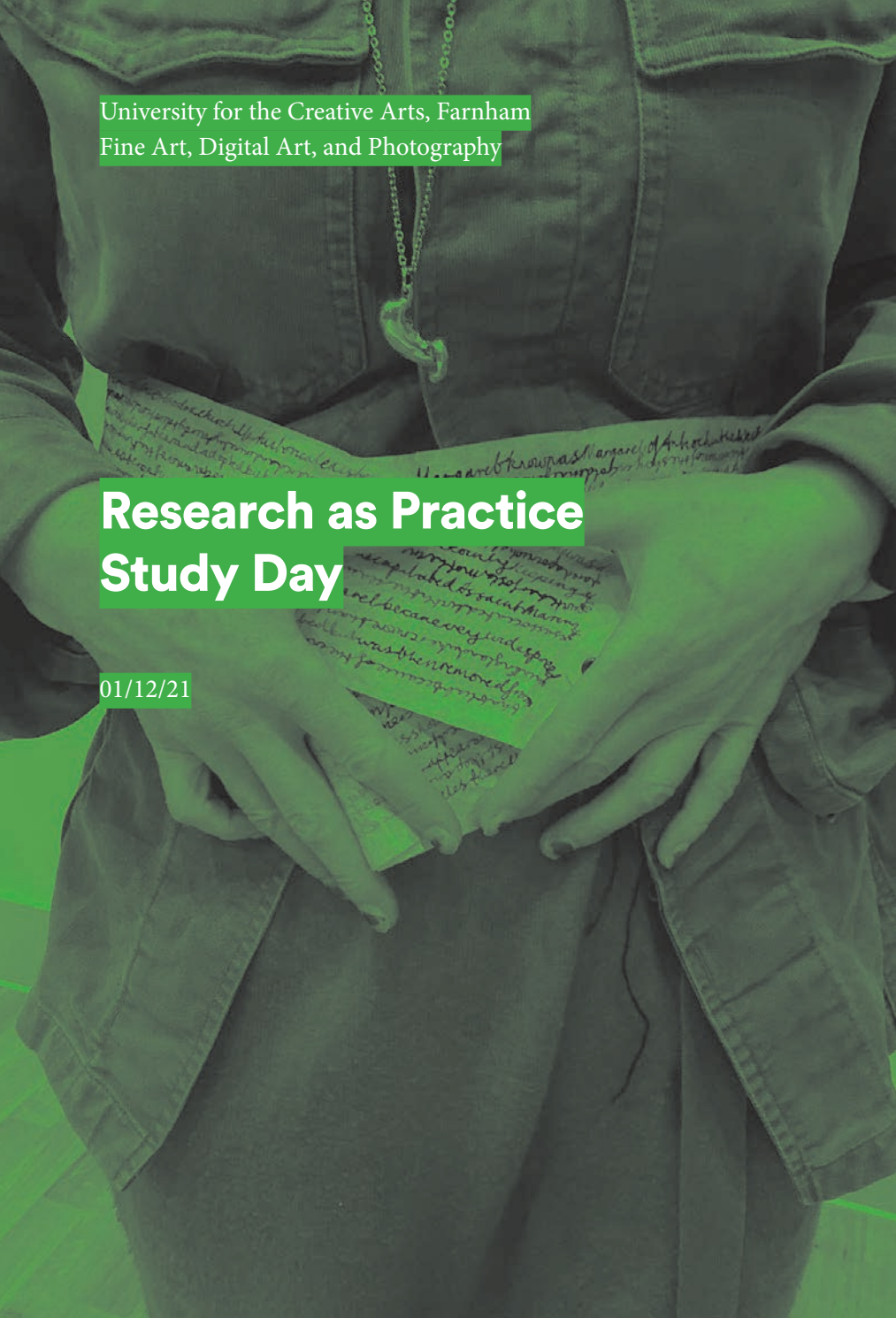


University for the Creative Arts, Farnham
Fine Art, Digital Art, and Photography

Research as Practice Study Day

01/12/21



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Introduction:

Dr Caroline Molloy

To mark the amalgamation of Fine Art, Digital Art and Photography, under the one programme at the University of Creative Arts in Farnham, in Autumn 2021 we held an inaugural Practice and Research study day through bookRoom which was supported by the research department at UCA. This builds on our online bi-monthly interdisciplinary speakers programme in which we invite artists and academics to share their practice and process. With a keen awareness that as pedagogues, the curriculum needs to be dynamic, fluid, and relevant to our learners, the aim of the Research as Practice study day was to bring together a range of artists and academics to discuss critical research questions that pivot diverse areas such as the ethics of art and artificial intelligence, how is information disseminated and communicated through publication on and off the page, whose voice are we listening to? And who has the right to be seen and heard. At the study day, these key areas were framed between host and guest who selected key points to make and expand on through their presentation. In this publication we share some of the points during the study day and include additional material that responds to the questions raised.

Senior Lecturer Minna Pöllänen invited artist Nora Heidorn to present a provocation that asks the audience to consider the representation of the body through race, gender and disability in art and visual culture under the panel title *Curating Inclination: Vulnerability, Care, and Resistance*. Senior Lecturer Matt Lindsey



Amanda Couch at Research as Practice Study Day, 2021

Senior Lecturer Jeremiah Ambrose invited artist Mocksim who pivoted questions around AI and whether intelligence itself can be defined at all. Senior Lecturer Matt Lindsey presents responses to both panels. Reader in Fine Art and Relational Practices Emmanuelle Waeckerlé, the Director of bookRoom, invited three artists, Matt Johnston, Emma Lambert, and Amanda Couch to present their bookworks and share their thoughts on how work is discussed and disseminated through publication. The closing keynote panel was hosted by Professor Anna Fox who introduced Aida Silverti and spoke about the current AHRC project *Putting Ourselves in the Picture*. Senior Lecturer David Rule presents a summary of these two panels.

In response to Nora Heidorn's talk Senior Lecturer Kate Street developed a new piece of work for this publication that reframes ideas of representation of the female body, and artist, and writer Greig Burgoyne developed a new piece of writing that conceptually unpacks some of the questions raised during the study day. We aim that this publication acts as a space in which new ideas are experimented with and developed within a critical and conceptual context.

Dr. Caroline Molloy

Programme Director Fine Art, Digital Art, and Photography

**Panel 1:
Nora Heidorn and Minna
Pöllänen**

**Curating Inclination:
Vulnerability, Care, and
Resistance**



Harold Offeh, from *Lounging*, 2017-20

Panel 1: Nora Heidorn

“Welcome, thank you for spending your evening with us! During this event, I invite you to join me in paying caring and critical attention to images of reclined bodies.

I developed this curatorial project from visual research I gathered over the course of last year: the fascinating paintings by the late Carol Rama of women in hospital beds and wheelchairs, a historic design of a gynaecological examination chair, 18th Century Anatomical Venuses, designs for the patient rooms in the sanatorium that Alvar Aalto built in the woods of Finland, photographs of die-ins staged by AIDS activists in the 1980s, and so on ...

When speaking to artist friends about this collection of images, it became clear to me that they have in common the theme of horizontal bodies, and the way this position seems to speak to complex dynamics of power and powerlessness.

In the works presented this evening, the acts of reclining, collapsing, reversing or lounging are deliberate and performative. You will notice that there is barely any speech in these works; tonight, we will feel out the embodied knowledges we have about what it means to move into varying degrees of incline, and to be looked at, painted, photographed, or filmed whilst being horizontal.

We might associate recline with sleeping and resting, with

having sex, with being unwell, injured and, indeed, with death. In these artworks, I read going horizontal as symbolic acts with different meanings in different situations.

Moving the body into horizontality, physically and perhaps psychically, removes the body from the spatial and temporal playing field of the present moment. The loss of verticality, whether intentional or due to circumstance, temporary or permanent, may indicate an altered state, a different mode of being. The horizontal mode contradicts the standard enlightenment representation of the human body as male, singular, upright, autonomous and able-bodied.

