors are more likely to stay engaged in the course and report academic satisfaction.² Simultaneously, researchers examining how different student populations respond to remote course design have found that moderate-structure, or a course design that has a clear structure that also offers options and different modes of engagement, closes the achievement gap between the—often white—students who are primed for university study and the immigrant, black, and first-generation college students who do not experience the same cultural training or privilege.³

1. "Zoom Video Communications, Inc. 2019 Form 10-K Annual Report," in U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (April 8, 2020).

2. See, for instance, Sarah L. Eddy and Kelly A. Hogan, "Getting Under the Hood: How and For Whom Does Increasing Course Structure Work?" in *Life Sciences Education* (2014).

3. See, for instance, Alfred P. Rovall, "Sense of community, perceived cognitive learning, and persistence in asynchronous learning networks" in *Internet and Higher Education* 5 (2002), 319-332.

Surveying the literature, we were struck that remote teaching is most equitable and inclusive when it involves a clearly defined, yet flexible, structure with multiple modes of engagement and the fostering of a community of learners, and that many of our existing pedagogies as museum educators feature these components. As we translated our in-person pedagogies into synchronous remote teaching, we aimed to retain their flexibility and interactivity while also activating the modes of engagement possible over Zoom so that students would encounter options in how to participate and experience themselves as co-creators of knowledge.

Agile Pedagogies

The Gallery's methodology for teaching at the university-level is rooted in inquiry-based visual analysis, which typically starts with an exercise in slow and close looking, allowing students to first familiarize themselves with the work and then make inferences based on the visual and material elements of the art. Collaborative learning, reflection, and connection-making further underlie our teaching practice. We believe that carefully selected artworks can spark broader conceptual links beyond the strictly content-related ones. In this sense, we view the collection as comprising what art historians and educators Jim Harris and Senta German call "agile objects,"⁴ a term they coined to describe artworks and artifacts that open themselves to interrogation from many different disciplinary vantage points. Agile objects have the power to illuminate subjects or issues in different fields of knowledge or practice, not necessarily (or at all) tied to the work's specific artistic, historical, material or temporal contexts. Agile objects can catalyze new ideas and foster deeper learning.

The authors explain:

*We see the starting point for teaching with objects not in the accumulated, existing knowledge they embody but rather in their capacity to submit to new investigation by students to whom that embodied knowledge is either unknown or irrelevant. In short, the object is not a passive receptacle for information but an agile tool for creative thinking and learning.*⁵

In addition to proposing that museum collections are intrinsically agile, German and Harris argue that in order to sustain and deepen the impact of object-based learning at the university level, museum educators must train faculty to use objects imaginatively and in relevant ways. "Agile teachers" will be able "to approach the museum and its contents not from the point of view of the curator or conservator but according to the investigative priorities of their own subject."⁶ Building upon German and Harris's argument, we suggest that agile objects also lend themselves effectively to a wide range of pedagogic methods, including new ones developed for Zoom (and similar online teaching platforms) specifically in response to the abrupt turn to virtual teaching and learning. "Agile pedagogies" – what we call any flexible method designed for maximum benefit from the agility of an object irrespective of the learning setting – have enabled us to continue to integrate the Gallery's collection into Yale curricula despite the physical inaccessibility of our galleries and various study spaces. Our collaborative relationship with faculty has grown stronger, fueled by their desire to reinvent their syllabi for successful student learning online and thus branch outside habitual ways of teaching.

Agile Pedagogies in Practice

We will now discuss two Zoom-specific activities that offer multiple ways of engagement and foster a sense of connection. The activities can be done in one session or during different meetings. Being agile, these activities can be incorporated in sessions lasting from 45 minutes to a three-hour long seminar. In addition to sharing their screen on Zoom, if possible, the

4. Senta German and Jim Harris, "Agile Objects," *Journal of Museum Education*, 42:3 (2017), 248-257. Accessed on October 11, 2020 - <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10598650.2017.1336369.s>

5. *Ibid.* 248.

6. *Ibid.* 249.

facilitator should share a high-resolution image with the class or group so that zooming in will reveal details such as linework, brushstroke, pattern, and texture. The following synchronous exercises are not designed to replace the experience of visiting an art museum and seeing an object in person; these agile pedagogies position Zoom as a teaching platform. Therefore, these practices may complement in-person gallery visits beyond the duration of this health crisis whether in a hybrid, or hyflex, learning environment or in instances where teachers want to continue to engage with art objects after a gallery visit. To illustrate each pedagogical exercise, we will use one artwork – an agile object, which ignites curiosity and resonates with many disciplinary frameworks – from the Gallery’s collection. Mayflower is a sculpture created by the Venezuelan artist Marisol in 1961-1962 (Figure 1). The sculpture comprises a large red vitrine and a series of painted wooden heads organized in a grid of rows and columns and featuring exaggerated eyes, noses, and mouths [Image]. Five additional wooden heads stand on top of the vitrine, distinguished from the others by their separate location and hats. When seen in person, Mayflower stages a face-to-face encounter for the viewer: Marisol’s arrangement of the three-dimensional heads sets up a counterpoint for visitors of various heights and eye levels.

Digital Drawing

Drawing, probably the most common in-gallery activity, is an important and widely applicable pedagogical tool, because it cultivates close looking, observation, embodied thinking, and creativity. Drawing activities in the museum context aim at exploration and discovery, rather than just depiction: when we draw, we see more and more accurately, engaging both sight and touch in the process of visually accessing a given artwork and establishing a personal connection with it.⁷ In order to work with drawing within the limitations of Zoom, we enabled the “annotate” setting prior to the session. To begin the activity, one of us shared our screen to reveal a high-resolution image of a detail of Mayflower that shows a few rows of sculpted heads. We first invited participants to select a face that they found interesting and draw what they observed on a sheet of paper with a pencil or a pen, thereby allowing



Figure 1. Marisol, *Mayflower*, 1961-62. Wood. 190.5 × 104.775 × 28.575 cm (75 × 41 1/4 × 11 1/4 in.) vitrine: 175.26 × 105.41 × 26.04 cm (69 × 41 1/2 × 10 1/4 in.) Yale University Art Gallery, Charles B. Benenson, B.A. 1933, Collection. 2006.52.71. © 2020 Estate of Marisol / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

them to slow down and focus on a detail in order to deepen their observation of and relationship to the work. After a few minutes we asked them to type in the Zoom chat box a word or a phrase to describe the emotion, or expression, of their selected face: the tactility of sketching offered participants a way of feeling their way into the sculpture and relating to it affectively. We read the submissions out loud to highlight the range of emotions in Marisol’s sculpture and to acknowledge and affirm the participant as contributing to the remote learning community.

7. For the most recent scholarship on and examples of drawing activities, see “Drawing in the Museum” in Elliott Kai-Ke, Lissa Latina, and Lilit Sadoyan, *Activity-Based Teaching in the Art Museum* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2020), pp. 114-127.

Next, we activated the “annotate” feature and offered clear directions for participants to find and use this tool on their screens. We invited participants to select a color, and trace the features of the face that they just drew on paper. In instances of large enrollment, we split up the participants alphabetically to either trace the heads, facial features, or hats. Once the participants had completed their task, we invited them to unmute themselves and reflect on the experience. One participant stated that digital drawing invited “paying attention to specific details”; another expressed that drawing “helped [them] look.”⁸ Participants shared that they felt a sense of intimacy with the artwork: one faculty member described the activity as “embodied and tactile” while another said that they started to view the faces in *Mayflower* as playful doubles of everyone on the Zoom call.⁹ We consider digital drawing an agile pedagogy because it is applicable to most artwork images, especially those that feature intricate linework, brushwork, pattern, or interplay of forms or volumes. The exercise enhances observation skills and empowers the participant to make choices while also encouraging community, because one can literally see their contribution within the collective drawing.

