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Abstract

This experimental paper, 'Interview with Self', is not so much the findings of a research project, but rather the continuing process of it. It is part of an auto-ethnographic study of the creative making process, presented here in its unedited form as an example of a methodology and as an artefact of practice.

The use of digital technologies and platforms for the auto-ethnography created spaces for reflection and alternative ways to observe and document both reflection and artistic production. My relationship to my own making was therefore mediated through technology. This enabled me to distance myself from what I was doing by becoming a spectator and experience a new intimacy with my work through seeing and hearing what usually went unnoticed.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Challenge of Self-Observation

Self-observation is a challenging territory. The ubiquity of the digital, and a society which increasingly captures and shares 24/7, conjures images of narcissism, indulgence, confidence and knowing. Here, the current abundance of documented selves on social media, where the selfie represents self-obsession rather than self-observation, the non-reflective constructed self, the self as product and the projection of the self 'outwards'. In contrast to this, in auto-ethnography we may encounter a version of the self that is both challenging and illuminating.

This methodology encourages experimentation and reflexivity, and embraces uncertainty. The putting selfie represents how we want the world to see us; it is not reflective of who we really are: it is not reflective at all. It is a constructed self, the self as product, and a projection of the self 'outwards'. Digital auto-ethnography is about looking inwards, a way to make the familiar unfamiliar, a deconstruction rather than a construction of the self and, in this context, it is a way to understand and develop a creative practice. It presents a version of the self that

might be uncomfortable or unflattering to share and not always the self at its best. McNiff (2013) asks:

How do researchers minimize one-sided self-absorption when personal, often intimate, art making is a core element of research? Might standards of usefulness to others assure practical outcomes and complement the subjective aspects of artistic knowing?

The research was about me but not just for me: I wanted to use this research to gain insight into the experience of making visual arts and to support my own students with their own practices. I am asking: how can digital technologies empower students with their own reflective practices and transitions from students to practitioners?

1.2 Preamble

Between October 2013 and June 2015 I experimented with using digital auto-ethnography to observe, record and re-observe myself as an artist. Digital tools such as a digital voice recorder, Go-Pro headcam, and private and public digital platforms were used to observe my non-digital arts practice. My identity as researcher, teacher and artist were inextricably linked. A key question I had for this research was how these digital tools and platforms might help me to develop or gain insight into my reflexivity and artistic practice. Pink et al (2016, p.13) suggest that 'ways that digital ethnographers might reflexively engage with their worlds is concerned with asking ourselves precisely those questions about how we produce knowledge'. The research was therefore also an opportunity for me to understand more about what reflection is for arts practitioners, so that I might be able to support the creative arts students I teach more effectively. This paper is an interview that I conducted with myself in late 2016 which includes further discussion in italics. The interview approach was used as a reflexive technique to support the developing case study.

2. Interview with self: 12 questions November/December 2016

1. You recorded different aspects of your making. Why did you start to do this?

I realised when I started to look at various personal statements that I had made about my work, my practice, that I had lost connection with them (these statements). The statements were basically statements that had been carried forward. I had made some observations about what I thought my work was about but, at the same time, it didn't really mean anything to me, or didn't feel very current. New statements felt like updating of previous statements – improving the language to describe the same things without questioning whether these descriptions were still relevant, and without reflecting on the work itself.¹ It was feeling like this, and also that I wanted to understand more about what was experienced throughout the making process, that led to the idea of recording as much reflection as possible (while experiencing thinking about and making work). This was also to try and experience this as a

¹ Artistic statements are commonly made to accompany personal profiles and applications for artistic opportunities. The use of statements about my artistic practice is reflected on in full in the blog post 'The Beginning' October 2013 <https://feltlikeit.wordpress.com/2013/10/18/the-beginning/> (Neil, 2013)

student might, to understand what emotions and experiences emerge throughout the process to potentially empathise more and find better ways to teach. I was interested in the reflection: the reflective activity that takes place about, and through, making art. What does reflection look like? How can it be captured? Why is it often absent from students' work in a critical or dialogic form? I was interested in what I might learn from recording what I do and think, and whether anything could be revealed, surprise me, or change my relationship to my work. The statements that are often made about a person's practice are often so decisive and assured and I thought this is often what students see². Even when we are allowed into the process by an artist it is often seeing the technical side of them making that work or a narrative of how their ideas developed, not always how they reflect on their work, what the making of the work feels like, or how they make sense of what they do immediately, or over time.