This is an ideal which women, children, and others considered a little ‘less than human’, less rational or more dependent, could never fully achieve. The feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero’s 2016 book *Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude* makes clear what is at stake in being horizontal. She writes that “philosophy, in general, does not like inclination. It contests and combats it. Its methods are numerous and varied, depending on the epoch, but all are, in essence, as Foucault would put it, dispositifs of verticalization, the aim of which is the upright man” - or, the righteous man.

Inclination, on the other hand, puts humans into relation with one another and the more-than-human world. Hannah Arendt wrote that “every inclination turns outward, it leans out of the self in the direction of whatever may affect me from the outside world.” Cavarero points to the geometrical imaginary in which inclination is at odds with “the theatre of modern philosophy, [where] centre stage is occupied by the I and whose position is straight and vertical.”



Manao tupapau

Paul Gauguin, *Spirit of the Dead Watching (Manao tupapau)*, 1892; Nashashibi / Skaer, *Why Are You Angry?*, 2017



How, then, might the simple but charged acts of reclining, lounging, collapsing, or reversing be reimagined as critiques of the neoliberal drives for efficiency, productivity, speed, and independence? I would like you to keep this question in mind whilst experiencing the artworks, and we will return to it during our discussion at the end.

I have selected three short artist films that we will screen in the first half of the evening. We will pause in silence for 2 minutes after each film to allow you a bit of time with your own thoughts. After the screenings, we will have a 10 minute intermission. We will then return to a live performance by Harold Offeh, before being joined by Felicity Callard for a discussion. Now, please get comfortable on your sofas, yoga mats, chaise longues, etc. and enjoy!”

[Extract from a script provided by Nora Heidorn]



Response: Matt Lindsey

Laying Down on the Job

Anyone who grew up in 1980s Britain might remember two distinct images of posed men. An iteration of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man recreated in red on black for the titles of *World in Action* (a current affairs television programme), and an album cover featuring of American singer Teddy Pendergrass's 1981 release *It's Time For Love*. Each of these dispositions bookend a spectrum of bodily pose, from 'casual' personified in rectitude, to the paradigm of perfectly proportioned upright symmetry. Where Pendergrass through a use of hand gestures mirroring his angled leg and left arm invites the viewer's gaze, Vitruvian man, cuts an autonomous figure, his blank stare through the viewer and into infinity affixes his power on us.

Irrespective of ableness, gender or race, we are all dominated by his blank stare for he represents not an individual man, but an aesthetic ideal that the human body can be correlated with the universe through mathematic principles connecting us to space through intersecting squares, circles and golden sections (deftly parodied by Chris Morris's *Brass Eye*). It is this study of the human body in an abstract space that has shaped western notions of interactions and experiences with the world. It posits to be an active participant in one's surroundings is not just to be a strong white man, but an upright figure whose proportions meet mathematic principles of perfect geometry.

White maleness isn't an ethnographic classification but a conditioned way of thinking of which we are all in varying proportions inadvertent agents and afflicted. It's codifications and hegemonic structures pervade much through society as an historic residue on which our actions add to its palimpsest. Regardless of our intent they are shaped but what has gone before, they reside on an accumulation that we sometimes wish to forget. Nonetheless active engagement with our world is increasingly less about our physical interactions and more about how we understand connectivity through other means. We congregate in spaces that owe as much to the four corners of a smartphone as those of a town square. The gulf between private and public space has been reduced as such they find themselves back-to-back. The armchair critic is voiced and even broadcast lounging. The reclined figure has long been subverting traditional power relations from Manet's *Olympia*, Lennon's *Bed Peace*, Tiananmen Square protests to Kahlo's bed paintings to the point when performed in Parliament by one of its immodestly outmoded protagonists, it disrupts and leaves observers confounded.

Soon after the 80s and its curbing of trade union powers came a short-lived hedonistic period of voter apathy. That era of political indifference has evaporated along with any fantastical notions of people lying down on the job. Activism and art have long had an uneasy marriage, but perhaps now more than in recent years, we understand **this is a time not just to represent, but for a return to action – prostrate, perpendicular, seated or otherwise.**



Panel 2: Mocksim and Jeremiah Ambrose

Artificial Stupidity

Panel 2: Mocksim

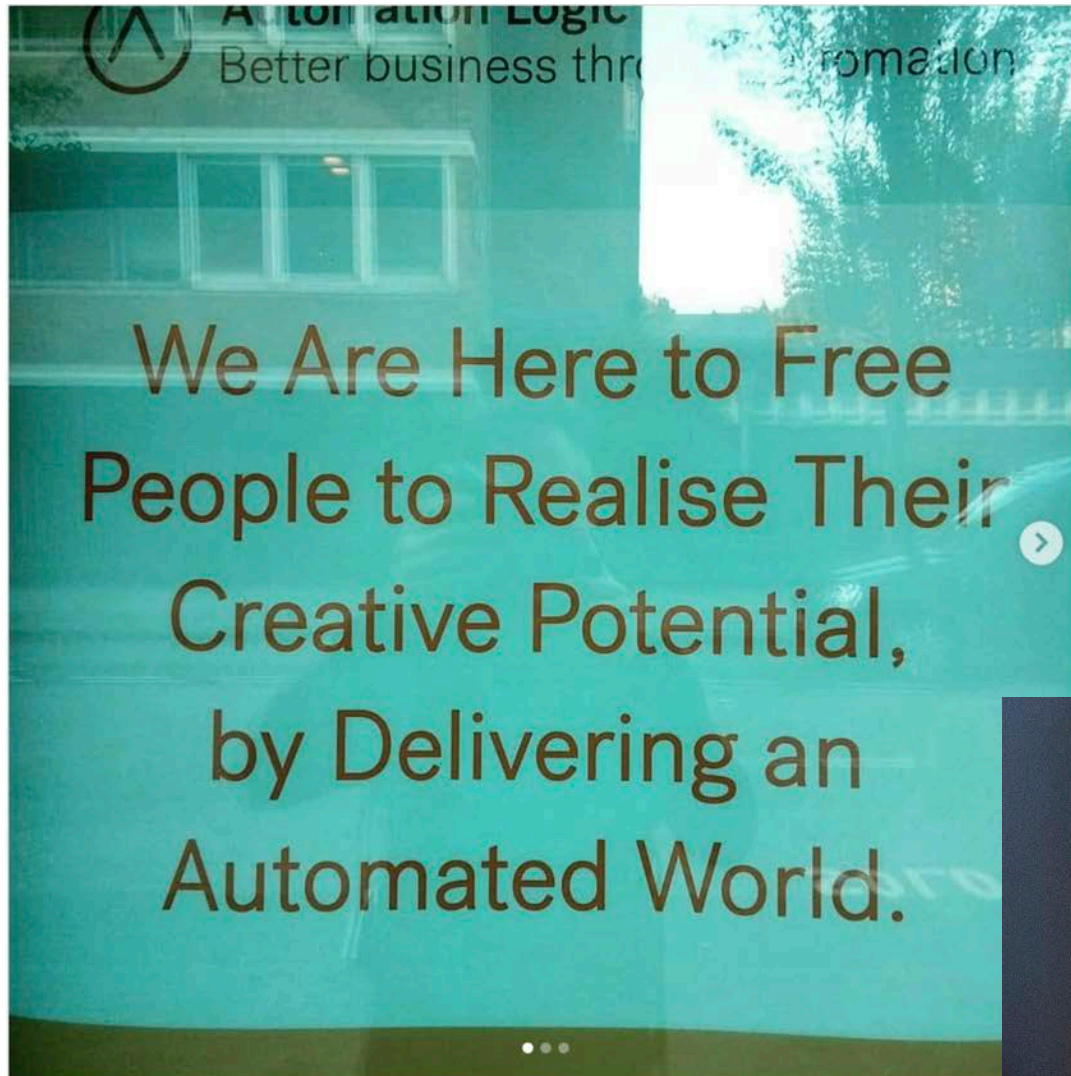
A few years ago, following an event at which eminent Professor of Cognitive Science, Margaret Boden, had spoken about AI dangers (Whitby and Boden, 2015), I had the privilege of sitting across from her at a meal afterwards. Asked what my, at the time ongoing, PhD was about, I answered: ‘artificial stupidity’. Boden laughed heartily, clearly with, and not at, the idea. Eventually the practice PhD was published (O’Connell, 2017) and though, in retrospect, the written component is oddly structured and is meandering in places, the subject remains of interest to me. The Research as Practice initiative at University for Creative Arts has been an opportunity to revisit and represent, in the form of a paper or essay, key findings, together with new material. The writing here is a synopsis of that.