In preparing for this exercise, it is important to determine whether digital drawing will contribute to—or interfere with—larger pedagogical goals. In the case of *Mayflower*, the communal activity of digital drawing contributed to a lively pastiche of line and color that heightened Marisol’s interest in caricature and her practice of bringing diverse cultural references into conversation. Before introducing this activity into the remote classroom, facilitators must consider the subject matter of the selected artwork and explore their own biases over which objects lend themselves to digital drawing. An instructor wishing to engage with digital drawing must reflect on whether the timing and application of the activity reinforce a hierarchy or a canon. To offer an example, inviting students to draw digitally on an example of an African mask or sculpture that is considered a source for a painting by Pablo Picasso may devalue it or render the specific culture or object as “other.” Meanwhile, discussing the source and then inviting students to draw digitally on a Picasso painting may encourage consideration of canons as flexible and up for interpretation and revision. When applied intentionally, digital drawing can be a powerful tool for building community alongside observation skills.

Breakout (of the Box)

Zoom’s breakout room feature brings participants together in smaller groups to promote discussion. When the breakout room feature is enabled in settings, the meeting “host” can assign participants into groups or choose an automated option. In-classroom small group activities encourage participation and aid cognitive processing and deeper engagement in learning. Zoom’s breakout rooms appear to be an extension of this practice. What is distinctive about being in a Zoom breakout room is that it is impossible to “eavesdrop” or know what the other participants are discussing. “Breakout (of the Box)” is an activity that works with the limitations and possibilities of Zoom’s breakout room feature to explore perspective and bias.

After sharing one of our screens and leading the group in a close looking exercise of Marisol’s sculpture, we chose the automated feature to place participants into three groups. Each group was invited to continue to observe and discuss the artwork but was told (by a Gallery educator embedded in each breakout room) different information about the artist or the sculpture once they arrived in their respective breakout room. The participants in the first room learned that the work is titled *Mayflower*, which references the ship of English Puritans, or pilgrims, who landed near Cape Cod, United States in 1620. In the second room, participants learned that Marisol is a Venezuelan artist who was born in Paris and created the sculpture while living in New York City. Finally, the participants in room three learned more about Marisol’s process by seeing images of the sculpture as installed in the Gallery.

Following ten minutes of discussion, we reconvened the class and invited participants to share an insight from their conversations. Once participants noticed that something was “off,” we revealed the design of the exercise and invited them to reflect on the experience. Several participants shared that learning the title of the work limited the conversation to how the vitrine of sculpted heads may represent the Pilgrims and their ocean voyage. One participant, who drew on their own Caribbean heritage in their analysis of the work, emphatically stated that they “knew” that Marisol drew on diverse cultural references even though they were not part of the room that learned this information.¹⁰ Reflecting on the process of

8. Anonymous quotations from participants in *Teaching with Art* workshop for Yale and Columbia University language faculty (October 1, 2020).

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

shifting from the breakout room conversation and the larger group discussion, one participant stated that each step “opened up” the work for them.¹¹ Additionally, a participant observed that the activity can be used to “teach confirmation bias.”¹² Inquiry-based discussion is an agile pedagogy because it is applicable to many objects, disciplines, and situations. Breakout (of the Box) is a form of inquiry-based discussion developed within the limitations and possibilities of Zoom to consider how quickly one jumps to conclusions when learning a piece of information or a data set.

Conclusion

Academic institutions are prone to siloing, yet this moment of disruption has broken down disciplinary boundaries in productive ways.¹³ In a recent virtual workshop, we trained faculty across language departments to use the digital drawing and breakout (of the box) exercises to engage with their students as agile teachers. More than half of the participants had never brought a class to the Gallery and to our knowledge none of them had introduced artworks in their virtual sessions yet. The workshop, then, created an equal opportunity for all instructors to integrate museum pedagogies at the foundation of their remote teaching.

Given that remote teaching is continuing well into 2021, we invite educators across institutions and disciplines to experiment with these agile pedagogies to address the interest and needs of their specific audiences. We encourage instructors in all fields and curricular levels to explore the capacity of a carefully selected and integrated agile work of art to bring people together and build community through dialog, the exchange of ideas, and the shared experience of meaning creation. As we look ahead to the prospect of gathering in person and reconvening around artwork, it is also imperative to consider which practices and lessons from remote teaching are worth keeping. Whatever the instructional format or means, we must not forget that there is a structural achievement gap amongst student subgroups and thus we must remain committed to the

ongoing process of developing agile—and equitable—pedagogies. Neither should we forget that in addition to its ability to unify, inspire, and open possibilities, art can also instill joy in the teaching and learning experience. One faculty member, who participated in a workshop we facilitated together with the Gallery’s Curator of Provenance Research last summer, shared:

[T]his session helped me - more than any other session I've attended in the last few weeks - to get excited about teaching virtually in the fall. You made compelling cases for some of the advantages and the new things that we can discover through this approach. So, even though we're all disappointed not to be teaching and working with each other in person, you three were the most convincing in helping us to think about some so-called affordances of the situation.¹⁴

We end with the suggestion that the close collaboration between museum experts and faculty members can be mutually enriching and ultimately in the service of all our students.

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11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. Beth McMurtrie, “Teaching: Why Is It So Hard to Spread Innovative and Teaching Practices?” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (September 10, 2020), https://www.chronicle.com/newsletter/teaching/2020-09-10?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_1510849_nl_Academe-Today_date_20200910&cid=at&source=ams&sourceid=5254878&cid2=gen_login_refresh&cid2=gen_login_refresh.

14. E-mail correspondence with Milkova, July 29, 2020.



Afro-Caribbean K-12 teachers' approach to facing Covid-19 and Distance Learning

By Shalander Samuels

Abstract

Education is no doubt a key sector being impacted by COVID-19. Every minute brings with it increasing uncertainties, which shape and influence the academic future for teachers of K12. Against the backdrop of this pandemic, two Afro-Caribbean teachers found strength and strategies as they tackled personal and professional adversities. Both secondary teachers in their respective spaces were expected to teach and maintain the district scoping sequence as to maintain business as usual in their classroom, even though instructions from their institutions were changing daily. There was often ambiguity regarding the sudden transition away from normalcy. Since Afro-Caribbean teachers are an integral part of the educational institution, understanding possible challenges encountered, and finding support to combat those challenges allows them greater opportunities for success. In K12 classrooms. The purpose of this article is to discuss various struggles and highlight some of the triumphs of K12 teachers, as we facilitate cognitively diverse students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article is written from the perspective of classroom teachers who struggled with the demands of teaching students remotely via e-learning/distance learning as well as it discusses insights on strategies implemented effectively to best help our students, while maintaining our mental health. We also offer suggestions for working with and facilitating cognitively diverse learners online.

Introduction

As Afro-Caribbean scholars in research, we are rarely ever the focus in either higher education or K12 classrooms. Afro-Caribbean immigrants are English-speaking immigrants from the West Indies whose first language is English. Thompson (2016) found that Afro-Caribbean teachers and students were rarely specifically mentioned in overall performance and achievement. Afro-Caribbeans failed to be identified in research concerning other immigrants and international students in higher education, especially in K12 (Deaux et al., 2007).

This reality is always in the back of our minds even as we teach, which often translates to, no matter the adversity we have to strive to succeed. Due to our diverse cultural backgrounds we are constantly engaging in reflexive thinking about how to engage with students like ourselves and those with even more diverse components to be considered as we teaching and learn in the classroom and questioning whether or not we are doing an effective job with our students. This unprecedented pandemic added another layer of concern for us as it made its way across cities, states and countries we could identify with and therefore assumed many of the struggles of our students from outside and around the United States.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected both government bodies and school systems around the world. For many of us we felt the impact instantly and are still concerned, especially since we are now in the early stages of receiving and analyzing the effects of the vaccine for the Coronavirus. This pandemic has rocked our nation and has challenged all forms of thought and ideology regarding learning especially as we transitioned to the new school year online. The staggering rate of unemployment is frightening; the 'stay at home' orders

and the pandemic has the propensity to cause fear and uncertainty in education. As the pandemic outbreak began across America in mid March, 2020, Shelly who is a ninth grade ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) teacher should have been enjoying spring break. She instead spent the entire week on countless phone calls grasping for clarity from her superiors. Despite five phone calls from the school district on the first day of spring break, messages from teachers, colleagues and friends equally frazzled nothing was clear. This was exemplary of the next few months as a teacher.

