idea journal

co-constructing body-environments

vol. 17, no. 02

2020

the journal of IDEA: the interior design + interior architecture educators' association

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about

IDEA (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators' Association) was formed in 1996 for the advancement and advocacy of education by encouraging and supporting excellence in interior design/interior architecture education and research within Australasia.

www.idea-edu.com

The objectives of IDEA are:

1. Objects

3.1 The general object of IDEA is the advancement of education by:

(a) encouraging and supporting excellence in interior design/interior architecture/spatial design education and research globally and with specific focus on Oceania; and

(b) being an authority on, and advocate for, interior design/interior architecture/spatial design education and research.

3.2 The specific objects of IDEA are:

(a) to be an advocate for undergraduate and postgraduate programs at a minimum of AQF7 or equivalent education in interior design/interior architecture/spatial design;

(b) to support the rich diversity of individual programs within the higher education sector;

(c) to create collaboration between programs in the higher education sector;

(d) to foster an attitude of lifelong learning;

(e) to encourage staff and student exchange between programs;

(f) to provide recognition for excellence in the advancement of interior design/interior architecture/spatial design education; and

(g to foster, publish and disseminate peer reviewed interior design/interior architecture/spatial design research.

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publishing

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co-constructing body-environments: provocation

Presenters at *Body of Knowledge: Art and Embodied Cognition Conference* (*BoK2019* hosted by Deakin University, Melbourne, June 2019) are invited to submit contributions to a special issue of idea journal "Co-Constructing Body-Environments" to be published in December 2020. The aim of the special issue is to extend the current discussions of art as a process of social cognition and to address the gap between descriptions of embodied cognition and the co-construction of lived experience.

We ask for papers, developed from the presentations delivered at the conference, that focus on interdisciplinary connections and on findings arising from intersections across research practices that involve art and theories of cognition. In particular, papers should emphasize how spatial art and design research approaches have enabled the articulation of a complex understanding of environments, spaces and experiences. This could involve the spatial distribution of cultural, organisational and conceptual structures and relationships, as well as the surrounding design features.

Contributions may address the questions raised at the conference and explore:

+ How do art and spatial practices increase the potential for knowledge transfer and celebrate diverse forms of embodied expertise?
+ How the examination of cultures of practice, Indigenous knowledges and cultural practices offer perspectives on inclusion, diversity, neurodiversity, disability and social justice issues?
+ How the art and spatial practices may contribute to research perspectives from contemporary cognitive neuroscience and the philosophy of mind?
+ The dynamic between an organism and its surroundings for example: How does art and design shift the way knowledge and thinking processes are acquired, extended and distributed?
+ How art and design practices demonstrate the ways different forms of acquiring and producing knowledge intersect?

These and other initial provocations for the conference can be found on the conference web-site: https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/bok2019/cfp/.

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Olivia Millard
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Luke Tipene
George Themistokleous
Russell Tytler
Rose Woodcock

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introduction: unknowingly, a threshold-crossing movement

Julieanna Preston
Executive Editor
idea journal

It is in this special issue that the editorial board holds true to our promise to expand the horizons and readership of *idea journal* while reaching out to associated and adjacent art, design and performance practices and drawing connections to seemingly distant disciplines. The articles in this issue have provenance in a 2019 conference event, Bodies of Knowledge (BOK), which was guided by a similar interdisciplinary ethos. With an emphasis on cultures of practice and communities of practitioners that offer perspectives on inclusion, diversity/neurodiversity and disability, this conference, and this subsequent journal issue, aim to increase knowledge transfer between diverse forms of embodied expertise, in particular, between neuroscience and enactive theories of cognition.

This brief description suggests that there are shared issues, subjects and activities that have the potential of generating new understanding in cross-, inter- and trans-disciplinary affiliations and collaborations. My experience in these modes of inquiry points to the importance of identifying what is shared and what is not amongst vocabulary, concepts, pedagogies and methods. Holding these confluences and diverges without resorting to strict definition, competition or judgement of right and wrong often affords greater understanding and empathy amongst individuals to shape a collective that is diverse in its outlooks, and hopefully, curious as to what it generates together because of that diversity.

cite as:
Preston, Julieanna. 'Introduction: Unknowingly, a threshold-crossing movement,' *idea journal* 17, no. 02 (2020): 08 – 12, https://doi.org/10.37113/ij.v17i02.412.