Seemingly very different applications of the joke phrase, artificial stupidity, can be connected. Obvious connotations are with the dysfunctionality of many supposedly intelligent or ‘smart’ systems. Bugs or design errors may have trivial or catastrophic consequences. Some amount to a source of amusement, easily avoided through workarounds, or can be designed out; others take users by surprise or put whole populations in jeopardy. In the first of four recent Reith Lectures, Stuart Russell refers to the preoccupation with processing speed: ‘Running stupid algorithms on faster and faster machines just gives you the wrong answer more quickly’ (*Living With Artificial Intelligence, The Biggest Event in Human History*, 2021). Actual employments of the term ‘artificial stupidity’

or similar, or related concepts, originating from other prominent thinkers such as Caroline Bassett (2017), Sadie Plant (1998), John Roberts (1996), Avital Ronnell (2002), Hito Steyerl (2017), and Joanna Zylińska (2020), are given attention and critiqued in the writing.

Artificial stupidity might be a retort to the common ignorance or expectations of AI, whether overexuberant or arising out of dystopian fantasy. Or, the expression could simply be shorthand for lack of awareness and an inability to think about invisible all-embracing systems. Disrupting or subverting back, as a practice or natural inclination, tricksterism that is, would be life-affirming, rather than merely foolish, and therefore artificially stupid or intelligently stupid. This important human ability to act stupid is delved into. For good reason, stupidity is a controversial term and Ronnell’s application (2002, pp.59–60), referring in turn to the writing of Stephen Jay Gould (1981), looks at the history of IQ testing and its terrible consequences in connection with the eugenics movement. Old portrayals of the Irish, from a British perspective, provide good basis for understanding the relationship between notions of intelligence and processes of ‘othering’/de-othering.

Can intelligence itself be defined at all in fact? A controversial book, *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein and Murray, 1996) has since been discredited, initially by Gould who had said it ‘contains no new arguments and presents no compelling data to support its anachronistic social Darwinism’ (1994). The American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on Intelligence concluded its investigation by responding to seven fundamental questions. The report emphasises how much is ‘unknown’ with



mocksim · Follow



mocksim #ArtificialStupidity

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Mocksim, #ArtificialStupidity, 2018 [Mobile device shot taken through window of new co-working office space in London, enlarged and printed on estate agent board, with post]

inert things (Barad, 2003; Latour, 2005; Haraway, 2007). Given the human propensity, or arguable necessity, towards othering, could our critical attentions, be directed instead towards non-human others, and specifically the codes, bureaucracies, systems which we created and then anthropomorphised? A sophisticated rather than superstitious revisiting of the value of ‘human exceptionalism’ might be in order, one which has learnt from the various network turns whether inspired by cybernetics or Gaia (Lovelock, 2000), Latour, or Haraway. An important definition of the word stupid after all is as ‘the characteristic of inanimate things: without sensation, consciousness, thought, or feeling’ (OED, 2021) and perhaps that is one to retain.

[Text provided by Micheál O’Connell AKA Mocksim]

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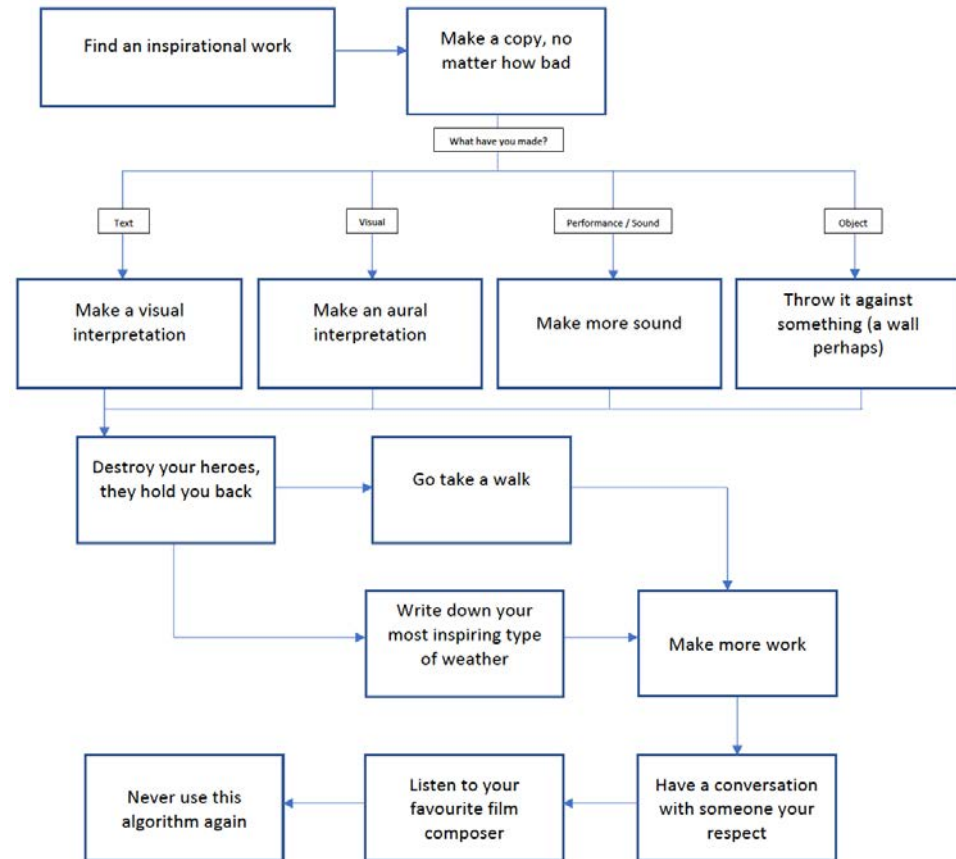
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Response: Matt Lindsey