Diversity at its finest: Our stories on student population needs in the classroom

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it a much different obstacle than ever before, for many it was and still is an astronomical calamity for families, students and teachers. The 2020 pandemic introduced chaos and disarray, yet we tackled the struggles that presented themselves daily, stressed but optimistic. Regardless of being faced with the loss of normalcy, death, zoom fatigue, and the overwhelming demands of institutional systems we found the strength to persevere. In the midst of the uncertainty, we (the authors) considered that today's classroom is the epitome of diversity; the kind of diversity that is not only of race, but also of cultural and academic abilities (Rucinski, et al., 2019). Many often mention race and culture when the word diversity is utilized, but we must also consider differences in neurodiverse needs of our students. For example there is an influx of individuals in our mainstream classrooms who have various neurological conditions, such as Dyslexia, Autism, ADHD, Dyspraxia and other neurological conditions. As such, educators have an important role in providing equitable and inclusive academic experiences for our students. For many teachers, it is customary to operate in a traditional (face-to-face) classroom setting where it is much easier to visually and physically assess student comprehension. With the aim of providing equitable and inclusive experiences for our students, it is usually a seamless process to provide differentiated instruction, scaffold lessons, organize and pull small groups, as well as provide one-on-one direct and whole group instruction. However, providing an efficacious learning experience to diverse students via distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic proved drastically different

and at times more challenging than expected. We specifically share our narrative below to allow for insight on our experiences during this pivotal time of learning.

Shelly

"Thank you de veras a mi me es muy difícil pero soy bien persistente con el. Le agradezco muchísimo. Su empeño y ayuda hacia mi estamos en contacto"

The English learning parent explained that she was having difficulty with her son during distance learning but was going to continue to give her best. She continued to explain by text message "Teacher you can't imagine, the joy it gives me being able to communicate with you. We lived in Cuba and everything was different. Here it has been difficult for me, I do not have the domain, and sometimes they trust themselves because they believe that one does not know what SE and I start looking for and reviewing it, never hesitate to communicate. With him and the school, I get hysterical. The School is only first. Thank you." This parent is one of very few that were consistent with communication during the unexpected remote learning period. Although she has utilized a translation application to express her thoughts, I understand exactly where she is coming from. That parent and her son are one of many English learners in my classroom, I become overprotective of those specifically as I remembered what it was like to be an immigrant with a thick accent, cultural references that escaped me and difficulty expressing to my instructors my needs. For some the barriers are evident in the inability to communicate because of language for others there is more to be considered for example, a language barrier as well as neurodevelopmental needs. In the traditional classroom, I had access to varying resources, including a paraprofessional. Without this access many students with neurodevelopmental needs who experience difficulty failed to be accommodated for. The diversity during this experience came in varying packages, whether the differences revealed itself in language, culture, attitude, abilities, finances, access, resources or communication they were there. I had to practice numerous times to refrain my brain and accept the challenges as they came.

Sherika

Obviously, teaching is quite different when you have your students in front of you. When you are



physically present in the classroom, you are able to elicit conclusions from their facial expressions, analyze their body language, and most importantly, use both verbal and nonverbal cues to accommodate the students' learning needs. Well, not so with distance learning. About one week into providing virtual lessons, a parent called to vent about her frustration working with her son. "I can't believe it is taking him so long just to read and understand one little paragraph!", she lamented. She continued by sharing how she had to stop doing her work (from home) every 15 to 20 minutes to help her son with some aspect of his schoolwork. "This is too much!" She exclaimed, "I don't know what to do". Jaime is a 7th grader who struggles with processing and at times, retaining information. Being diagnosed with ADHD adds to Jaime's learning struggles. As his teacher, I am equipped with the training and knowledge to diversify my lesson to implement effective techniques that ensure he is successful in the classroom.

Like Jaime, close to half of the students that I teach also have a diagnosed condition along with learning difficulties. Understanding the dynamics of neurodiverse learners (ADHD, Dyslexia, Autism) is essential to their learning, but this struggle became ever so real throughout distance learning. I believe in some sense that I was naïve to think I could carry out the same structure and form of teaching as I was accustomed to when working face-to-face with my neurodiverse learners, but I was very wrong. Being thrust into the era of K12 distance learning was in itself a diverse experience; it was unfamiliar and I was unprepared. The trepidation that I experienced was difficult to unpack. Overcoming these struggles has taught me more about understanding the various facets (language, culture, attitude, abilities, finances, access, resources or communication) that can affect diversity within the classroom. The extensive dependence on distance learning since COVID-19, has increased awareness of how changes can happen in an instance; the difficulties to digest these changes; and the preparedness of educators to triumph in uncertain times.

A rude awakening when teaching and learning online

Shelly

My first challenge became real on the first day of remote/online instruction. I emailed each parent and student and posted an announcement on the online platform informing and inviting them to attend a live conference.



Figure 1. Marisol, *Mayflower*, 1961-62. Wood. 190.5 × 104.775 × 28.575 cm (75 × 41 1/4 × 11 1/4 in.) vitrine: 175.26 × 105.41 × 26.04 cm (69 × 41 1/2 × 10 1/4 in.) Yale University Art Gallery, Charles B. Benenson, B.A. 1933, Collection. 2006.52.71. © 2020 Estate of Marisol / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

I had planned to use the time to explain the purpose and importance of the conference and the benefits to the success of the students. When the conference began, I waited, and waited, and waited but no one showed up. I was puzzled. While I understand that requesting a parent and student meeting face-to-face is normally difficult to get full (or even half) attendance, I was puzzled as to why no one attended remotely. What was the excuse? Businesses were closed; everyone was under a stay-at-home order, so, where were they?

I understood then, that the uphill battle to connect with my students would be a continuous struggle in the coming weeks. By midweek, I sent out several emails enlisting the support of other teachers who also taught my students; the guidance counselors, the deans, the assistant principal and the staffing specialist. All of whom were now working from home. I explained in the email my attempts to connect with students and the difficulties I was experiencing. Within a week I began receiving slow updates from my colleagues and responses from parents and students. Many of my diverse learning needs students' families were having to find new homes, students had become caretakers and many were reeling from the loss of loved ones. I had not always

considered all those things because of the personal pressure I put on myself to do my job. As I reminisce on this experience, I am reminded that I am not solely my students' teachers, but also their mentor, role model, at times their parents, but equally important, I am their advocate, more than just an ally. Knowing this, I could not just sit by and allow my students, who needed my help to successfully maneuver their education during this time, to slip through the cracks.

Sherika

In my mind, I could easily transfer the strategies from traditional learning to online but I was definitely in for a great surprise. My first struggle was that I often felt ill prepared to teach the neurodiverse learners in my class. I have students who have Autism, ADHD and Dyslexia, some of which have not been officially diagnosed. Others have accommodations that are required for student learning. Many of these needs were not met through distance learning because the parent did not have all the required tools and some students needed to be in direct contact with the teachers in the same room. We felt our abilities to accommodate all those needs were minimized and the students who did not receive instruction at its full capacity will be behind the next school year.

The possibility of this plagued me for the remainder of the school year. Students with neuro-developmental challenges require much preparation from their teachers. Despite our best efforts, we could feel the pressure we were under and could identify areas we could improve in. We ended the school year contending with the struggles of technology, such as the ability of our school district's systems to handle the number of students logging on all at once; as well as the concern of whether or not we did an effective job. We lost hours of lesson time waiting tirelessly for our systems to work and for continuity in its effectiveness. What I found was that most of my students did not understand how to use the computers to access teaching platforms when they were at home without a teacher's help. Sometimes past midnight while in bed, I would remember that I didn't take attendance for my students or logged my hours and would run to the computer to get it done. It was tiresome to say the least.

