

reflec[emo]tions : Animating Research: flesh/contour/line

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TACTILE IMAGINATIONS

FBE Design Research Exhibition

Exhibit

'reflec[emo]tions'

Animating Research: flesh/contour/line
Video Digital Artwork

Collaborators

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in association with

Michael Yip
Rido Pin

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1. Background

Through their research, Ann Quinlan and Oya Demirbilek are interested in revealing the 'lived experience', the embodiment, and the *presence* of the whole person in her or his interactions with design. In particular, Oya and Ann are interested in the interaction between emotion and design. For Oya, an industrial designer, this means the interaction between people and designed objects. For Ann, an architect, it concerns transformative student design learning interactions.

During our term as joint directors of the Design Research group, these interests were further nuanced by our efforts to represent and document the group's research activities. Despite the very obvious *presence*¹ and expertise of our member community of 33 people (drawn from Architecture, Interior Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Industrial Design and Construction Management) and our outreach into the broader community, industry fields and professions, we were absent in the institutional research community. Ironically, for such a

¹ The concepts of presence and *dys-appearing* are drawn from Leder's discussion of the 'lived body', which is itself framed by the work of Merleau-Ponty. See Drew Leder, *The Absent Body*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990. With reference to educational settings, see Charlotte Silen, 'The tutor's approach in base groups (PBL)', *Higher Education*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2006, pp. 373-385. Silen proposes that *presence* is when the body is directed towards the world of life (p. 377).

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visually orientated discipline, we were a *dys-appearing* body² when we engaged in research authentic to our discipline. We were visible only when we delivered research outcomes such as DEST-audited publications from research processes that were often alien to our designedly ways of being.³

In meeting this challenge, we have reviewed our self-concept as designers, scholars and teachers. We now try to think of ourselves as entrepreneurial researchers⁴ engaged in scholarship⁵ that re-presents design as an evolving, layered practice of networked and reciprocated inquiry that gives agency to our creativity and emotional vitality. We have also attended to the distinctiveness of our role as design educators. Our understanding of the complexity of design is continually being revealed to us through our interactions with students in design learning settings such as design studio.

2. Exhibition Proposition

Framed by our resolve to advance design as a scholarly activity, this Design Research Exhibition provides a springboard for gaining new insights, interpretations and counterpoints for representing the interaction of design and emotion. Our proposition's raw material is data gathered as part of an educational research project on the perceptions of final-year students undertaking research activity across all programs in the FBE. For students in Architecture, Interior Architecture and Landscape Architecture, this activity leads to a design project outcome; for those in Planning and Construction Management, it leads to a thesis; and for those in Industrial Design, it leads to a thesis and a design project outcome. Our aim in the project was to understand students' lived experience of research and design, using in-depth filmed interviews, focus groups and student journals.

Our aim in this exhibition, however, is to explore riskier, untried research and representation tools to interpret and express the students' lived experience. In this intention, we were inspired by the 'say/do/make' model pioneered by Elisabeth Sanders.⁶ This model (Figure 1) places information that research participants 'make'—their feelings, experiences and dreams—at its tip. This kind of information is often more difficult to interpret than what participants may say (the top part of the triangle) but is more accurate and authentic to their experience, more representative of real life and more open to new forms of creative expression and inquiry.

² Charlotte Silen, 'The tutor's approach in base groups (PBL)', *Higher Education*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2006, p. 379. Silen proposes that Leder's *dys-appearing* body means that the body emerges when it is non-functioning (dys) in some way.

³ See Nigel Cross, 'Designerly ways of knowing', *Design Studies*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1982, pp. 221–227.

⁴ See Angela Brew, 'Conceptions of Research: a phenomenographic study', *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 26, no.3, 2001, pp. 271 – 285.

⁵ See Lee Andresen, 'A usable, transdisciplinary conception of scholarship', *Higher Education Research and Development*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2000, pp. 137–153.

⁶ The ocularcentric bias of electronic mediums such as AutoCad and the way they transform consciousness leading to disembodiment is discussed in Kevin Robins, *Into the Image Culture and Politics in the Field of Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996).