An Algorithm for Creative Life



**Panel 3:
Amanda Couch, Matt
Johnston, Emma Lambert,
and Emmanuelle Waeckerlé**

On and off the Page



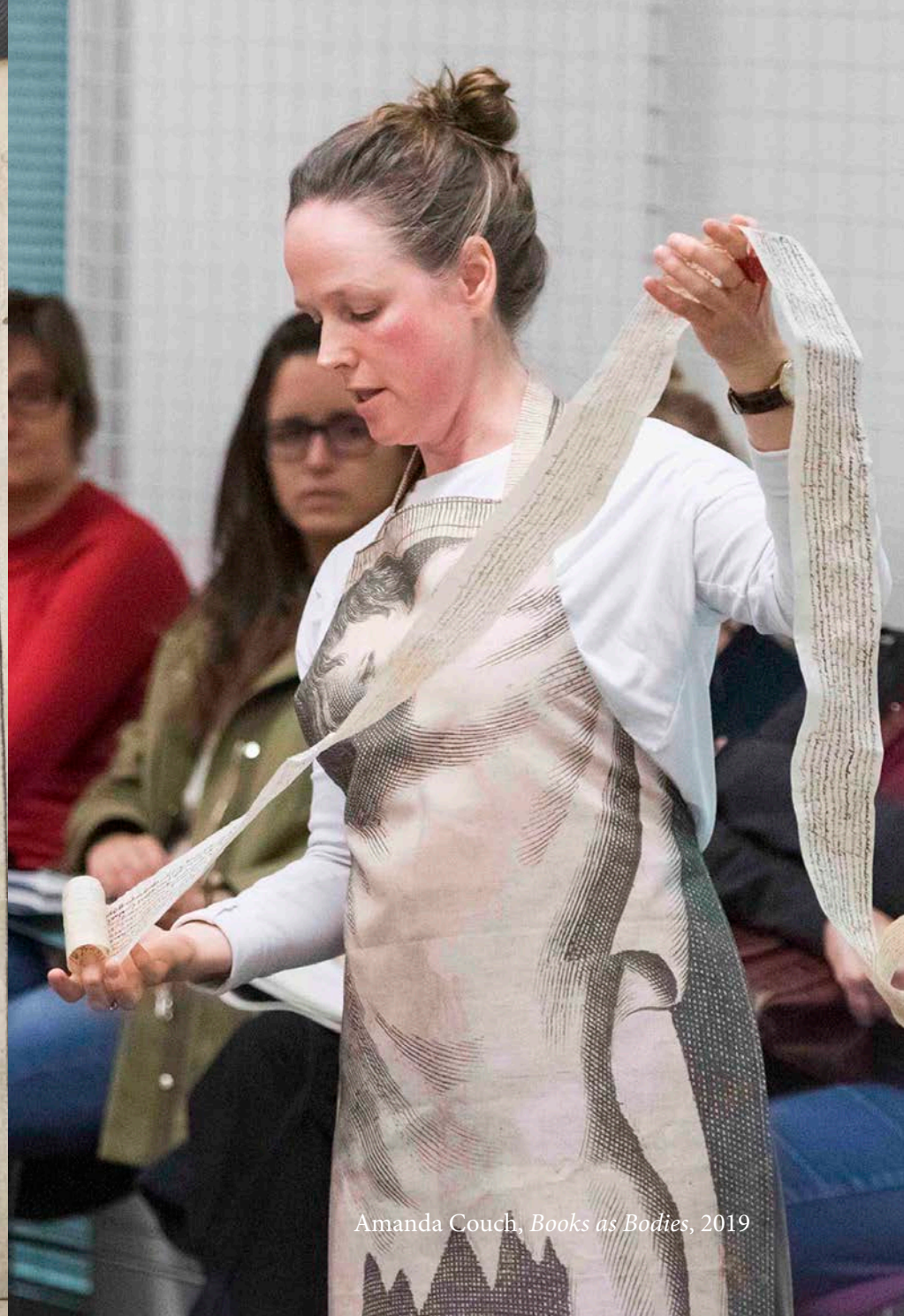
Alex Soth in his library, Ethan Jones, n.d.

Panel 3: Amanda Couch

Amanda Couch's artists' books and lecture-performances explore the processes and metaphors of digestion and reflexivity as well as the history of reading. She plays with the corporeality of books and the entanglement between the metaphorical, **books as bodies, vessels that contain knowledge and experience**, and the material, books constituted often of bodily matter, parchment, leather, blood and hair. As part of the study day, Amanda presented aspects of her practice that intersect with the book and shared how she has been working with bookRoom since 2012, beginning with the epic *Reflection on Digestion*, the collaborative *On Innards* in 2015, and *Digesting Ritual* more recently in 2019. Many of her books can also be classified by what Joanna Drucker calls 'Book[s] as Performance' leading her to develop *Books as Bodies* a series of performance-lectures presented at the Wellcome Library (2016 & 2019) and in 2020 at The Royal College of Physicians, both in London, which weave theory, storytelling and the performing of gestures and artefacts to enact research to champion the re-emergence of the body as a site for discussions of knowledge and knowing. The performances are structured by a series of chapters, which include 'Birthing Girdles', 'Reading as Ruminantion', and 'Palimpsests and Skin'. In the most recent iteration for the Royal College of Physicians, she created a new chapter 'The Matrix, The Womb and The Printing Plate' which drew on materials in the library's collections and conversations with the librarian, Katie Birkwood, that explored the etymological convergence of meanings of the word 'matrix', "where printmaking

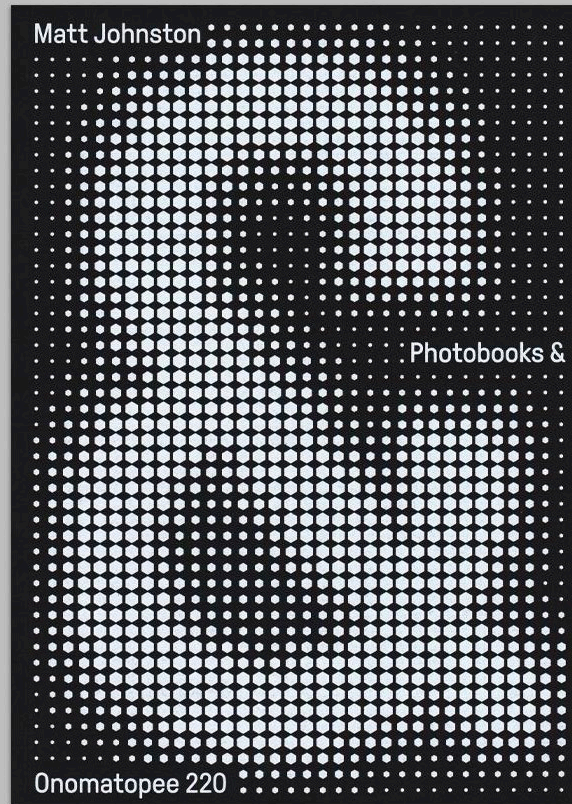
matrices and the [bodily] womb-uterus as a matrix collide." She concluded her talk at the study day by performing this chapter, metaphorically birthing a print from a plate-womb, whilst wearing a parchment birthing scroll.

Angelica Harris-Faull, 'The Re-Producing Womb-Matrix', 2015, <https://writingfrombelow.org/space-and-place/re-producing-womb-matrix/> (accessed 20 March 2020).



Panel 3: Matt Johnston

In *Photobooks & A Reading economy* Johnston presented a key consideration and proposal from his publication *Photobooks &* with *Onomatopée* (2021). By articulating **the reader as an overlooked participant in the photobook ecology** and a representation of the narrow confines of the medium's audience he highlighted the need for a more meaningful discourse around photography and publishing. A reading economy was posited as a system by which to help achieve this recalibration away from current maker-centrism and insularity.



Distance reading

The information we gather consciously or collect unconsciously prior to picking up the book or entering a first reading.

Material reading

A brief material consideration of the photobook.

Inspectional reading

A brief consideration of the photobook's contents and non-material form.

Navigational reading

An investigation of content, which may be either passive and spectator-like, or active and scholarly.

Conceptual reading

A questioning of the purpose of the work — why does it operate in this manner? What is being communicated?

Assimilatory reading

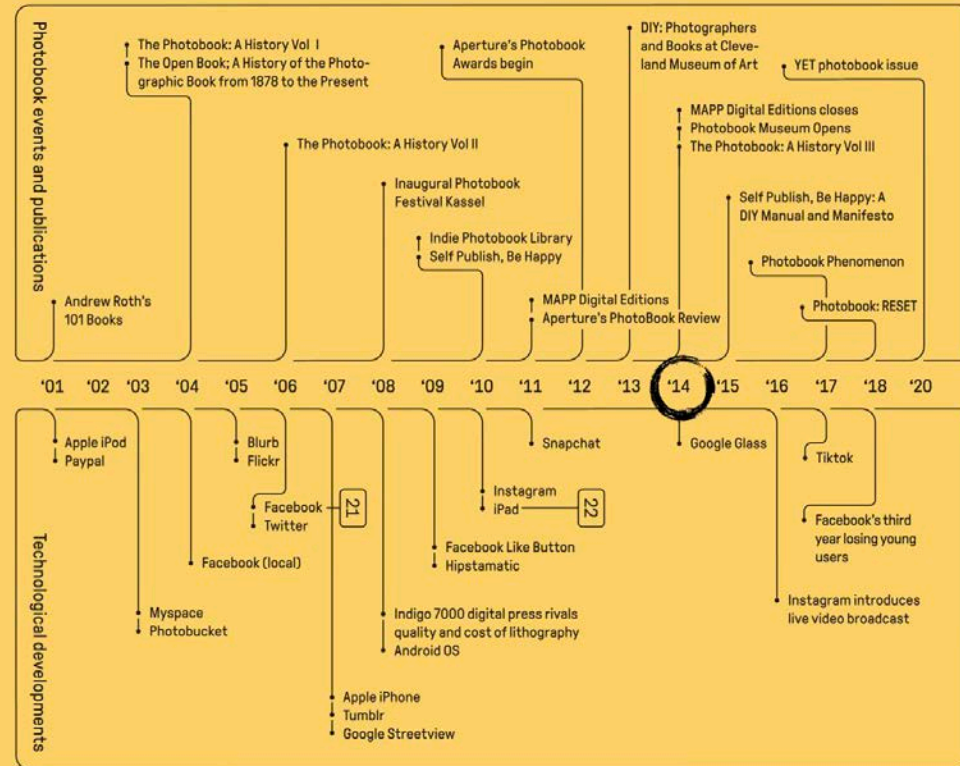
Making connections to other works, experiences, actions and relationships.