2. How important was it to use digital technologies?

The technologies were important because I had already been using a blog to document my work and at times used it to reflect on things to do with my research. I wanted the blog to continue as a way to have an audience for my writing and work. I think this helped think about talking to 'someone'. I had also been using Evernote³ and considered this as a private space for documenting thoughts, ideas and links to interesting sources. Although I was also making notes in various physical notebooks and documents on the computer, Evernote and the blog helped me to keep various bits of writing in one place alongside other digital forms.

The use of audio recording became important very early on. I was waiting in the car and wanted to get down some thoughts before I forgot them so used the audio on my phone to record my spoken thoughts. This recording became something that I could listen back to at various points and something that also documented how I was feeling at the time through the pauses and intonation in my voice.

I thought of the digital technologies like the Go-Pro camera as a third eye which would allow me to see again what I had already seen, and to see things that I had not noticed at first. I was not sure if these technologies would reveal anything but having them recording me enabled me to focus on the making, rather than thinking about what I was thinking about or doing. The audio became important: I could explain things in spoken words that I would possibly have written differently. The process of writing slows down thoughts for me where as speaking allows the thoughts to flow, or at least be expressed in a different way. Seeing the work in a digital form, whether it was a still photograph or a video recording, reframed the work: it became flat and presented. The video recordings animated and presented the work in a different way again: static imagery came to life through these recordings enabling me to see and reframe from different perspectives. The technology provided a different dimension

² My own experiences as an art student reinforced this; artists visiting to give a slide show about their work would often present a linear and seamless account of the work. The fear and uncertainty of making work was rarely spoken about.

³ Evernote is a commercial digital platform designed for note-taking, organising content and archiving. It enables users to store notes they have created which might include text, webpages and excerpts, photographs, voice memo's and attachments, these are organized in labelled notebooks.

to view the work, a kind of virtual space, and when hosted on the blog, a virtual space within a virtual space.

3. Why did you use these particular technologies rather than others?

I initially used technology that was easily available and familiar to me so the Wordpress blog and Evernote, both free, were accessible to me on my computer but also on my mobile phone. The phone was an important portable device and, using the Evernote app, I was able to record short spoken thoughts, take images and save them directly to my Evernote 'notebook'. This on-the-go recording was mainly done with Evernote and, as a private platform, it created a space where the raw information could go before I decided what to share. Although the blog hosted some unedited and raw information, it was only used once I had mentally, and sometimes physically, processed the content.

The Go-pro head-cam was available to me and although a fairly clumsy third eye, with it fixed on my forehead, it did allow me to record what I was seeing fairly accurately. The video camera was a simple one which enabled me to record the experience of making from multiple angles, some from points of view I would not be able to experience on my own. It was important to me that what I was doing was not about the technology itself, but about what the technology could help me to do more effectively.

I had the opportunity to look at other developing technologies, which were designed to collect data, record and be responsive. I also considered technologies that were designed for more covert activities like surveillance and spying. I went as far as trying out Google Glass and researched into various eye glass technologies thinking that this may be a more accurate way to observe and capture experiences. I also thought that Google Glass might be a way to engage students in observing and recording their own reflections, although the public image of this type of wearable technology was not always positive⁴. The decision to not go this way came from considering practicalities, cost, and what was happening with this type of technology at the time (November 2014). The technology did promise a more accurate 'eye view' of what you observed and experienced but was limited in terms of the length of recordings that would be possible to make and store on the device. The costs of the technology were prohibitive, and the functionality and reliability of the device was still in the early stages of its development. There were also other wearable technologies being developed as glasses, googles and visors⁵, mostly for sporting, communications, gaming, and business logistics applications, rather than teaching and learning. I realised what had been important to me when I used the digital technologies was that I could pretty much pick them up and use them straight away, at least with minimal study of instructions. They were also technologies I had, or could get hold of fairly easily, or buy cheaply. With the technology changing so quickly, and the accessibility and creativity of finding technologies to observe and record, I decided to stick to cameras and audio recording devices. The surveillance equipment still interests me, partly because I would like to find a way to observe and record myself

⁴ The phrase 'Glassholes' for those early up takers of the Google Glass technology began to take root fairly quickly <https://techcrunch.com/2013/01/28/glassholes/> (Lawler 2013) amid concerns of invading privacy and generally looking a bit daft.