A second struggle that we faced was the abrupt social distancing and inability to see family and friends. The separation from family and friends has been very difficult to cope with. Two family members contracted the virus, but thankfully, they were able to overcome it. My husband strongly believed that he too had contracted the virus back in

December 2019, but was able to withstand its effects. This time has indeed been tough on all fronts. I have family members across several states as well as in Jamaica that I frequently communicate with. We make plans each year to visit each other to celebrate milestones or other events. However, everything came to a screeching halt this year with the arrival of COVID-19. The most anxious and worrisome part of going through this pandemic was ensuring the safety of my immediate and extended family members. I am a mother of four and the caretaker of my mother who is 71 years old. My mother is at a higher risk of contracting the Coronavirus and while at first it was revealed that children were not affected by the virus as much as others, I was still concerned about their health and how it could affect my mother. While sheltering in place, I was able to cope and stay connected with friends and family through calling, FaceTime and Zoom. During this time when despair easily sets in and hopelessness, anxiety and disbelief pushes through, what got me through each day was knowing that my family and friends were safe.

Implication

Although we do not have all the credentials necessary to make a formal assessment of all our students' diverse learning, culturally, academic and neurodiverse needs, we have found a few practices that have been working for us as we are continuing to engage with distance learning. Additionally, an awareness of students with neurodiversity will allow teachers to be more intentional in their approach, whether virtually, mixed mode or traditionally. For example, when teaching students with Autism, we should presume the competence of each child, even when times seem dire. Many parents are frontline workers and do not have the privilege of working from home. Depending on the level of their abilities, many students can do varying tasks on their own. Also, to better meet the needs of students, communicating with them to see whether they want to share how they would like to learn is key. For example, some students will say they will do all the work at once, on their own time or they might say they want to work in small groups, one small section at a time. Students are often unable to focus with loud noises in their immediate environment, therefore it is important to be mindful of how loud your surroundings are during video chats and be aware of, and remove any distractions. A student not completing an assignment does not mean they lack the ability; assume they know and ask them to help you accommodate them. Furthermore, if you are remotely

teaching a child with ADHD, it is important to build a relationship with the parents/guardians as teachers can get more useful information than what is on their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

Some students have limited mobility or motor control, so maneuvering through the computer applications without help might not be feasible. Therefore, as teachers, we have to scaffold and differentiate our instruction ahead of time for each lesson and edit the lesson based on the student's abilities. Let each student know that they are capable of being successful and give them the support they need to see and believe it; especially during a time when they are not in the classroom with other students. Moreover, we cannot escape and would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the social injustice at the forefront of our communities. For us a Afro-Caribbean teachers we automatically consider things but for others they might need some support. Consider that, our students are seeing themselves perceived negatively in the media everyday, even after they log out of the various academic platforms being utilized in class, problems in their communities continue to persist.

Promoting Enriching Opportunities in all content areas for Diverse Learners during Distance learning

- Check in on your students' mental health
- Check in with your colleagues mental health as well as ensure you are mentally well
- Enact social justice approaches/changes
- Presume confidence of all students in the classroom
- Communicate with students to hear their thoughts on their learning
- Utilize real world examples to investigate concepts locally, nationally and internationally
- Be aware of your personal surroundings and the surroundings of the child as they learn online (background noises/ distraction)
- Build relationships with the parents
- Scaffold and differentiate lessons and activities (script necessary materials, use audio, visuals, small break out rooms etc.)
- Invest in your diverse students by not just being an ally but being an advocate and conspirator for their learning
- Highlight their lived experiences (Funds of Knowledge)

Conclusion

Adolescents need both autonomy and cognitively demanding academic activities in secondary education to succeed (Howard & Ticknor, 2019; Anderman & Mueller, 2010). That concept is no different during the Covid-19 pandemic. Both teachers and students are able to gain from the deliberate implementation of the ideas mentioned above. COVID-19 without a doubt has forever changed how K12 teachers perceive their roles as educators. As Afro-Caribbean educators we did unintentionally take on some of the problems of our students because we could relate, non the less we worked hard and are still making attempts to bridge the gap in their learning. In this article, we shared several struggles and highlighted several opportunities to triumph with cognitively diverse students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, we discussed strategies for working with and accommodating these learners via an online platform. Excitement grows when we succeed but this process is arduous and sometimes we find that disappointments tend to be greater than the reward. The trepidation that we experience with distance learning coupled with the needs of our neurodiverse learners has been a unique learning experience and has given us a deeper appreciation of our roles as educators and for what we do and why we do it.

Understanding the dynamics of Neurodiverse learners (ADHD, Dyslexia, Autism) is essential to learning. These students require different types of support, intervention and accommodation based on their learning disabilities. Providing accommodations such as extended time to complete lessons, repeating and clarifying directions, checking for comprehension, peer support, changing of placement to increase attention and focus, positive verbal cues, small breaks, scaffolding, etc., are some of the many strategies that can be used with students within diverse classrooms, and it was helpful especially during a time of crisis. Educators are seen as resilient individuals. Oftentimes we are tasked with job duties that are outside the spectrum of our roles; tasks which are beyond what we are able to timely and effectively carry out. Nonetheless, when we are asked to rise to the occasion, we buckle up and do just that; Spring of 2020 was no different. The transition of learning from a traditional setting to an online

platform came abruptly and as educators, we huddled together and collectively worked with the guidance of our school district and administrators, to devise plans on how learning will continue remotely.

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Sonic spaces online: Teaching studio-based courses through virtual collaborative environments

By Eleni-Ira Panourgia, Ph.D.

Abstract

Practical experimentation, technique demonstration and work presentation are indispensable aspects of teaching artistic disciplines. Physical distancing and lockdown conditions during the coronavirus pandemic have been particularly challenging for studio-based courses. With specialist equipment and university facilities being out of reach, higher education teaching staff have been given the responsibility to provide alternative solutions to ensure learning objectives are met. This article investigates challenges, solutions and outcomes in teaching studio projects through online blogs within the framework of the undergraduate course Sonic Spaces at Gustave Eiffel University in France. This course explores the notion of space in sonic arts with content ranging from spatial audio, sound in public space, interactive and participatory sound installations and performances. The experiences and learning processes of creating and listening to sound environments online are not the same as a physical, real life interaction. However, the use of blogs can offer a range of possibilities through a synchronous and asynchronous online exchange among students, educators and audiences. Hence, blogs can be considered not only as educational tools, but as means for an aesthetic exchange and collective experience. The chronological format of a blog is approached in this article as a form of daily life storytelling and as a reflective artistic practice while enhancing student participation, communication and the sense of belonging during lockdown conditions. At the same time, blogs are considered from an aesthetic perspective in relation to the challenges and practical difficulties when a multisensory experience moves from exhibition and public space to an online virtual space. The proposed use of blogs suggests new ways for educators to support conceptually and technically practice-based courses through an online format beyond the studio.

Introduction

This article examines the challenge of teaching studio-based courses on sound during the COVID-19 pandemic. Physical distancing and lockdown restrictions have limited our access to specialist equipment and studio spaces. These conditions have changed the experience of the learning processes in creative subject areas. Transitioning to virtual learning environments has an important impact to the way we listen and practice with sound. The online listening space introduces a different dimension to auditory perception, which differs from a physical, real life interaction. In response to lockdown restrictions, blogs were used to complement the institutional e-learning platform provided by our University. This article presents an exploration of blog uses in a class of 45 undergraduate students during spring semester in 2020. The class was participating in the third-year course 'Sonic Spaces: Aesthetics and Tools' of the undergraduate degree 'Music and Sound Professions' at Gustave Eiffel University in Champs-sur-Marne campus in the eastern suburbs of Paris. Sonic Spaces explores the notion of space in sonic arts with content ranging from spatial audio, sound in public space, interactive and participatory installations and performances. Students were asked to develop a sonic space as their final project. The assignment included three elements: research, experimentation and presentation. Project content and creative processes were included and elaborated through an online blog. Students had the possibility to collaborate on a project or undertake individual work. A pool of links to the blogs was integrated in the e-learning platform of the course to allow students to visit and comment on each other's projects. To navigate between the use of blogs for teaching sound and the new listening experience resulting from the global lockdown measures, this article looks at how blog environment can provide an alternative mode to studio-based teaching and lead to improved distance learning experiences. It also seeks to use this experience to reflect on the relationship between virtual spaces for learning and virtual spaces for sound practice.