Shelf-reading

The physical positioning of the photobook and its connection to an ongoing cognitive connection with the work.

Re-reading

Any secondary reading of a work, which can be begun after any act.



Panel 3: Emma Lambert

Lambert spoke on **the photobook as a social object**, citing Namita Wiggers' definition of a social object as:

'an object that pushes social interaction into a new space, form, or way to illuminate frameworks of society itself. A social object must be a conduit for change - whether a small behavioural gesture or shift in social norm of public action.' (Wiggers in SECC, 2017)

Lambert introduced her imprint, Silverprint Press, as the nexus of her current PhD, her research question: 'the contemporary photobook as a social object: can independent photobook publishing be considered a form of social art practice? Lambert explained: "this research is grounded in making and making with others and so to develop this research through practice was very important."

Right and overleaf: Emma Lambert, *Where are you a local?*, 2022





Where

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you

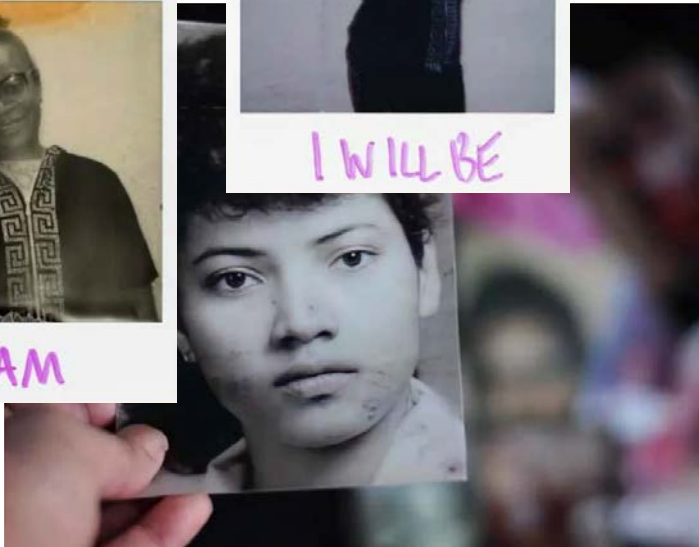
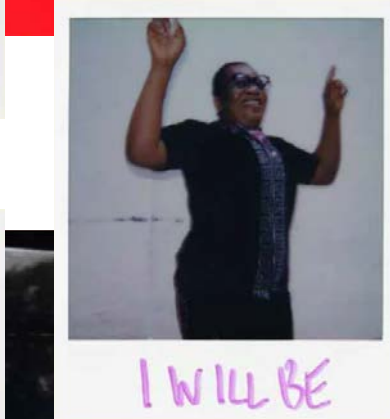
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Panel 4: Aida Silvestri and Anna Fox

Putting Ourselves in the Picture



Panel 4: Anna Fox

The partners Autograph, Impressions Gallery, National Galleries of Scotland, Women for Refugee Women, and Work Show Grow, worked with the Fast Forward team to develop the project and designed a series of empowering skills development activities building confidence for the women participants. Each partner brought their own team of artists, mentors and workshop leaders to work with a group of participants in their own locations. The powerful narratives and inspiring images that emerge from *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* have grown out of the pioneering photography workshops and mentorship activity, devised by the partners and delivered across the UK. The book *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* is out now published by Trolley Books.

The project participants Ceecee, Rella, Rhody, Miya, Precious, Raolat, Phim, Leonelle, Linda, Nwanyi, Lovelin, Hannah, Grace, Maureen, Ana, Maryam, Sylvie, Taraneh, Elham, Manar, Vicky, and Josiane all made work that opens our eyes, enthuses our ideas and crushes stereotypes. *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* confronts gender discrimination and the marginalisation of women in our societies.

Fast Forward, based at the University for the Creative Arts in the UK, is designed to promote and engage with women in photography across the globe. We provoke new debate and ensure, as women photographers and professionals, that we are in the

news and in the history books. There are millions of women in the world of photography and we intend to arrest the process of forgetting that so frequently erases women from the burgeoning histories of photography and shed light on new ways of thinking, showing, discussing and distributing our work. Fast Forward has initiated the Manifesto for Increased Involvement of Women in Photography, which welcomes signatures from both: individuals and organisations to support the need for equality and diversity across all fields of photography.

Aida Silvestri is an interdisciplinary artist, activist and educator of Eritrean descent who creates mixed-media artworks that challenge the status quo of stigma, prejudice and social injustice in relation to issues of race, class, identity and health, often combining text, image and experimental techniques to manipulate the photographic surface. Silvestri's solo exhibitions include Autograph and Roman Road Gallery, both in London, and she has exhibited in international group shows such as *African Cosmologies: Photography, Time and the Other* (FotoFest, Houston, 2020), and at The Photographers' Gallery, London; Saatchi Gallery, London; TEAT Champ Fleuri, Sainte-Clotilde; Musée National d'Histoire-aux-Poissons, Ville-Haute; The Hong-Gah Museum, Taipei; Benaki Museum, Athens; Cours de L'Archevêché, Arles; and Centquarter, Paris. In 2021 she was artist-in-residence at Light Work, Syracuse. Her works are held in the collections of the Museum of Fine Art, Houston (USA), Los Angeles Country Museum (USA) and Autograph, London (UK).

Response: David Rule

The two afternoon panels brought together six practitioners and researchers with intersecting interests around collaboration and printed matter.

Emmanuelle Waeckerlé introduced bookRoom, an experimental research platform within the School of Fine Art and Photography at UCA that, alongside symposia and multiple public outputs, supports research through direct, experimental practice with an on-campus binding space, editorial support, and well-established small press. It's through bookRoom that the three speakers of the panel generated much the work shown: Amanda Couch's first three bookworks were published by bookRoom press; Matt Johnston completed his PhD with Waeckerlé's supervision; and Emma Lambert is a current PhD candidate.

Amanda Couch introduced her first bookwork *Reflection on Digestion* (2012), a vast concertina produced during live scribing performances, followed by *On Innards* (2015) a hybrid catalogue-artists book on guts and digestion (the unravelling and reading of which becomes a performance itself). *Digesting Ritual* (2019) was published, again by bookRoom press, following an exhibition and participatory performance drawing on extispicy (divination using entrails) and comprising texts, photographic documentation, and a fascinating biscuit. Couch's 'books as performance' (a phrase she attributes to Johanna Drucker) developed into 'books as bodies':

performance lectures in which scrolls are worn, unfurled, read, and enacted. Enacting, practicing, or doing often merges provocatively with reflection in Couch's work – such as in the memorable experience of eating offal while listening to a text on its biological function and culinary preparation.