The breadth of the knowledge bases represented within this issue necessitated that the peer reviewer list expanded once again like the previous issue. It was in the process of identifying reviewers with appropriate expertise that the various synapses between scholarly and artistic practices became evident. It is these synapses that shape sturdy bridges between the journal's existing readership, which is predominantly academics and students in interior design, interior architecture, spatial design and architecture, and the wide range of independent scholars and practitioners, academics, and students attracted to BOK's thematic call for papers, performative lectures and exhibitions. At the risk of being reductive to the complexity and nuances in the research to follow, I suggest that the following terms and concerns are central to this issue, aptly inferred by its title, 'Co-Constructing Body-Environments': spatiality; subjectivity; phenomenology; processual and procedural practice; artistic research; critical reflection; body: experience. All of these are frequent to research and practice specific to interiors. In this issue, however, we find how these terms and concerns are situated and employed in other fields, in other ways and for other purposes.

This is healthy exercise. To stretch one's reach, literally and metaphorically is to travel the distance between the me and the you, to be willingly open to what might eventuate. Imagine shaking the hand of a stranger—a somatic experience known to register peaceful intent, respect, courage, warmth, pressure, humour, nervous energy, and so much more. This threshold-crossing movement is embodied and spatial; it draws on a multitude of small yet complex communication sparks well before verbal impulses ensue. This significant bodily gesture sets the tone for what might or could happen. Based on my understanding of the research presented in 'Co-Constructing Body-Environments,' I propose that this is a procedure in the Gins and Arakawa sense that integrates theory and practice as a hypothesis for 'questioning all possible ways to observe the body-environment in order to transform it.'[01] I call this as *unknowingly*—a process that takes the risk of not knowing, not being able to predict or predetermine, something akin to the spectrum of 'throwing caution to the wind' and 'sailing close to

the wind'. My use of the word 'unknowingly' embraces intuition where direct access to unconscious knowledge and pattern-recognition, unconscious cognition, inner sensing and insight have the ability to understand something without any need for conscious reasoning. Instinct. The word *unknowingly* also affords me to invoke the 'unknowing' element of this interaction—to not know, to not be aware of, to not have all the information (as if that was possible)— an acknowledgement of human humility. I borrow and adapt this facet of unknowingly from twentieth-century British writer Alan Watts:

> This I don't know, is the same thing as, I love. I let go. I don't try to force or control. It's the same thing as humility. If you think that you understand Brahman, you do not understand. And you have yet to be instructed further. If you know that you do not understand, then you truly understand.[02]

Unknowingly also allows me to reference 'un' as a tactic of learning that suspends the engrained additive model of learning. Though I could refer to many other scholarly sources to fuel this concept, here I am indebted to Canadian author Scott H. Young's pithy advice on how to un-learn:

> This is the view that what we think we know about the world is a veneer of sense-making atop a much deeper strangeness. The things we think we know, we often don't. The ideas, philosophies and truths that guide our lives may be convenient approximations, but often the more accurate picture is a lot stranger and more interesting.[03]

In his encouragement to unlearn—dive into strangeness, sacrifice certainty, boldly expose oneself to randomness, mental discomfort, instability, to radically rethink that place/ your place/ our place, suspend aversions to mystery—Young's examples from science remind us that:

Subatomic particles aren't billiard balls, but strange, complex-valued wavefunctions. Bodies aren't vital fluids and animating impulses, but trillions of cells, each more complex than any machine humans have invented. Minds aren't unified loci of consciousness, but the process of countless synapses firing in incredible patterns.[04]

Figure 01:
Meeting the horizon; A still image from Shore Variations, a 2018 film by Claudia Kappenberg that reimagines *Waning*, a 2016 live art performance by Julieanna Preston. https://vimeo.com/user11308386.