⁵ Other products in development at this time were: Vuzix M100 smart glasses, Epson Moverio BT-200 smart glasses which could take still pictures, record and playback video, using voice and gesture controls. All retailed between £700-£1000 but were very new to the market at the time.

without knowing when I was being recorded or being in control of when I am being recorded. This type of recording might be something I develop through my practice rather than a method for digital auto-ethnography that I use with students. When I started thinking about being unaware of when I might be recorded I remembered something I did when on the 2nd year of my art degree course (1994-05). It was at a time when I was experimenting and just trying stuff out, though I am not sure if it connected to any ideas or work at the time or not. There was a room that could be completely blacked out so I had the room as dark as possible and switched off the lights. As I walked around the space I asked someone to randomly take flash photographs of me. This was not on a digital camera so I imagine I had to wait several days or weeks before I saw them. The digital recording offers immediacy for reflection, that photography, when I was a student didn't. The images show myself unaware that I would be seen or documented and I am interested in the idea of this as a conscious-free selfie, especially in the context of how selfies, which construct the perfect image of the self, are so prolific on social media. I think the image (Figure 1) is also a good metaphor for what I am doing with auto-ethnography; I am capturing moments of stumbling in the dark.



Figure 1: 'Stumbling in the Dark' (1995)

4. What did you hope to find out?

I hoped that in recording and re-seeing my process that I would understand something of my habits and approaches to making work. I wanted to see and understand the experience of making so that I could also reconsider some of my teaching habits. Actually, this is a difficult question! I suppose I didn't know but I hoped something of the different phases of my making process might be revealed to me. I hoped to find out why I did work in the way I did, why I made the decisions I did, and what I was thinking about and feeling at different points. I wondered what my making process looked like, what my thoughts were and how what I was feeling related to decisions about the work I made. I hoped to understand more about reflection, how I reflect, when I reflect and how I use this reflection. I also hoped to make better work; work which had more depth to it, especially having explored possibilities relating to more commercial outcomes I felt that I had lost my way, that teaching had started to distance me from my practice, that being a teacher and artist had made my identity difficult to grasp. I hoped to re-experience something of what it is like to be a student again through feeling completely exposed.

5. What was it like to record yourself in this way?

It felt experimental. It was experimental. In some ways it felt like making a piece of artwork. I felt uncomfortable at first, even awkward, and was reminded of what it feels like to play and pretend. Pretending or playing at being a researcher, questioning the validity of the research, and being uncertain about what it might mean, or how the research might be useful. Because I didn't know what I was going to find out I didn't feel particularly confident. I also initially felt quite aware and self-conscious when recording my voice and recording my making. It was interesting having a heightened awareness of the work and myself while it was being made. I felt more connected to what I was doing, or at least in the moment and noticing what I was doing, although I sometimes felt that this caused interference. As I got more used to the recording equipment and techniques I was able to immerse myself in the practice more easily without over-thinking, or trying to resolve, how what I was doing worked as a methodology. The heightened awareness was partly because the recording was not automatic: I instigated when I was being recorded, and how I was being recorded, so this affected my relationship to my making at certain points.

The films that were created needed some small amounts of editing because the beginning and endings of the recordings were quite clumsy, so I am wondering now why it was important to me that they became edited films. I felt embarrassed at myself being visible, when I was not particularly ready. I am now aware that this contradicts what I have said earlier about how recording when I am not aware might reveal interesting habits or behaviours. The films were edited to show the making as a process and not what it is like to record yourself. They became art works in a sense (perhaps not enjoyable, or meaningful, outside of the context of documenting a making process), but they became artefacts at least. On some occasions the editing was more intrusive where I might edit together several films taken from different viewpoints at the same time. These became a way to document and reflect on the making but also became quite interesting short films themselves. Often the view I had of myself was disembodied: the view I had of myself was of parts of my hands or arms, the sound of my voice, or movement of a body I couldn't see. When there were recordings of me looking, they were often through other filters like glass cabinets or a side view where I was not appearing to be self-conscious at all. These images of myself showed concentration, me half squinting at my drawing or the object, up close to the drawing, my body poised for drawing, not smiling, but not not-smiling.