Couch performed a sample of *Books as Bodies, Bodies as Books* (2020) – a meditation on the matrix, the womb, and the printing plate (which share 'the offspring' as a kind of copy) through her encounters with historical birthing scrolls (part talisman, part medical text). Couch's current work takes her into a more traditional site of research: the Royal College of Physicians' library (its collections including 16th century engraved images of wombs and foetuses), though the reflections carried out continue to weave intricate connections – the fertile pomegranate; its rich tannins; and printing ink.

Matt Johnston presented *Photobooks &* (2021), speaking first of his early encounters with photobooks and the opportunities they offered for a personal, manifold, reading experience. Surrounding these encounters was a newly visible cultural excitement around the photobook (with published histories, notable collectors, festivals, etc. emerging in the early 2000s). Johnston suggested that this frenzy might have neglected what happens to a photobook once it reaches a reader, and responded in 2009 by founding The Photobook Club. With chapters around the world, The Photobook Club provided spaces for non-hierarchical conversations around photobooks; curated exhibitions; travelling book boxes; and original explorations in digital publishing (bringing out-of-print collectables back into circulation).

Reviewing over a decade of movements in publishing, Johnston asked questions about the use of the term ‘photobook’, given the variety within the genre; and examined the reading experience – a specific process for the photobook, distinct from other book forms. Through his PhD, Johnston crystallised his questions around an attempt to reconnect ‘making’ and ‘making public’. Michael Bhaskar’s theory of publishing models a process of ‘filtration’ (establishing what to publish) through to ‘framing’ (the publication itself), noting that frames are both presentational (signalling a completion) and receptional (intended for a receiver). Framing (publishing) ensures that work is made public – and available – amplified to a public (depending on quantity, cost, medium, etc.). *Photobooks &* (2021) represents Johnston’s reframing of his PhD thesis – to make his assessment of post-digital publishing public with language, provocative questions, and recommendations of additional resources, designed for practitioners as much as academics.

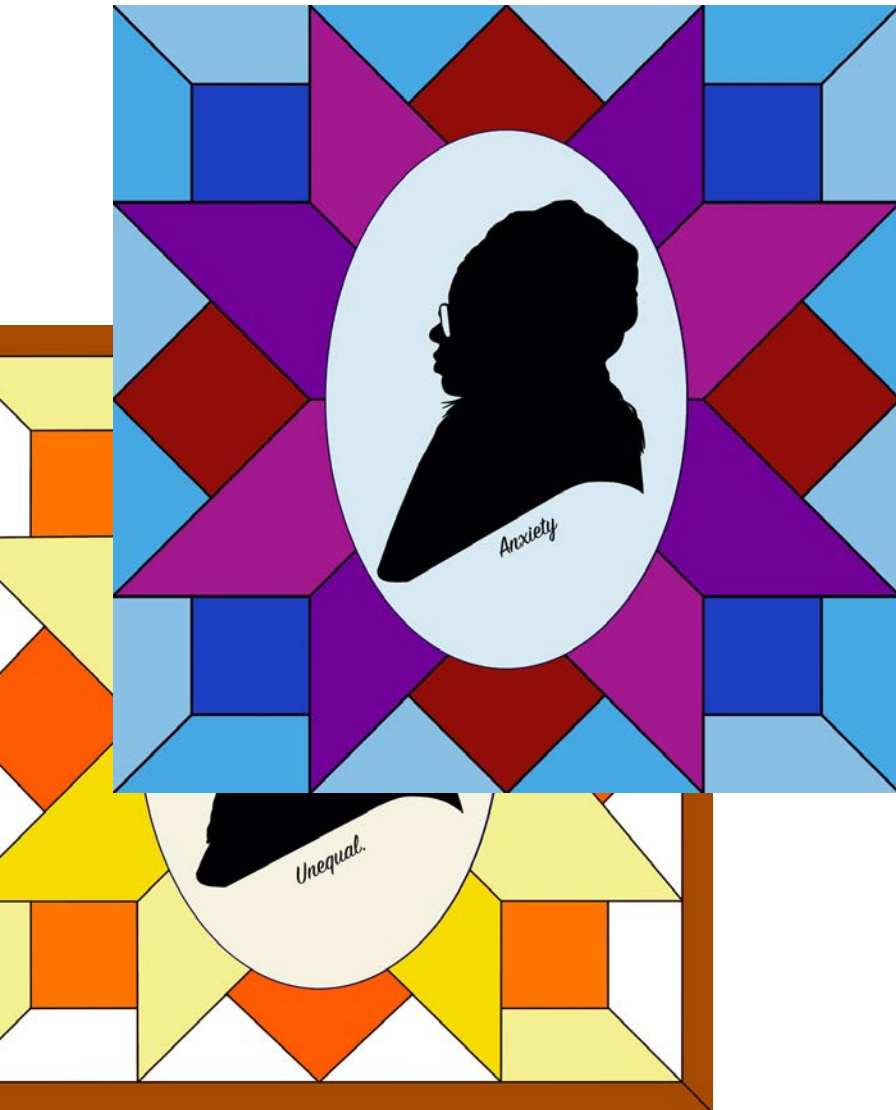
Emma Lambert spoke of the photobook as a social object, introducing her own publications before describing her work encouraging undergraduate students to explore the possibilities of producing photobooks – at times a collaborative process between educator and learner. Keenly aware of the proliferation of small presses, stoked by digital printing technologies, Lambert’s PhD considers the intersection of independent photobook publishing and collaborative or social art practices. Supported by craft theory (how people connect through making) and contemporary ideas around post-digital materiality, Lambert reframes artists books and photobooks as ‘social objects’ – with the potential to alter or illuminate interactions or behaviours. Revolv Collective serve as an important case study, working with experienced and burgeoning

makers to pull together responses to set themes. Lambert introduced her own Silvergrass Press, launched in 2021 with a clear statement of intent:

‘Photobooks create opportunities for people to learn about themselves and others through making; they embody collaborative practices of making and sharing; and they generate conversation and exchange through the hand and mind connection.’

The press’ first publication *Where are you a local?* (2022) responds to this, gathering nine photographers through an open call to collaborate online (using Zoom and Padlet to gather and exchange during the Covid pandemic). The title poses a question near impossible to answer in a non-discursive way, securing the ‘conversation’ at the heart of Lambert’s manifesto. A consistent template gave each participant a double-sided A3 sheet, folded and combined in such a way that the publication remains looseleaf with shuffling encouraged (and inevitable!). Each new sequencing by the reader / curator generates new imagined conversations between the nine participants – the binary of the folded spread involved in extending and further entangling understandings of place and home.

In the final session of the day Professor Anna Fox introduced Fast Forward, a research project established at UCA in 2014 to promote and engage with women in photography. In 2021 Fox was awarded an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Engagement Fellowship by the Arts and Humanities Research Council enabling the year-long project *Putting Ourselves in the Picture*, which supported a



community of marginalized women and non-binary people through workshops and mentorships, with outputs (ranging from collages to recipes) published by Trolley Books in *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* (2022). Fox introduced Aida Silvestri, artist, activist, and one of the workshop leaders for the project with sessions for seven participants run through Autograph APB.

Aida Silvestri prefaced *Putting Ourselves in the Picture* with an introduction to her broad practice, often centring the migrant or refugee experience. In *Why Folkestone?* (2019) Silvestri looks at ideas of belonging and the implications of migration in the seaside town through approachable portraits and minimalistic tapestries tracing routes both local and global. In *Even This Will Pass* (2014) the geographical journeys of Eritrean refugees (fleeing 30 years of totalitarian rule) to the UK by car, lorry, plane, boat, and foot are stitched across anonymised portraits (threads doubling-back, and some with an unimaginable number of vertices).

For *Putting Ourselves in the Picture*, Silvestri worked with seven LGBTQ+ women who were in the process of seeking, or had been granted, asylum in the UK. With varying experiences of and backgrounds in photography (one participant, Ceecee, posts frequently on social media), the seven women considered notions of identity, difference, and representation, guided toward new technical skills and creative storytelling practices. One strategy involved striking graphic geometric designs, resembling quilting, framing bold black profiles, resembling nineteenth century silhouette portraits. Under the neckline of each, a single word in cursive – ‘Anxiety.’ ‘Unequal.’ – hint at the struggles behind the strength of the

designs and optimism of the colours.