In like manner to the *BOK2019* conference which was staged as a temporally infused knowledge-transfer event across several days, venues, geographies and disciplines, I too, ingested the materials submitted for this issue in this spirit of unknowingly. The process was creative, critical, intuitive, generative and reflective—all those buzz words of contemporary research—yet charged with substantial respect and curiosity for whatever unfolded, even if it went against the grain of what I had learned previously. For artists, designers, architects, musicians, and performers reading this journal issue, especially academics and students, this territory of inquiry may feel familiar to the creative experience and the increasing demands (and desires) to account for how one knows what one knows in the institutional setting. 'Explain yourself,' as the review or assessment criteria often states. If you are faced having to annotate your creative practice or to critically reflect on aspects that are so embedded in your making that you are unaware of them, I encourage you to look amongst the pages of this journal issue for examples of how others have grappled with that task such that the process is a space of coming to unknow and know, unknowingly.

There are a few people I would like to acknowledge before you read further. First, huge gratitude to the generosity of the peer reviewers, for the time and creative energy of guest editors Jondi Keane, Rea Dennis and Meghan Kelly (who have made the process so enjoyable and professional), for the expertise of the journal's copy editor Christina Houen and Graphic Designer Jo Bailey, and to AADR for helping to expand the journal's horizons.

Okay, readers, shake hands, consider yourself introduced, welcome into the *idea journal* house, and let's share a very scrumptious meal.

acknowledgements
I am forever grateful for what life in Aotearoa/ New Zealand brings. With roots stretching across the oceans to North America, Sweden, Wales and Croatia, I make my home between Kāpiti Island and the Tararua Ranges, and in Te Whanganui-A-Tara/ Wellington. I acknowledge the privilege that comes with being educated, employed, female and Pākehā, and the prejudices and injustices that colonialism has and continues to weigh on this land and its indigenous people. I am committed to on-going learning and practicing of Kaupapa Māori.

notes

01 Jondi Keane, 'An Arakawa and Gins Experimental Teaching Space; A Feasibilty Study,' *INFLeXions* 6 (2012), accessed 29 October 2020, http://www.inflexions.org/n6_keane.html.

02 Alan Watts, *Creating Who You Are* (Video) (n.d.), accessed 29 October 2020, https://vimeo.com/76888920.

03 Scott H. Young, 'The Art of Unlearning' (2018), accessed 29 October 2020, https://www.scotthyoung.com/blog/2018/04/12/the-art-of-unlearning/.

04 Young, 'The Art of Unlearning.'

is my body out of date? the drag of physicality in the digital age

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with
Bon Mott *and* Sean Miles, 2019
and Jo Bailey, 2020

At the 2019 *Body of Knowledge Conference* at Deakin University, I presented the third episode of performance-lecture series 'Is My Body Out of Date?' in collaboration with Melbourne-based artists Bon Mott and Sean Miles. Punctuated by quotes and phrases from a range of theorists, writers and artists including Karen Barad, Caroline Bassett, Laboria Cuboniks, Ian McEwan, Oscar Wilde, Yon Heong Tung, ETA Hoffman, Gilbert Simondon, and my drag character #Sergina, the performance (struck) poses (around) the question of whether, in a world that is increasingly managed and experienced online, our bodies, as our primary mode of interaction, may be beginning to feel out of date. Is our desire for sweaty, messy, fleshy physical co-presence out of whack with the agility, efficiency and value of our algorithms? Performed live at a laptop with Mott and Miles as physical #BackupBodies for my own body that didn't fly from London for ecological reasons, this physical/digital screenshare performance wove in video documentation from previous #Sergina performances in order to confuse and conflate what was happening now, and what already happened, what was live and what was pre-recorded. Here we played with issues of perception, presence, liveness and the fantasy of the (ex)changeability of identity and 'drag' (performance) of physicality within an ever-shifting media present.