A new space for listening

The pandemic has not only changed the way we practice and teach sound-related subjects, but it has also transformed our everyday listening experience. New spaces of listening inside and around our houses have been created during the lockdown. Living in a specific space for a significant duration made us notice sounds of house interiors and infrastructure, which we would otherwise ignore. In urban areas, we noticed more the sounds of our neighboring spaces, the humming sound of our devices and the echoes of the few authorized activities taking place on the streets. Different soundscapes formed in our cities during lockdown were characterized by an altered and lower intensity of 'anthropophony', the sounds caused by human activity that dominate contemporary landscapes (Krause, 2015). Andreas von Bubnoff (2020) stressed that there is a lack of discussion about the phenomenon of sudden silence in places as a result of the lockdown: '...many places seem to have become quieter. But what does this sudden silence mean to us? And what can we learn from it about the effect we have on the sound of this planet during normal times?' Worldwide lockdown conditions provided us with the opportunity to listen more profoundly and understand our surroundings from a sonic perspective. In that sense, paying attention to the information received by our ears, could allow us to delve into an audible dimension of social and environmental dimensions of our everyday life.

Sound artists, producers and designers are currently exploring this changing state of soundscapes during the pandemic through online collaborative projects. *Sound Of The Earth: The Pandemic Chapter* collaboration between Dallas Museum of Art and Yuri Suzuki is an online participatory platform where users are invited to upload their sonic observations of their everyday life in the form of recordings (Dallas Museum of Art, n.d.). As a response to the changing state of this period due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this open platform invites participants to 'express themselves and to capture our shared experience of the fleeting moments ... collective observations and the simple act of listening' (ibid.). The project's aim is to raise empathy and enable an alternative form of communication among people around the globe. The online interactive space of the project

is meant to help us connect with each other through sound during a time of physical isolation. Website visitors are invited to submit recordings of sounds observed inside their living space 'from cooking dinner at home, to the ambulance siren passing by, to online connections with loved ones' (ibid.). Sound files are uploaded and mapped onto a globe in relation to the geographic location of their recording. Andreas von Bubnoff and Veronica Semeco collaborated on the Pandemic Silence Project to collect sound recordings during the lockdown. The project's aim is to continue this activity of soundscape samples after the pandemic in order to establish a better understanding of human generated sounds and their effect in our environment. Further to the sound recordings, interview and multimedia files such as videos are created and uploaded on the project's website. This collection 'will enable anyone to later relive the sonic aspects of the pandemic once it's over... to become more aware of how our presence shapes the sound of the planet' (Pandemic Silence Project, n.d.).

Following these emerging forms of everyday and online listening, the course Sonic Spaces took a natural shift towards a reflection on listening to life under lockdown conditions through the comparison of sonic spaces around us and the use of sound to create immersive experiences. Inevitably, soundscape observation contributed to shaping teaching and the creative processes of students. To facilitate communication and reflection on everyday listening, students were asked to use blogs in which they would post files, keep a journal and present their creative work to online audiences.

Blogs, collaboration and pedagogy

According to Bosman and Zagenczyk (2011) blogs can be an opportunity for students to summarize and reflect on concepts and content addressed during teaching. Blogs provide with a multi-media platform that engages students on multiple levels including visual, audio, analytical and curatorial aspects (ibid.). From a teaching perspective, blogs are valuable tools for organizing and managing course content as well as supervising student progress. For example, in Sonic Spaces course students were invited to involve teaching directions in their own blog and elaborate their work to meet learning objectives. Blogs open up communication between

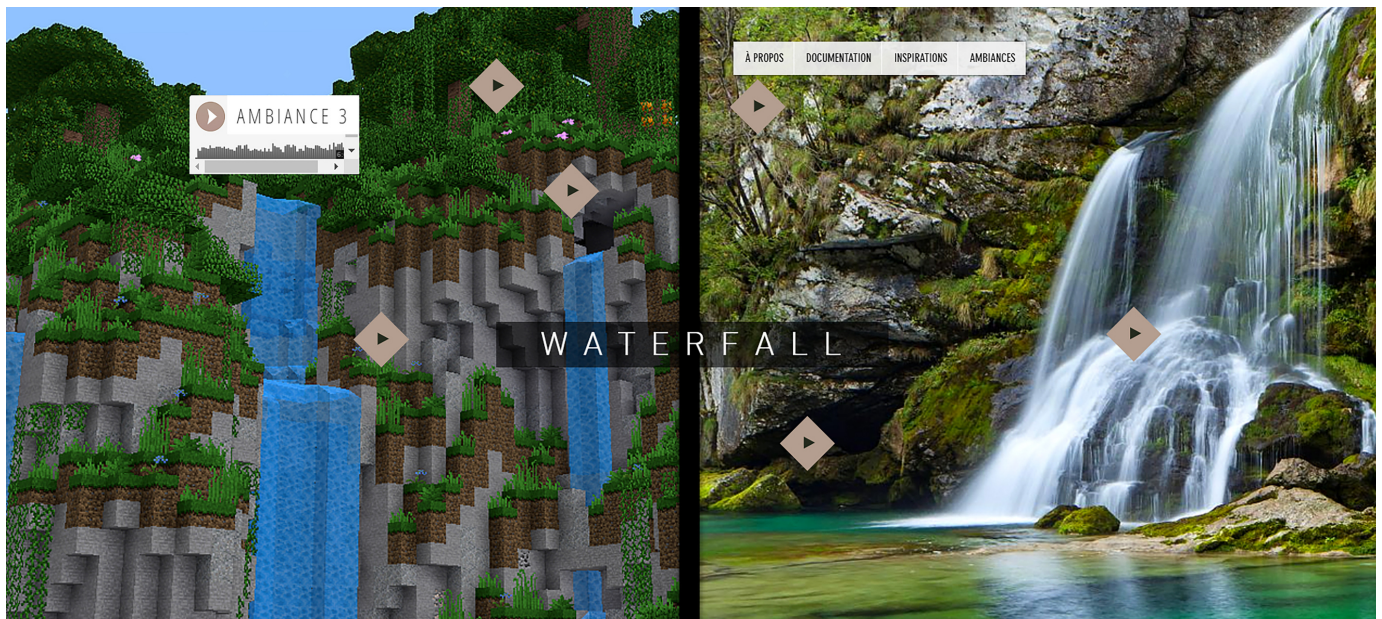


Figure 1. Screenshot of student blog showing the use of multiple sound sources

educators and students as well as among the student community 'by providing a forum for answering questions' (ibid.).

In artistic disciplines especially, blogs can take the form of electronic portfolios that can further academic and professional development of students by presenting a range of projects undertaken. The asynchronous mode of communication in blogs 'provides students with time to reflect and compose their thoughts before engaging with the community' (ibid., p.65). Additionally, during this period of physical distancing, blogs offer an alternative environment for collaboration. Blogs have been characterized as inclusive spaces for students to engage in discussion with each other and with their instructors (Reeves and Gomm, 2012). Natascha Radclyffe-Thomas (2012) highlighted the interactive experience in blogs as an essential element in contemporary teaching methods. Importantly, she stressed that such blog 'interactivity [can be an] experience outside the classroom' and should be further explored in relation to 'wireless campuses [that] promise to revolutionise teaching and learning in the twenty-first century' (ibid., p. 75). Beyond the use of blogs for managing a course, enhancing learning and creating an online track of work, Radclyffe-Thomas (2012, pp. 76-77) stated that blogs 'offer a very public yet simultaneously personal space with the capability of supporting new ways of teaching, to transform the classroom by offering students new voices and roles'.