Though not explicitly addressed on the day, the playful inversion of ‘practice as research’ to ‘research as practice’ may say something about the position of those sharing their creative methodologies. The works discussed in the afternoon panels exist as both original investigations, undertaken in pursuit of new knowledge (in the conventional sense of practice-led research, see Linda Candy, 2006), and practices that might not exist without an investigative urge. There’s a fluidity between the two ‘modes’ – or perhaps even an erasure. Couch’s weaving of ‘traditional’ secondary research and reflective, embodied, response; Johnston’s initial pragmatic impulse to share later guiding and ultimately shaping the dissemination of his PhD; Lambert’s practice becoming research, becoming practice, becoming research (through doing!); and Silvestri’s work creating processes and tools for reflection, which are then handed out – shared with others to become practitioners, themselves reflecting, almost as autoethnographers. The joy of a day like this is to recognise what the fruits of such varied approaches might have in common: the investigative urge, an impulse to share and collaborate, and a fluidity between modes which, not long ago, may have been positioned against each other.

Response: Kate Street

In response to the presentation by Nora Heidorn and practice of Amanda Couch, Senior Lecturer in Fine Art Kate Street, developed a digital composite bringing together these areas of research through her own methodologies. Street, often drawn to predigital print, combined an archive image from Museo Del Prado of *Still Life with Grapes and Pomegranates* by Jose Ferrer (1781) with an image from a 1974 copy of Playboy magazine. The pomegranate being the key edible item within the composition references the comparisons with medical diagrams within Couch’s research based practice. The female is often reclining with soft porn imagery, readily available to the viewer, but here, in the digital composite, she’s less vulnerable, and more concerned with self-care through harvesting one’s own bounty.



Kate Street, *Harvest (After Ferrer)*, 2022

Closing comments: Greig Burgoyne

Research as Practice

‘The possibility that I project and the one that I discover are knitted together by action’ (Ricoeur, 2007:54)

Research is an attitude. It is activated knowledge, in a continual state of rupture, between hegemonic systems seeking to impose boundaries on that insight and potential, but also the means to evade such systems through surprise, wonder and even stupidity.

The world is not in front of us, but all around us as Merleau-Ponty said. It’s also one of perpetual inconclusiveness. Invariably however, we can find ourselves walking along a street looking down into our iPhones oblivious to that world, the challenges nor surprises that this phenomenology may be offering up.

Research as practice reveals a myriad of strategies and positions in which we locate and immerse in this world. In this regard, ‘Language is not meanings servant’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:83) and this, therefore, may be what drives that play, curiosity and risk as we paradoxically seek out conclusions where none are possible.

Yet this is an era unrelenting in its proliferation of images and data. Less information and certitude, we are continually fed a

hegemonic spectacle. As our subjectivity is repackaged and sold back to us, we may be becoming a potpourri of witnesses and dreamers. We can think even debate, but ‘No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing that wall’ (Foucault, 2020:206).

To share these thoughts and actions is to contest, be enriched and acknowledge the inclusivity that new understanding and innovation can bring if we allow it. This is to engage as Nora Heidorn proposes, in playful antagonism in her call for horizontality. This is to mean a departure from that vertical and cartesian straitjacket toward empowered bodies indicative of initiative and choice. In doing so, celebrate the dynamics of community and indeed our vulnerability. In Hiedorn’s research, we might evade those, up till now domineering perceptions that our bodies are singular, autonomous, Vitruvian and male. Instead, advocate less engendered conceptions of inclination, recline and indeed objectification as pertains to those bodies.

Making any decisions on what we do and how, may be the first challenge. Could being stupid as Mocksim advocates be where our survival lies? In The trouble with being born Cioran states ‘We are a mixture of automaton and whim, a robot with defects, a robot out of order’ (Cioran, 2012: 169) Long may we remain so.

Has all rationality been delegated away to AI? and in doing so a future that whilst certain could be an insecure awaiting us on the horizon. AI evolves such hyper rationality that it is dislocated from any kind of rationality as a result. We are organic neurobiological networks increasing estranged by non-biological ones.

Mocksim in his overview of AI brings to mind Frankenstein, in which we relinquish all control to the uncontrollable. At its heart, with Algorithms of such speed, number and efficiency, we may need to ask whose logic and to what ends do they benefit? Our inefficiency, unpredictability, difficulty or willingness to adapt, leave us with a dilemma. Berardi, Augé and Benasayag all point out that if we wish to acclimatise to this post democratic digital world, we can do so in several ways. By losing any sense of empathy we have as humans, and distracting ourselves from its complexity through pleasure, as we shift our distrust of each other into a blind faith in machines we subsequently can't revolt against. Comprehending virtual reality is quite simple, whereby reality is reconstituted by artificial means. In contrast, the reality of the virtual and its subsequent manifestations maybe be less visible, while increasingly part of us.

The projects presented show us the wealth of working, connecting, and sharing together of the challenges, surprises and potential in regard to the that knowledge acquisition. Research as practice is when we contest and renavigate this situation, being as we are between the given and the impossible. Only through a networked knowledge and unity can those urgent questions be exposed and necessary advances materialise.

On and Off the Page, is part of that emergence, as the means and tactics, demonstrative of how we activate research through that embodiment of word, image and thought. Firstly, it could exist as metaphors of folding and unfolding, in the spatial narratives by Amanda Couch. A gut ontology no less, in which we are forever in the midst of bodilyness as it oscillates between thing and event. In the workings of Emma Lambert private becomes public. As bookworks'

shift from presentation to reception, she suggests research is a state of rhizomic activity and becoming, where enquiry is social, and a greater sociability is its result. Deleuze states that research has tools, if anything is to come of that thinking, they have to be used, not simply looked at. In this and matt Johnsons photobook make visible that which was invisible or concealed. This is that knitting of thinking, world and art. As Matt Johnston says it is not just filtering out stuff but a much-needed amplification of those stifled voices and unrealised actions that lie within.

A case in part is *Putting Ourselves in the Picture*, involving Professor Anna Fox and Aida Silvestri. This is an array of socially engaged initiatives whose ongoing dissemination seeks to redress representation and social equity beyond the insular frameworks that research and academia can at times be.

So, research is to co-create, to share, unravel, unpack and challenge. It is also to contest imposed synchronicities and systems of control, outmoded hierarchies and seemingly invisible hegemonies. In these ways see open, fluid and porous states of thinking and making propagate. Thinking we don't control, situations that dissolve distance, and initiatives where boundaries or walls collapse may be that liberation to coexist, and surprise, always to contest conventions, at other times ask uncomfortable questions.

Thankfully for research as practice there may be 'no definitive system because the revolution is the regime of creative imbalance' (Merleau-Ponty, 1973:88) In this, it is where all subjectivities lie, as differences indicative of formings and unformings, endlessly between invention and transformation.

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- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964) *Signs*, Northwestern University Press Illinois USA
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1973) *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Northwestern University Press Illinois USA Ed. Joseph Bien
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Contributor biographies

Dr Jeremiah Ambrose is an artist, researcher and Senior Lecturer at UCA whose work explores digital art, media futures and experimental practice. He is particularly interested in interactive 360 environments, but is looking to expand his practice, pedagogy and research into XR aesthetics and intersections between contemporary immersive media technologies. Jeremiah Ambrose was awarded a practice-based PhD at the University of Brighton, looking at emergent narratives and interaction aesthetics in VR and interactive 360° environments. He graduated with a BA (Hons) in English, Media and Cultural Studies from Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology in 2009. After this he was awarded an M.Phil in Film Theory and History and an M.Sc in Interactive Digital Media from Trinity College Dublin in 2011 and 2014.