6. What did you find out about your practice?

I connect to certain things, whether it is an image or an object, and I don't know why. Previously I would have made a statement about how I like to use banal objects in my work to elevate them or find their beauty somehow but, actually, I don't know why certain things draw me in to draw them. I found myself constructing narratives around the imagery and objects, so there is an aspect of wanting to tell stories or wanting to draw certain shapes, forms or details. The connections or symbolism becomes a reason to look at certain things and draw them. What connects the drawings and responses seems to vary between being on a small-scale or on a larger scale.

I made a comparison between the museum setting and the encyclopaedia that I had previously used as a source of inspiration which, in turn, had been something I connected

with at a young age: flicking through pages of volumes of the Waverly Book of Knowledge encyclopaedias. My memory of looking at page after page of different sorts of imagery, colour, or black and white, diagrams and graphs, were before I was reading properly, however, I like to think that these visuals formed and informed my desire to select and recreate in different incarnations the things that I am drawn to. The account I would give of my experience was factual but the narrative applied to it was a form of sense-making, or possibly, a constructed and applied narrative. Perhaps these are the same thing, perhaps it doesn't matter.

Other discoveries related to behaviours that were observable: the Go-Pro offered a way to document what was seen as a third eye, but also capture the movements of my body. The film of making the first copy of an image from a book recorded when I was looking at the image to be drawn, and when I was looking at the drawing I was making. Additionally, I was able to see how where I was looking related to what my hand was doing, whether I was looking at the drawing, visualising the drawing or drawing without looking. A tedious process of looking at the film using film-editing software and slowing down the footage to a 10th of a second enabled me to measure, in time, this co-ordination of eye, hand and memory. Although not as accurate as using eye-glass technology, I created a set of data from this observation. Examining 1.7 minutes of 15.2 minutes of footage, I was able to find out that 41% of the time in this first 1.7 minutes was spent looking at the image, 45% drawing and 14% visualising (looking at the paper but not making a mark). If I had guessed what proportion of time is spent looking compared to drawing I would probably have said 50:50 so looking at this breakdown did make me think about that time spent between looking and recording and time spent 'visualising', staring at the paper, and my drawing and not making a mark. This finding made me think in more depth about what is memorised, the co-ordination of body and mind (my hand was often left making marks as my head moved away), so I found something out about the physicality of my making.

Seeing a recording, a moving image of a drawing, being created, whether stitched on the sewing machine, or with pen on paper, makes something that becomes static (a 2D drawing on a 2D piece of paper) animated: the lines, shapes and forms move, become movement, and emerge from movement. It is what these movements look like that was revealed to me. I also found out how I make connections as I go along, so there is revisiting and iteration through making connections between things. I felt a sense of securing what my practice was as I progressed, partly because I started to understand how my work was actually about sense-making and storytelling. There is also sometimes humour in what I do.

7. What did you find out about yourself?

Although I have always been present in my work in an autobiographical sense, I was also quite hidden or removed. I thought I had been making work that revealed something about myself, but this work has always been quite subtle, anything really revealing or personal was not there. I think this was a sort of passive engagement rather than a conscious attempt to remove myself from the work in some way. I discovered that I think a lot, and that this sometimes gets in the way of making. I become too self-conscious while making work, but also found that I can easily become lost in what I am doing. From looking at recordings I seem

confident in what I am doing even though I am feeling unsure and confused at times. I think I do things that I am in the mood to do, that there has to be an emotional connection to the work I am doing and sometimes this is just to create a space for thinking.

Some of the more repetitive processes like tracing drawings with the sewing machine, essentially the same image with each one taking on its own identity, allowed me to go into a more meditative state. I think this meditative state is important to me and my work, and it is only through recording the making and re-watching the footage that I have seen the connection between what I create and how I create it. Repetition and iteration are important through the themes, techniques, processes, and both physical and mental states of my body and mind. I also realised that having a better understanding of my physical self in the work made me want to include myself more physically in future pieces: for the work to become more performative in the future.