In the course Sonic Spaces, the use of blogs not only as educational tool, but also as virtual creative space, enabled students to overcome practical issues related to the physical distancing restrictions and imagine their work in a new space. It allowed learners to make creative use of the available technologies and to integrate the networking and collaborative potential of the internet in their creative process. At the early stages of the course, the blog served as a tool for communicating the course content, learning objectives, methods and potential outcomes. Students working in group projects were co-authors of a blog, which encouraged them to further exchange ideas and creative processes online. The use of the blogs was also promoted as a form of group communication among the students since it was required from them to work as a team (Delahunty et al., 2013). Collaboration could take place from distance and blogs formed a creative space of exchange between group members.

Students were required to regularly post content in the form of text, hyperlinks, audio-visual material and other bibliographical sources. They could add comments in the form of posts and upload their own material, while working together to complete their project. Students working in groups created a single blog in which they would exchange ideas and files through individual posts. In some cases, living

in specific locations involved different production roles. For example, in a project looking at human-nature relationships, students living in the suburbs of Paris and were closer to green areas undertook filming and field recording activities, while others confined in the city center far from rural spaces worked on computer tasks such as editing and mixing. Blogs enabled task allocation in collaborative projects and provided with a better understanding of the various production roles involved in each project. At the same time, it allowed me to monitor the contribution of each student and support them both individually and as groups.

Three main menus were required for each project blog: documentation, inspirations and presentation. Each menu corresponded to a learning task related to the development of a sound space. Documentation involved journals that traced technique experimentations and creative explorations. In documentation menu, students were asked to reflect on the techniques demonstrated during synchronous learning sessions. Students were required to share screengrabs of their practice with sound equipment and of their workflow in software programs. Some projects involved the development of custom software, which could be downloaded and used by fellow students and blog visitors. Documentation menu acted as a form of studio practice online that allowed an active exchange of techniques and processes. Presenting the technical aspects of the creative work allowed me to identify areas for improvement faster, to provide with timely feedback and suggest new tools. Inspirations menu concerned researching other design and artistic examples, as well as theoretical works and concepts related to each project's idea. Presentation menu was considered as an exhibition space where students were asked to share the final version of their work. Students were given the freedom to design their blog according to the aesthetic of their projects. The requirement was to design menus, pages and content material in a manner that is user friendly and that resonated with their proper ideas and creative output. Posts took the form of daily storytelling in the form of a journal.

The use of blogs led students to express their creative thinking through writing, while engaging with verbal descriptions of sound qualities and the audience experience of their work. Some translated examples of blog posts can be found below:

If we consider the sound environment as a landscape, does your neighborhood sound more like a garden or an alley? ... my idea is to create a sound installation for a physical space located at 49 Boulevard de Ménilmontant. The sound installation ... will seek to create an imaginary state of the space for the listeners. The goal is to make listeners discover a natural and calm landscape that risks being transformed by noise pollution. The project expresses sonically the life in the park. The video does not correspond to the sound project, it is only included to immerse the listener in the relationship between sound and space. Two elements constitute the sound experience: voices (spoken, onomatopoeia, laughter, shouts...) and noises (insects, animals, machines, drills) ... My goal is to create an auditory immersion.

I recorded the sounds of my garden. No more human activity ... the ideal conditions for recording soundscapes. Few cars or planes, nothing else but birds, insects and the bell of the village church ... It is the garden, the heterotopia in which I am confined. Confined outside. In this other place. Blissful heterotopia, overflowing with color and animation ... that transforms slowly, but with dazzling speed, that transforms in a day, a night, or a fraction of a second.

Texts accompanied sound artworks and added an extra dimension, that of the physical experience of these works that we were not able to have due to the lockdown conditions. Describing the auditory experience in sound artworks can be a particularly challenging task, as there is no specific vocabulary for expressing how we perceive every single sound quality. It is a very experiential and personal process and each one of us could perceive the same sound differently. As we can see from the blog excerpts, the words used by the students seek to describe the overall experience of their creative ideas and of their sound artworks. The terms used seek to communicate a range of poetic, sensorial, embodied, spatial, geographical and personal characteristics involved when we experience a sound installation. In some cases, videos simulating the spatial experience were

shared on the blogs together with these textual descriptions. The combination of writing about the sonic experience and the audio-visual representation of spaces, enabled students to present online spatial and temporal structures specific to this course.

Student writing took different forms depending on the purpose or target audience of each post. Research posts such as final reports and literature reviews involved more formal writing, while technical posts and work in-progress posts such as descriptions of the creative process and personal reflections were more conversational. Blog posts including student communication or commentary were also conversational yet more informal than work in-progress posts. This exchange between research and reflection, formal and personal writing, are important methods of reflection in artistic research. Blogging provided students with more time to search, to think out loud through posts and to reconsider their creative process. The regular posts allowed me to ensure that learning objectives were met and that the projects were evolving throughout the semester. The online course became more interactive and engaging for the students. Blogs brought the student cohort together in an online space where they were able to exchange opinions and collaborate. In addition to its academic scope, the blog environment supported and motivated students by developing a sense of belonging during a time of isolation.

Blogs as creative hubs and listening spaces

Blogs were meant to function as creative hubs at various stages of the course, especially during the research phase and the final presentations. Blog use and content development varied mostly by the topic and the creative process of each project. Some of the students decided to work on the sound environment of their home and surrounding areas, others explored more global issues about human-nature relationships, while others focused on technical aspects regarding spatial audio, sound diffusion or sound visualization. The particularity of blog uses in sound-related courses lays in the various modes of streaming sounds and the multimedia environment created. These can range from embedded links to original recordings and live formats. Students were invited to use already recorded material or create new content depending on equipment availability in their home environment. Three main approaches were distinguished among student projects in Sonic Spaces course: libraries of sounds, sound interaction, and performance.

An example of the libraries of sound format was the use of blog as an audible recipe. Sound samples recorded in a kitchen space were categorized to create a form of storytelling of the student's daily routine during the

lockdown. These could be played on the blog's page and triggered in any order, remixed or following the various stages of the recipe. Another feature was multiple sound sources played simultaneously. For instance, a background sound in the form of an ambience that could be combined with other samples and embedded videos posted on the same page. In this manner, the user could interact with the online environment to trigger those sounds or listen to each of them separately. The third category 'performance' involved the development of custom software programs in the Max environment, which could be shared with the blog visitors or performed live by the students. The three formats could be combined. All formats were realized within the default blog features without any further programming. External platforms such as YouTube and SoundCloud were used in some cases to facilitate streaming. Blogs provided with a timely response to practical issues of sharing and presenting sound work online.

Augmenting spaces through sound

In most of the student projects blogs were used as a space for presenting the creative work and submitting coursework. There were some exceptions, which went beyond solely presenting artworks online and used the blog environment as means to recreate a physical space. These approaches were particularly interesting and timely as they introduced new directions for exploring the spatial and temporal questions of the course during lockdown. Two of the projects that addressed such questions are discussed below. Object-sound and interior-exterior relationships were explored through methods of navigation between urban, natural and virtual landscapes, real and imaginary versions, through image-sound relationships and interactive formats inspired by gaming environments. A written reflection from the blog of the first student project example presents the challenges of lockdown conditions and how these contributed to alternative methods for creating a sonic space online:

Without any sound equipment available, my idea was to use sound and image and the functionalities offered by the blog site to create a sound space. To enable sound-image relationships via user-activated sound elements. On each ambience page, the user can first activate an ambient track (top left of the screen) then play with the sound effects placed on the background image. These sounds illustrate the element of the picture and are also placed in the stereophonic sound field according to it.

In this project, the online blog environment inspired new audio-visual relationships: sounds were processed according to the images posted on the blog pages with the aim to enhance our perception between the real (right image of Figure 1) and the virtual (left image of Figure 1). Realistic sound recordings on the right part of the page were processed into more crystallized versions on the left. Blog visitors could play single sounds or create a range of variations of sound layers by triggering multiple sounds simultaneously. As described by the student, the position of each sound source on the blog page determined its place in the sound field. Blogs were then not only used to document a practice and to develop skills, but also as a creative medium that generated new aesthetic questions in relation to user experience.