Greig Burgoyne is a Senior Lecturer in BA Fine Art at UCA Farnham. Having studied at Universität Für Angewandte Kunst Vienna and Royal college of art London, he has lectured in fine art practice and theory in Europe and North America including Novgorod State University Russia, NSCAD university Halifax Canada, Lille III University and HEAR Mulhouse/Strasbourg France. His writing, research and practice focus on conceptual frameworks around Performance, drawing and phenomenology. Recent solo exhibitions include *Delay#1* Spazio Mensa Rome; *Expect the unexpected* The Lowry Manchester (with Yoko Ono, Gillian Wearing and Keith Tyson); *Raid* Galleria Bruno Lisi Rome(June); *Negotiations* Paper Gallery Manchester; *Night of experimental boredom* Lodge 222 Dordrecht; *Spaceman* Kunsthallen Bochum Germany; *Papier Skulptural* with Monika Gryzmala,

Ignacio Uriarte and Esther Stocker Verein Für Aktuelle Kunst Ruhrgebiet Oberhausen; Empty Spaces Digital commission ACE/Tempo Arts UK. His work features in *Performance Drawing: New practices since 1945* published by Bloomsbury Books Autumn 2020.

Amanda Couch is a Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at UCA. She is an interdisciplinary artist who has published 3 artist's books with bookRoom, all involving performances on and off the page or performance lectures, such as *Books as Bodies* which have been enacted at The Wellcome Trust and her more recent work *The Royal College of Physicians* that she will share in this panel <https://oninnards.wordpress.com>.

Anna Fox is a British photographer best known for *Work Stations: Office Life in London* (1988), a study of office culture in Thatcher's Britain and for *Zwarte Piet* (1993-8), a series of portraits taken over a five-year period that explore Dutch black-face' folk traditions associated with Christmas. Fox's solo shows have been seen at Photographer's Gallery, London, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago amongst others and her work has been included in international group shows including *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant Garde* at Tate Liverpool and *How We Are: Photographing Britain* at Tate Britain. She was shortlisted for the 2010 Deutsche Borse Photography Prize. Fox is Professor of Photography at University for the Creative Arts in Farnham, where she directs the Fast Forward: Women in Photography research project for which she has been awarded grants from the Leverhulme Trust, The British Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. www.fastforward.photography.com and www.annafox.co.uk

Nora Heidorn is a curator, researcher, and lecturer. Her practice is led by rigorous interdisciplinary research in the intersecting fields of gender, race, health and care. She is undertaking an LAHP-funded PhD at the Royal College of Art, London in collaboration with Birth Rites Collection. Nora's long-term curatorial research project *Sick and Desiring* took the form of an exhibition, artist publication and a series of events for the biennial Bergen Assembly 2019 in Norway. She has curated exhibitions, workshops and screenings, and spoken at institutions, universities and project spaces in Berlin, London, Turin, Oslo, Helsinki and Bergen. Nora publishes essays and articles, including in *CARELESS* (Ma Bibliothèque) and *Prova 6* (Royal College of Art) in 2021. Alongside her independent practice, Nora has been working as an Associate Lecturer on BA Culture, Criticism and Curation at University of the Arts London since 2018, where she has developed a course on Care and Curating together with Andy Marsh. She has previously worked as Curator and Project Coordinator in the Department of Art at Goldsmiths College, London and as Associate Director at the commercial gallery *The Approach* in East London. www.noraheidorn.com

Dr Matt Johnston is a visual practitioner, assistant professor in Photography at Coventry University and founder of *The Photobook* (2009). He completed a PhD at UCA in 2019 about the post-millennium situation of the contemporary photobook and connections (made and missed) between makers and readers. This led to a new book *Photobooks &* (Onomatopée 2021) that he will talk to us about. <http://photobookclub.org> and www.mjohnstonphotography.co.uk

Emma Lambert is a photographer, educator and current PhD student at UCA whose practice and research interrogate the contemporary photobook at the intersection of independent publishing and social art practice. Her imprint Silvergrasspress is “a space to develop and create collaborative photobooks where the form and narrative of the book, craft and process are valued as much as the social and relational aspects of making things public.” <https://silvergrasspress.co.uk/site/> and www.emmalambert.co.uk

Dr Caroline Molloy is the programme director of Fine Art, Digital Art and Photography at UCA Farnham. She is an artist, academic and writer. She holds an MA in Photography from the Royal College of Art, an MA in Visual Anthropology from Goldsmiths UoL, and recently completed a PhD at Birkbeck at the Centre for Photographic History and Theory. Her research interests are focused on the marginalised voice in both gender and post-/decolonial colonial contexts. Her work was recently exhibited at the New Art Gallery Walsall (2021) as part of the Living Memory Project and at Four Corners, London, as part of the Ph research network in Bridging Boundaries. Recent peer reviewed publications include (2020) ‘Rethinking the photographic studio as a politicised space’, in Ashley, T., Weedon, A. (eds.) *Developing a Sense of Place: Models for the Arts and Urban Planning*. London: UCL publishing. In addition to this, she regularly writes for *Visual Studies*, *The Journal of Visual Practice*, *1000words* magazine and *Photomonitor* around the relationship between photography and visual culture.

Micheál O’Connell has a practice that employs a number of strategies - often carried out under the moniker Mocksim - of ‘interference’ with everyday functional processes, including

appropriation, misuse, lampooning and tinkering with technological systems. He does not distinguish between the computational, algorithmic, less visible, digital network and older, heavier physical infrastructures such as the road system or couriering operations. These systems reflect each other; both involve hardware (devices, server farms, vehicles etc.) and software (coding and bureaucracy), and there are many analogies. The interventions were discussed in his doctoral project, which was entitled *Art as Artificial Stupidity*. In that, he investigated relationships between cybernetics, conceptions of intelligence and this artistic practice. Specifically, intelligence's downside, the controversial notion of stupidity, was reappropriated as a means of considering the way artists intervene and how art, as a system, functions.

Minna Pöllänen is a Finnish visual artist living and working in London and Oxfordshire. Pöllänen is a Senior Lecturer on the BA (Hons) Photography course at UCA Farnham. She is studying towards a PhD in Fine Art at the School of Arts and Humanities in Royal College of Art. Her practice-led research explores lingering, touch and care in relation to sculptural objects. Pöllänen's work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally in venues including The Queens Museum in New York, Galerie Project Pangee in Montreal, Centre for Emerging Visual Artists in Philadelphia, Yinka Shonibare Guest Projects in London and Gallery Forum Box in Helsinki. She is the recipient of multiple residency awards including Triangle Arts Association in New York, Cité in Paris, Skaftfell in Iceland and Helsinki International Artist Programme in Helsinki. Pöllänen also works as a duo with the New York-based media artist Bang Geul Han. They are currently working on an interactive online commission for the Finnish Cultural Institutes

titled *Talk Me Tender*. The project employs conversational AI and the form of a falling space junk to explore ideas around care and end-of-life. The project launches in spring 2022.

Aida Silvestri is a UK based artist. She holds a BA (First Hons) in photography from the University of Westminster, London. She creates work that challenges the status quo of stigma, prejudice, and social injustice/inequality by highlighting issues of migration race, class, identity, and health. In her work she explores unique approaches to documentary photography and manipulation of the photographic surface. In this panel discussion she will be speaking about her contribution to the AHRC project *Putting Ourselves in the Picture*.

Kate Street is a UK based artist and Senior Lecturer on the BA and MA Fine Art at UCA Farnham. Her work explores found imagery/objects as a vehicle to uncover hidden narratives around entrenched ideologies and systematic commodification of the female form. She is a regular contributor to *Revolve:R*, a collaborative book project that initiates and records non-verbal image based exchanges as a form of non-verbal dialogue and exhibits her work internationally. www.katestreet.net

Emmanuelle Waeckerlé is a Reader in Fine Art and Relational Practices and Director of bookRoom at UCA. Her practice has evolved from the single discipline of fine art Photography into multiple, interconnected work zones: conceptual writing, performance, new musical composition and artist-publishing. www.ewaeckerle.com and www.thebookroom.net



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