What follows is a visual essay constructed out of the digital remnants of the performance: a (trans)script, a screen recording, screenshots and links to media located beyond the template of the text. The visual essay touches on key conference themes such as virtual embodiment, human/computer interaction, temporal coupling and time consciousness, knowledge-transfer and how technology affects the way we move, think and desire. Furthermore, the templates of Zoom video communications, of the laptop screen, of Chrome and of the wider digital/physical conference model that hosted, directed (and dictated) the boundaries of our presentation reflect on the influence of design, layout and digit/al choreographies on the shaping and ordering of thought, knowledge and embodiment.

cite as:
Elly Clarke, 'Is my body out of date? The drag of physicality in the digital age,' *idea journal* 17, no. 02 (2020): 289–325, https://doi.org/10.37113/ij.v17i02.360.

keywords:
networked performance, drag, online/offline identities, collaborative script writing, digital templates, zoom video, performance lecture

re:presenting and re:playing bodies and knowledge across time and space

This is a transcript—with links to the screenshare archive—of a bi-hemisphere lecture presented at the *Body of Knowledge Conference* at Deakin University on 28th June 2019 by Elly Clarke (in Brighton, UK), together with Bon Mott and Sean Miles, (who were physically present in Melbourne/Naarm, Australia). The performance was the third in a trilogy of networked screenshare lectures Clarke had performed under the same title over the previous two years as/in collaboration with her (bodily transferable) drag identity #Sergina, who is played not only by Clarke, but by others as well; most often Serbian performer/art historian Vladimir Bjelčić, with whom Clarke has been working since 2015. With leaky edges and an identity that is up for grabs, #Sergina is 'everyone's selfie and no one's.'[01] Facilitated by video conferencing software Zoom and the use of screenshare from Clarke's computer throughout, the performance wove in videos of previous performances and videos, including rehearsal footage produced at a Doctoral Event at Sussex in the run up to the conference. Catalysed by the question 'Is My Body Out of Date?,' the performance is an attempt to reflect upon what it is to be and have a human body in a society that is increasingly experienced through screens, and how to maintain and build meaningful connections through and in collaboration with the tools available to use. Sharing a title with Clarke's practice-led PhD (now based at Goldsmiths College, University of London), the performance is also about dragging the term 'drag' to different contexts, expressions and uses; exploring drag for its potential to re/present both a performance (*dragging up*) and a burden (*dragging down*). In a technological present of assumed smartphone ownership, machine learning, Artificial Intelligence (AI), suggestive algorithms, and auto-updating platforms, Clarke explores how drag and dragging could be a means and method of playing (with) and resisting some of the *snapping-to-grid* an online/offline existence invariably brings about both in terms of digital templates and patterns of normativity.

The script was hacked from its previous version via Google Docs over a series of Zoom rehearsals in collaboration with Bon Mott and Sean Miles. Mott, who Clarke had met in Melbourne in 2012, was initially invited to collaborate, who in turn brought in their collaborator Miles. One singular identity (of #Sergina) was played by, and across, three

different bodies. Both Miles and Mott brought their research and personalities into the script, as well as the delivery. As with previous performances, the lecture put verbatim text from theorists into dialogue through the mouth/s of #Sergina, with citations delayed until the end. Whilst #Sergina has been performing through different bodies in different cities since 2015, the bi-hemispheric nature of this particular performance was due to the author's decision not to fly to Melbourne from London on account of the Climate Emergency. This makes the need to connect well and creatively through media even more urgent. And now, just over a year on, in the context of the global COVID19 pandemic, online is a primary mode of communication and interaction.

What follows is a word for word transcript with timings, set up and log off, and screen grabs which link directly to that point in the screen recorded performance as it happened. Alongside that are additional links to videos, previous performances that inspired this one, and some of the external sources that the lecture cites. Performers are identified by their first name initials.

How to read this text

Each screen shot acts as a link to the point of the QuickTime screen-recording of the performance. Additional links from the text enable the reader to leave this visual essay behind altogether, in pursuit of something else, thanks to the interactive architectures of the internet, and the (non)consensual dance of algorithms and human input.

probably shouldn't need too much info on 'how to use' (if we do it isn't really working!) This needs to cover epub and pdf use-cases too with the fact that some pdf readers won't play video (hence the links to MP4s ont he web. Also perhaps mention that some links might degrade over time and break (as is the nature of the internet)?

jpreston 24 Nov Reply

is this going to stay? if so good. but could it be given the same attributes as other notes to follow?

EllyClarke 12:49 AM

I understand that this was intended as a note to me. But actually it's probably good to have this standing out so people don't miss it. - perhaps the wording is:

Please note that some links might degrade - or become corrupted - over time and break (as is the nature of the Internet).

Add a reply...