I also began to realise that as part of my shifting identity of artist, researcher and teacher, that I always consider what I am doing in terms of how it might be useful as an approach for students. I clearly have a desire to make my personal insights and experiences useful for teaching and learning contexts, even when I am immersed in my own work. It also struck me how thinking about teaching and learning contexts in turn provided an additional lens to think about the work I was making. This is possibly where the making-about-making element stemmed from. As well as performing or thinking about my body as part of the work, I also realised that I like writing and that the writing became not just a form of sense-making but, at times, a form of creative expression, a poetry of sorts. Theatre and poetry have always been interests of mine, but pushed to the background, now feeling like they have been suppressed from a practice that has only been touching the surface.

8. How has observing yourself in this way helped you?

I think that if I had just kept a written journal as a diary of thoughts then I may have explored some of the same things. However, I am not sure I would have read the notes back to myself in the same way, or used the initial notes to construct different piece of writing. By having a variety of observations I was forced to revisit the recordings in different ways. Some of this involved editing together material or processing digital files so that they could be included on the blog which meant seeing what was recorded several times. Working with this material in a rather technical way provided some distance to it as my involvement in viewing the material was quite functional. Deciding how to narrate the content on the blog, which for one project was different stages of the making process, and for another, specific units of time (days of the residency), also required a form of processing and editing. Because there was an imagined audience reading and looking at the content, this editing was about making sense to others and sense-making for myself. Reflecting on the making process became more than just thinking about what I had done and where I might go next; reflecting became a way for me to interpret, reorder, and develop a dialogue. So, in some ways observing myself in this way enabled many different ways to reflect on the making, my process and myself.

Also, looking at the making, myself, and pieces of work with different media, provided different ways to view and experience them. Drawings became a different sort of image when

they were photographed, and they changed again when on a blog, where they might sit next to text or moving imagery. A piece of work looked at in one context or setting was affected by the forms it was presented with and this provided me with a different experience of it. I think some of this helped to distance me from the immediacy of making and helped to make what I was doing unfamiliar. This unfamiliarity was also through seeing bits of me I wasn't used to seeing: what my face is doing when I am drawing, or what the materials I am using look like as they are making contact with surfaces. This intimacy and close-viewing of materials not only gave me a renewed sense of the materials themselves but also gave me a closeness to the materials, what they look like up close: the textures, absorbency, sound they make, or the flow and relationship between my movement and the material and mark. It is not that I necessarily reflected in depth on these elements but that a heightened sense of awareness was created.

9. Has your work changed?

At the time of doing the auto-ethnographies it didn't feel like it was making much of a difference to my approach to the subject matter or process as a whole, but one of the things that I found challenging was how the methodology began to influence, or perhaps inspire, the things that I might do. Part of this came from being inspired by the different viewpoints I was seeing from, but also how the video recordings were interesting as additional layers to the work. The video recordings, in some cases, became more than pieces of work: they became vehicles to reflect with, rather than stand-alone pieces. I think the research gave me an approach to my work which enabled me to let go of certain habits. Because I was trying to observe, and in a way question everything I was doing, I allowed myself to do things without over-thinking what I was doing. This seems like a contradiction, that while being more aware of what I was doing, I was more willing to step outside what was familiar. I became aware of what was familiar and this challenged me. At the time I felt that being a researcher of my practice while doing it often presented a conflict, and I remember at various times thinking that the methodology, the technology in particular, was interfering or even contaminating the work I was making. So there was an element that my work was changing because of the new ways I was looking at it which felt like a process of unpicking and understanding. Through this process I became interested in what was being created and the making of the work sort of became its own reflexive methodology. The digital brought something new to my practice and the methodology: it enabled me to slow down my making process, to quite literally slow movements down. The slowing down also gave me a sense of connecting with my work, the process, and myself in new ways, and it is this aspect that I feel has had a lasting impact on me.

The work created through the auto-ethnographies was different to previous work, in that I was less focused on the end pieces, and more detached from them as pieces than I have with work in the past. In some ways I felt that I had invested more of myself in these pieces, that they revealed more about me, but I was more happy for them to be shared, and they perhaps revealed more to me about myself than to anyone else. A significant change to my work since stopping the auto-ethnographic projects is that I feel that I have a stronger connection to the way I work, the materials I use, and how I want to become more physically part of my work.