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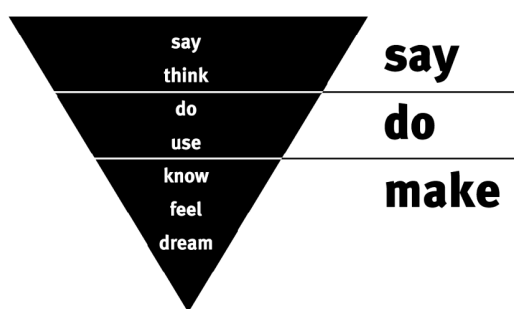


Figure 1. Ways to understand people (Sanders)

To interpret and represent the ‘made’ data, Sanders argues we need new research ‘toolkits’, which focus on the emotional aspects of experience. Thus we sought out media techniques and specialists to help us develop an appropriate toolkit.

We knew we wanted to represent the students’ lived experience of research as a video projection installation, and we had speculative ideas about the layered and looping animations we wished to create. But we had no idea how to produce this installation technically. Therefore, we contacted our professional alumni colleague Michael Yip, Associate of the Architectural Practice of PTW, who leads a visualisation course for built environment postgraduate students. In consultation with him, we invited his students to interpret and represent the raw material using creative digital compositing of image, line and text. We were excited by the potential of digital compositing techniques to assist us in communicating the presence of the final-year students as well as the vitality, depth and complexity of their lived experience of research.

The students undertook these experimentations as a course assignment, guided by Michael and his colleague Rido Pin. For us, there was an educational authenticity in connecting postgraduate learning to the creative process of revealing the nuanced emotion of undergraduate student research experiences. This also created another layer of interpretation as the postgraduate students relived their own undergraduate research experiences through the experiences of the final-year students. Moreover, we were not in control of technical processes or the twists and trajectories of the postgraduate students’ interpretations as they become deeply immersed in the intimacy of their connection to the final-year students, their emotions and actions.

We appreciated working with professional design colleagues as part of an open and cooperative design practice. Indeed, this exhibition has brought home to us that design research means marshalling a network of people, ideas, research approaches and resources to achieve an artistic vision. It affirms that design research is a community enterprise involving layers of reciprocity and risk in the pursuit of something whose final form may not be known. In this endeavour, we have engaged in a complex creative matrix of networked layers and interpretations to represent the interaction of design and research. As the video installation is viewed and interpreted, new layers and directions of inquiry are created, affirming exhibition as research, and research as exhibition.