The second example involves a project that explored listener immersion in the sounds of the space where they are confined based on the idea of revealing stories related to rooms and everyday objects. Sounds were triggered in relation to visual elements of a space such as posters, colors on walls and mirrors. Recordings of words and phrases were used to narrate stories related to personal memories and perception of space. The project involved the development of an interactive sound environment that would change according to the listener's position in the apartment. Its objective was to reveal a feeling of freedom, to augment the physical space, or on the contrary to underline the heavy, unpleasant side of the spatial limits of the apartment. For example, to show the double identity of the balcony as an opening to the exterior space and a limit, a field recording from the balcony was transformed to a glitch-like sound to indicate the border with the interior of the house. The use of a blog allowed to showcase these relationships in detail concerning conceptual, technical and experiential qualities.

The blog's environment allowed to create meaningful connections between the creative process, the concepts and the software used. Sounds were related to images from the house interior posted on the blog and accompanied by a video documentation of the performative event. ¹

- La transformation d'un reflet en un écho déformé selon les caprices du miroir



Cet effet, plus ludique, est réalisé en temps réel grâce à un enregistreur zoom caché en hauteur et relié au logiciel par une carte son externe. Le son "direct" ou "dry" est insaisissable; l'auditeur entend donc sa propre voix "de l'intérieur", transformée et réfractée par le miroir.

- S'évader par le balcon

Le balcon est un espace caractérisé par une sorte de polarité contradictoire. En s'y installant, on sort de l'appartement, mais il nous rappelle aussi que l'accès à l'extérieur s'y limite. Il a donc été naturel de composer une ambiance sonore permettant "d'agrandir" la perception de cet espace appartenant au monde réel et extérieur. Pour compléter les nappes synthétiques évocatrices d'une spatialité illimitée, on entend un sample de mer. C'est un des lieux que nous aimerions tous les 3 le plus retrouver, et les vagues me semblent avoir un potentiel évocateur fort, qui pourrait modestement offrir à l'auditeur un voyage audilif vers la côte.



Figure 2. Screenshot of student blog showing moments of the creative process

Conclusion

The strategies and approach presented in this article reconsidered blogs as a learning tool and creative medium in sound disciplines. Blogging allowed students to practically experiment and create sound artworks with tools available outside the campus. The format and the virtual online space of the blogs influenced these creative works to become more web specific. The spatial element of the course evolved into a hybrid space through a dialogue between the physical space of sound sources and the online environment. Blogs encouraged independent learning and working collaboratively from distance, presenting student work publicly and creating an electronic portfolio. The public-facing feature of the blogs motivated students to finalize their work and search artistic concepts in more depth. Students engaged with the online presence of the work while 'read[ing] more critically, think[ing] ... more analytically, and writ[ing] more clearly' (Richardson 2010, p.20). Blogs were designed to address a wider audience, not only fellow students and academic staff. The collaborative approach allowed for a more inclusive form of teaching and peer-support as well as a space to meet and socialize. The use of blogs did not only enhance student participation, but it also promoted creativity and reflection. Both factors raised the level of the students' work. Blogging also offered a great way to document the progress of the project, which provided both students and educators more organized and rigorous learning and teaching processes, respectively.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hpn_Ffya2I (accessed 18 September 2020)

the multimedia environment of the blogs developed for Sonic Spaces course involved audio-visual files and interactive formats, which created the space for approaches and processes to emerge rather just presenting the outcomes. Directing students towards the use of blogs in the specific subject area expanded their views of what a sonic space could be, how it could be experienced and shared with a public online. It provided not only with educational support, but also an artistic solution during the pandemic in moving from a physical concert or exhibition space to an online virtual space. Bayne et al., (2020) stressed the temporal aspect of the learning processes involving blogs, which allows students to continue editing and improving their work. Educational spaces in the online environment allow for a flux of activities and flexibility beyond physical or institutional boundaries (ibid.). Blogs can indeed keep projects alive for further dissemination and organize coursework into electronic portfolios that can be useful for the future careers of students ². They can also act as a platform that supports the continuation of the collaboration between students after their studies. This article reconsidered the learning experience through an online format inclusive and accessible beyond the studio, which can support the development of creative, academic and professional skills needed for the future.

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² For example, this blog used for the Sonic Spaces course in spring 2020, has since then been updated and enriched with extra content: <https://lenvie2lor.wixsite.com/website> (accessed 29 November 2020). This has also made explicit by the student in the Accueil [Home] menu: 'beyond the academic purpose of this site, it also aims to showcase my creations and it is bound to evolve over time' (translation from French). The Des Autres Lieux... [Other Places] menu includes the most recent posts.

Exemplar

Expression Activity in Adobe After Effects

By Sherry Muyuan He

Two weeks after the official lockdown of our campus in New York City, we had our first online digital design class. I used to be very proud of creating in-class activities related to current events. However, with an ambulance passing by my apartment every five minutes and the uncertainty of how many students are losing their loved ones, I was not sure if I should include any pandemic-themed projects.

What I was sure of is that I care about the students. I miss each of them. I did not know if I would ever see them in person again. Then I counted, in seconds, how long it would have been since our last offline class, by the time we saw each other in our new classroom—Zoom for the time.

1198800 seconds.

That's what the students saw when they opened their online classroom. Then it started counting: 1198801, 1198802, 1198803... The short video was made in Adobe After Effects with the expression (one line of coding to achieve certain animation that would be hard to do with keyframes)

"Math.round(time)". The students needed to find another expression to make a 15-second-long short video in After Effects and share the results and code with the class.

Results

A student made a bouncing "wash your hands" with the bounce and wiggle expressions. Another student took a dark twist and used the math expression to count her anxiety attacks. One student was less literal and created a spinning room with multiple lines of expressions.

The successful aspect of this assignment is that all students made something unique and shared with the class within 2 hours. They were given the freedom to explore more coding on their own. Based on their own energy and emotion level, they could choose the amount of details to put in the projects. Since it was a type-centered class, Next time I will limit the typeface choices at the beginning and push them to pay more attention to the details in the type and composition. Overall, I feel good about creating an assignment that invited students to explore their new everyday experience, while being considerate (or even addressing, getting rid - exploring) of their stress.

It's been
1198805^{seconds}
since we
saw each other

I'VE HAD
ANXIETY
ATTACKS **4**
SINCE
THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

I hope everyone is safe, health, and...
WASHING THEIR HANDS

Activity:

“Expression” is an introductory motion graphic exercise that invites students to express their raw emotions when the pandemic first hit the United States. It is an opportunity for students to share with each other how they feel while getting an understanding of coding in After Effects. They are first introduced with an exemplar expression that counts the time by seconds, followed by an invitation to explore other After Effect expressions that best suits what they want to say about the quarantine.

Objectives:

1. learn to insert expressions in the timeline panel in Adobe After Effects
2. nurture a creative process that connects to daily life experiences
3. create an online community that encourages self-driven learning
4. expand visual vocabulary through type in motion

Materials:

1. Adobe After Effects
2. Adobe Illustrator (optional)

Strategy:

1. Provide a 5-10-minute-long After Effects tutorial on the skills needed to complete the assignment
2. Show an example of the expected outcome. Share it on Google Drive and post the code used.
3. Give students work time (2 hr) to complete the assignment while helping troubleshoot any problems in the software

Key Questions:

1. What are your feelings about the pandemic? What do you want to say to others?
2. What typeface best fits your words? What color could you use? What can you explore in the composition?
3. What animation speaks the most of your feelings? What After Effects expressions will you insert?
4. Does a single line of words on the composition fully express your emotion? Or multiple sentences on top of one another work better?

Critique Strategy:

Students upload their finished animation to the class Google Drive folder and comment in the group chat on the After Effects expressions they use. Do you think they choose the typeface that matches the words? Does the color palette work? Could the type be enhanced by a different composition?

Notes:

This quick exercise also reflects my own feelings. While there were definitely worries, I also missed my students. Therefore, I counted the number of seconds that had passed since the last time I saw them on campus. For the same of students’ mental health, I chose to start our online class, converted from an in-person class, at the beginning of the lock down with a lighter workload. Although the project submissions could be fine tuned more, everyone in the class was able to produce a piece and share the code during the synchronous class period.