The auto-ethnographic methodology has performative elements to it: I became an observed performer even if it was to an audience of one. The work I have made since has explored using the spoken word (scripted), and making-as-performance. This is a huge departure for me, but not a surprising one when I consider my interests in theatre and poetry. The idea that my practice has been interfered with, or contaminated, seems ridiculous to me now and makes me think about how much control I used to want to have with, and over, my work. So letting go has made me feel closer to my practice which, in turn, has changed how I perceive myself as an artist, researcher and teacher. I am now more present in my work.

10. Is there anything else that has changed?

I think my perception of myself has changed in that I feel empowered by my roles or identities as an artist, educator and researcher rather than compromised, particularly the dual identity of teacher and artist. I think this has stemmed from a perception that you can't be serious about making artwork unless you are earning a main living from it. I don't think being an artist has much to do with that; rather, it is about how you situate yourself, and make sense of the different roles or identities you might have. How I might write about my practice has changed and I am less concerned with pinning it down, or defining exactly what it is about. It continues to be an emerging thing and, as soon as I feel I can pin it down, I might be tempted to do more digital auto-ethnography. I want to feel surprised by what I do.

Some of the challenges I have previously had relate to discipline identity. Starting out as a painter who did as much photography, print, installation, and 3D work, as painting, my practice has never been defined by the materials or techniques that I use. For a while I experimented a lot with felt fibre and I began to identify my work with fine art textiles and craft. I have always wrestled with making what I want to make and what I think others would want to buy, and after a few years, although enjoying some of the more commercially driven making, happily returned to making for myself. So I feel I have come full circle and consider myself an artist who works interchangeably with materials, techniques, processes for ideas and expressing myself because I have something to share or say. Although I have previously used video and sound, this was at a time when I was experimenting at art school, so what has changed recently is a desire to allow more experimental ways of working back in to my practice.

Although not explicitly focused on teaching in the classroom, the experience I have had, has changed how I think about my relationship to my students. The aim of the research was to explore something for myself and enable students to do the same as a pedagogical approach. However, the changes to my teaching have gone beyond that. My experiences of using different ways to record myself has resulted in different ways of making work. For example, recording spoken descriptions of things I want to draw before drawing them. This approach became an idea for a series of workshops where participants used this technique to make work, and explore drawing, as a verbally reflective activity. Having recorded tutorials with students, and then shared them with the students, my approach to tutorials and providing feedback has also changed. The tutorials have become more like conversations where the student speaks more than I do. In fact, tutorials have started to feel more like informal

interviews where I am asking questions as a way to develop feedback rather than give a critique or directive.

11. Will you continue to use these approaches in the future?

I can imagine using the methodology of auto-ethnography as part of my practice but not necessarily to observe my practice for continued research purposes. The process has triggered something, and I feel sent me on a different trajectory which I can explore for a while. I feel that if and when I become too comfortable with what I am doing then I might attempt to make the familiar unfamiliar again. I feel at the moment that I am open to changes that are happening, and that it is a changing practice.

In terms of how I might use these approaches with others I think there is definitely mileage in unpicking art and design pedagogy and also in looking at other contexts for these approaches, for example, the tutorial as recorded interview or feedback as a podcast or film. Blogs will continue to be important and have been a great vehicle for exploring different methods of reflecting, however, there are often already ingrained approaches students have with using social media, and these are often not very reflective. Sharing work on Facebook and responding to Likes becomes quite passive and potentially directive. Blogs also can become static repositories rather than environments for deep or dialogic reflection.

I am also interested in trying other ways to observe and document making and thinking. As touched on earlier, there is potential in exploring the use of surveillance tools for my own reflection, or making work specifically to reflect with. Creating slow motion recordings visually slowed down an action which gave me an interesting 'space' to reflect in. There is also potential to explore some of these approaches for students with disabilities. Many people I have spoken to about the work I am doing drew my attention to the benefits of some of these approaches for dyslexia, memory problems, sight impairment and emotional wellbeing.