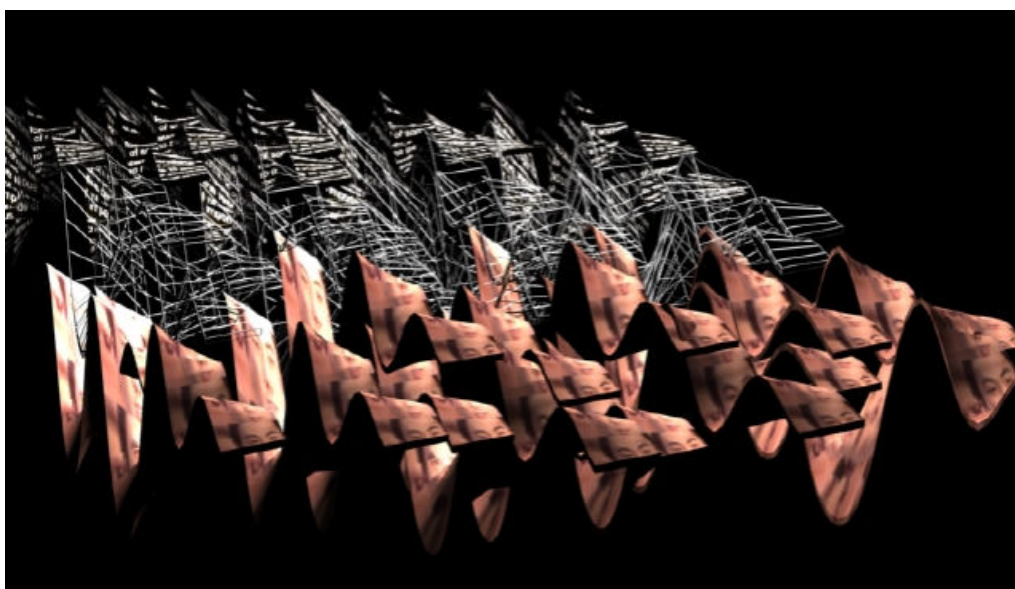
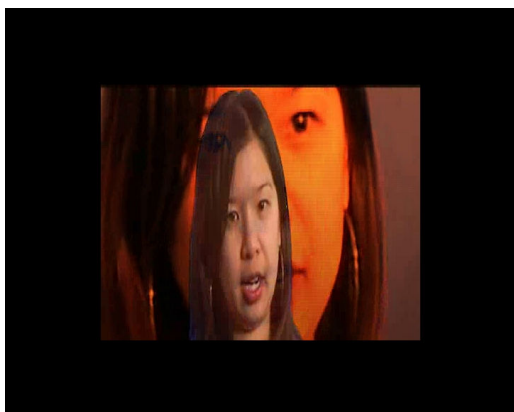
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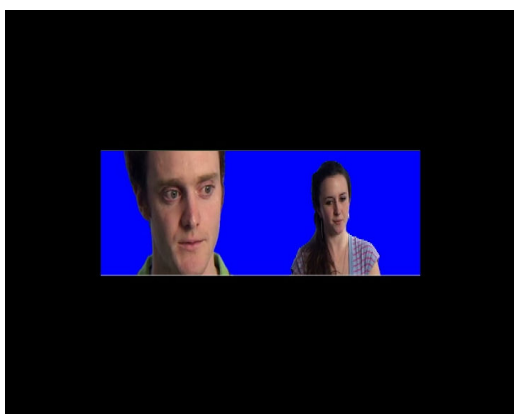
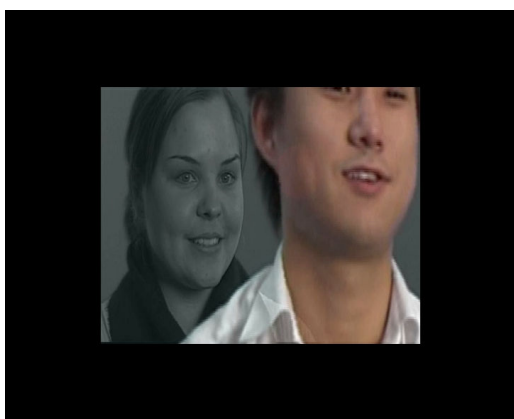
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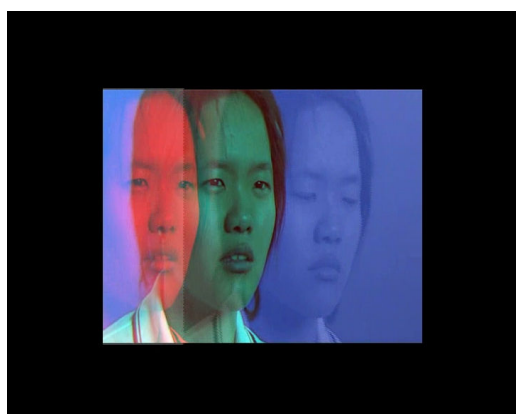
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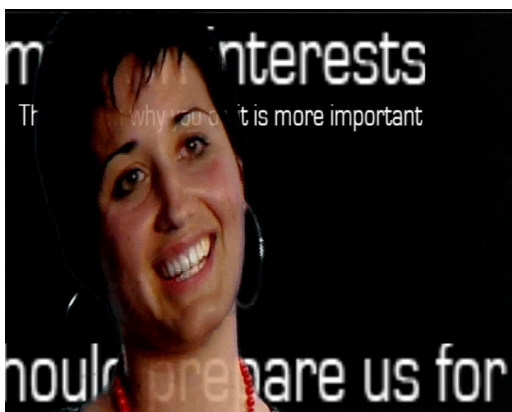
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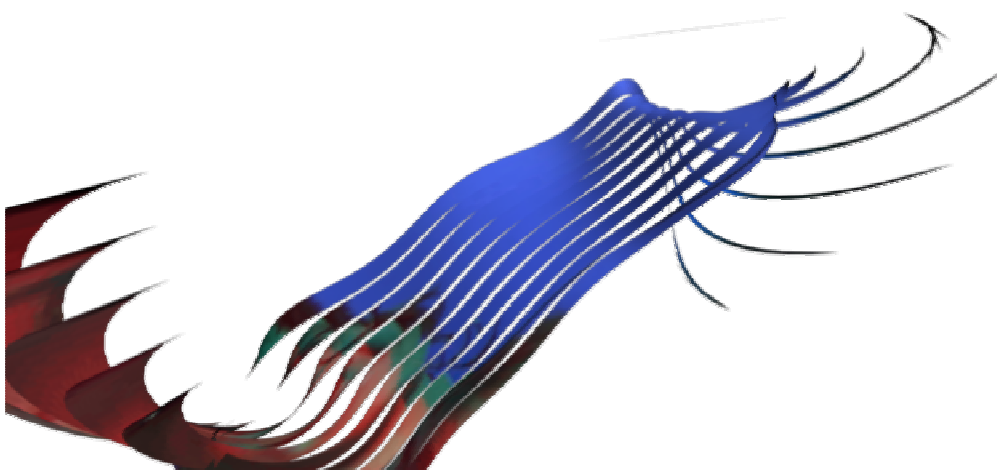
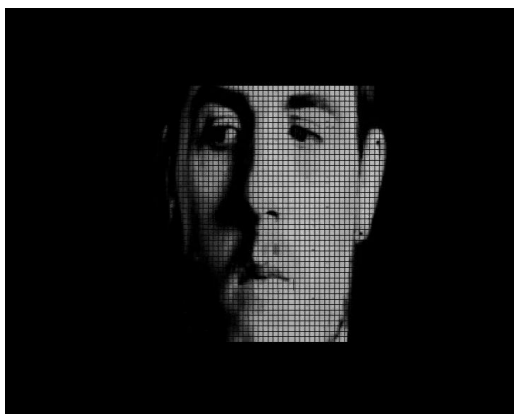
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3. Biographies