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An interdisciplinary designer who specialized in the food-themed project-based learning experience, and in adding spices to college courses by constantly designing new projects for teaching.

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Exemplar

(RE)ACT: Success and Failures in Connecting Subject and Subject Matter During Isolation

By Meghan Duda

Problem:

How does one motivate a group of students to stay engaged in their creative drawing practice while in isolation? What is one way to pivot a project, a week before it is introduced, to both acknowledge and capitalize on the shift in routine presented by isolation?

Students in a Foundation Drawing class were originally assigned two drawing sets - a mechanical drawing and a botanical drawing - inspired by techniques in instructional and observational drawing. Students were to complete the two sets, introduced as two separate assignments, over the course of seven weeks in the second half of spring semester. The two assignments were conceptually connected, however there was no requirement that the drawings be related to each other.

When isolation set in it became important to rethink the two drawing sets and find a more engaging way to encourage creativity without the pressure of a large scale drawing. While participants could likely continue the assignment as intended, concerns emerged over equitable access to time, materials, studio space, and opportunities for presentation.

When considering the practice of solo drawing, the sketchbook immediately comes to mind. The idea emerged to tap into the [Brooklyn Art Library's Sketchbook Project](#), a collective sketchbook library of more than 50,000 entries, illustrated by artists all over the world. Artists purchase sketchbooks from the Project, fill them out, and then return them to add to the large social art project. Each year the collected Sketchbooks travel the country in a touring exhibition, sharing the creative endeavors of the participants with people of all age groups and backgrounds. The Sketchbook Project offered a fantastic opportunity to solve the equity issues posed by isolation, and connect students with artists across the country

Materials:

- Brooklyn Art Library Sketchbook, purchased by the department and shipped directly to students.
- Pencil / charcoal / marker / pastel / pen and ink
- Mechanical object that can be deconstructed
- Botanical specimen, or access to images of a chosen specimen

Objectives/Assessment Targets:

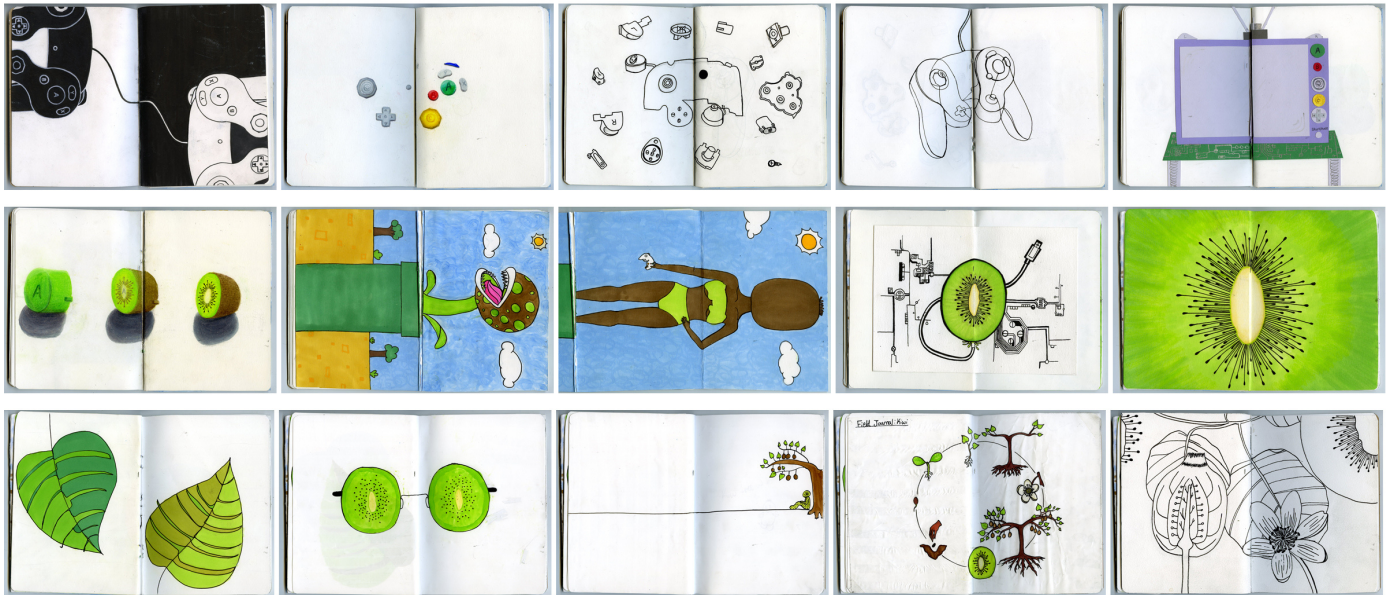
- Create a narrative series of sketches connecting two conceptually related drawing prompts. - Develop skills in observational drawing techniques, use of line and value, and spacial relationships in compositional layout.
- Find motivation to continue to make under new working conditions and mental pressures. - Connect students to artists beyond the walls of our school, so that isolation becomes an opportunity for connection.

Strategy:

Students will work individually to analyze and sketch two objects, one mechanical and one botanical. The objects are chosen by the individual artist. The mechanical object must be dismantled through the analysis and drawing process. The botanical specimen can be one that is physical in front of the artist, or understood through research and sourced imagery. The observational drawings that emerge from the initial sketches should be used to develop a narrative sequence, drawn over a span of twelve spreads in a Sketchbook provided by the Brooklyn Sketchbook Project. The sequence should include the analytical breakdown of both objects into individual parts. Participants can choose the best way to represent this breakdown and integrate it into the flow of the narrative.

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How do the drawings progress from one spread to the next - and one project to the next?
2. Is there a theme to the drawings, an aesthetic that links them, a flow from one page to the next?
3. Do the two objects, mechanical and botanical, relate to each other in some way, and does become apparent in the narrative sequence?
4. How does the sketchbook begin and how does it end?
5. Does the final destination of the Sketchbook affect attention to detail and craft?



Brooklyn Sketchbook Project submission
by Kenney Bohlman, 2020

Critique Strategy:

Participants must scan or photograph their sketchbook pages and upload the images to the class google drive, or other file sharing platform, for periodic check ins throughout the course of the assignment. In lieu of weekly class meetings, Zoom mini-critiques are set up every few weeks, to discuss issues with technique or other creative blocks.

At the completion of the project students and instructor will come together on Zoom to discuss the final sketchbook and experience with the process. Students will self reflect using a fillable pdf questionnaire provided by the instructor. Questions address the objectives and assessment targets of the assignment. Students submit the form along with the completed sketchbooks for final assessment. Sketchbooks are then returned to the Brooklyn Art Library by the instructor.

Timetable:

1. Week One - Introduce mechanical drawing prompt. Meet on zoom to provide feedback on concept and practice sketches.
2. Week Two - Introduce perspective drawing and continue zoom discussions of progress.
3. Week Three - Introduce botanical drawing prompt. Discuss potential paths for research inspiration. Meet on zoom for feedback on sketches.
4. Week Four - Continue developing concepts and practice sketches. Begin implementing layouts in final Sketchbook.
5. Week Five - Mini critiques to discuss progress and problem solve setbacks.
6. Week Six - finalize drawings.
7. Week Seven - Submit final Sketchbooks and discuss process and outcomes over Zoom.

Success/Failure:

I found this project to be a huge success in light of the situation. Students were engaged and excited by the project. I found that they were actually challenged more by this iteration of the Mechanical/Botanical Drawing exercise than as it was originally intended. I am unsure if this was due to the fact that they were forced to spend so much time with the objects, items that were almost exclusively selected from their personal spaces. I believe that the narrative aspect also has a huge bearing on the outcome. Or perhaps it was the pressure of submitting the final piece to the Brooklyn Art Library. I look forward to replicating the project outside of isolation to assess the variances.

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**BROOKLYN SKETCHBOOK PROJECT
SUBMISSION BY MELANIE SANTIAGO-
HERNANDEZ, 2020**

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