12. How important was sharing the recordings?

Sharing was vital to me developing a sense of other or audience, even though I was aware that this was a form of pretence, pretending there is someone else reading, watching or listening. It also gave the process a purpose: I was observing and making for someone else. There were other forms of sharing that I did at various stages of the projects, which at times was difficult because I didn't start the research with a fully formed idea of what I was doing and why. This emergent nature of the work was supported by talking at conferences, lectures to students and, of course, discussing ideas with colleagues, friends and supervisors. I often thought of my sharing, particularly at conferences and on the blog as a selfish sharing, that it was more for me and my benefit than for other people. I think this was at a stage when I was using the sharing to make sense of something, and the information was not fully formed; it was fragmented and possibly quite confusing. The most difficult content to share was probably the sound recordings because my uncertainty and vulnerability was exposed the most with these. The visual recording only ever showed parts of me, bits of arms, hands, feet, or eyes squinting. They were unflattering, but probably showed a confidence (not felt) rather than a vulnerability.

3. Postscript

This postscript serves as a reflection on the digital auto-ethnographic methodology, my findings and where, as an approach, it might be situated. The process of digitally documenting artistic practice, as empirical as this might be, provides lenses rather than truths. In the context of life histories and autobiographies Sandino (2007, p.191) describes this type of documentation as 'deeply mediated texts that...do not transparently reflect their authors' intentions... nor construct a unified subject'. However, they are useful in providing a 'rich text of the ongoing strategies of meaning-making captured in the moment of the dialogic encounter of the recording', not offering 'truths' but 'an opportunity to hear the self in the process of becoming through reflective narration' (Sandino, 2007, p.198). If, as Sandino says, 'we can unravel the singular and complex ways in which artists' identities are created and re-created, and understand how artists' stories of process are imbricated in the larger project of identity formation' (2007, p.198), this is potentially useful, not only for the established artist, but also undergraduate students making their own transition through their practices.

Fortnum and Smith (2007), in their exploration of the challenges artists face when documenting their practices, conclude that although technology has made it easier to document practice, and that we are more used to being observed, this does not necessarily mean that the creative process has been 'demystified'. Fortnum and Smith (2007) refer to Mey's (2007) point from her symposium paper abstract that '[the] ...process of making art and their documentation influence each other'. For me the risk of this 'influence' is more interesting than remaining in the dark and allows me to question my understood 'repertoire', what Schön (1983) refers to as something the practitioner can draw upon when faced with something new. The relationship the artist has between their thinking and making is complex but there is an opportunity to explore this pedagogically.

This digital auto-ethnography was for my own personal development as an artist, and to form a series of vignettes of students as an arts pedagogical enquiry. The research project included thirteen students across year groups from several art and design disciplines. While there is not room here to discuss this aspect of the project in any depth, the approach enabled the students to take ownership of their own creative making processes and critically reflect on these experiences. Beyond the case studies, students on year two of a B.A. (Hons) Fine Art programme were given a research project brief, framed as 'Tactics for Not Knowing' taken from Cocker's (2013) essay. Knowing and being able to situate one's arts practice is a critical part of artistic development and assessment. These periods of uncertainty, of 'not knowing' are described by Cocker (2013, p.126) as 'paralysing' and 'prohibitive' and that they can 'usher in the feelings of anxiety and embarrassment, the debilitating sense of being at a loss or lost, unable to see a way out or forward'. However, like Cocker, I find myself reinvigorated by not knowing, on the edge of discovering something, 'not knowing is an active space within practice, wherein an artist hopes for an encounter with something new or unfamiliar, unrecognisable' (Cocker, 2013, p.126). The students were challenged to find research approaches that helped them to become strangers to their practices, to become outsiders looking in, and to make the familiar unfamiliar. Some students recorded different aspects of their making and thinking using auto-ethnographic techniques, some recorded conversations

with each other. Some students have written questions to interview themselves. They were enabled to take this critical approach, to remove the need for a teacher role in this critique, and to develop their reflective practices.

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Links to the digital auto-ethnography projects undertaken between 2013 and 2017

'Submerged' October 2013 – February 2014
<https://feltlikeit.wordpress.com/category/submerged/page/2/>

'Drawn Together: A conversation with the collection' October 2014-May 2015
<https://drawnconversation.wordpress.com/>

'Seeing Practice' research project with students 2015-2017
<https://seeingpracticeblog.wordpress.com/>