Ann Quinlan

(BSc Arch. B.Arch. MEd. UNSW) is joint director of the FBE Design Research Group. Ann deploys a practitioner-led action-based research practice. Informed by Boyer's (1990) model of interaction between the Scholarships of Teaching, Application and Integration this approach is enhanced by deliberate interdisciplinary collaborations with Built Environment colleagues. An Architect and Senior Lecturer in the Architecture Program Ann engages in a student centred, inquiry-based approach to architectural design learning and teaching. An initiator and mentor of numerous FBE exhibitions Ann is the recipient of a Deans Teaching Award, UNSW Learning and Teaching Awards and a recently completed UNSW U21 Fellowship award.

Oya Demirbilek

(BID and MSc Blg Sc METU; PhD Bilkent; PhD Marmara University) is Program Head for Industrial Design, Faculty of the Built Environment. Her professional experience includes appointments as instructor in product design, Art Center College of Design (Europe); free lance designer for ceramic products, Hardegger Handels, Bern/Switzerland; Research Assistant, Lecturer, and Assistant Professor in Industrial Design, at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara - Turkey; Adjunct Lecturer, Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Industrial Design, Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW. Her current research interests include universal design, participatory and collaborative design, design for aging populations, and emotional responses to products.

Michael Yip

(B.Arch, UNSW) is a lecturer in Advanced Visualization at the Faculty of the Built Environment and an Architect and Associate at PTW Architects. He has extensive experience in architectural competition projects in various scales, ranging from interior design to urban design and development. He has a sustainable focus in various building types, including mixed-use, residential, commercial and TV studio. He promotes intuitive learning in digital tools and encourages students to explore experimental processes in conceptual

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development. His expertise is in design, production and training of three dimensional narratives, non-linear spatial interpretations and installations.

Rido Pin

(BSc Arch, MSc Architecture & MSc Building Technology TU Delft, The Netherlands) is a young and recently graduated architect currently working at PTW Architects in Sydney. His interest lie in conceptual derived architecture and the structural complexity of double curved surfaces within design. The 3D software used to research this has guided his interest towards the field of film editing and 3d animation. Assisting Michael Yip on a conceptual level within Film and Animation at UNSW allows him to further explore his ideas and interests.

Belinda Rosenbaum [preproduction image]

(B.Arch, UNSW) is a recent graduate located on the mid-north coast of NSW currently collaborating with local architects and PTW Architects. Her architectural experience includes projects in various scales with heritage and community focus. Her association with the FBE includes graphic design and production of FBE catalogues and information booklets and as guest lecturer and tutor in graphic communication Year 2 Urban Planning "Integrated Planning" Course. Themes of place making and place marking have presence in both her architectural and art works, her most recent artwork exhibited in "Trading Art Places" Blue Poles Gallery 8 Dec 2007 – 28 Jan 2008.

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