

# ‘Authenticity, Creative Practice and Community in Distance Learning’

In Progress: Thinking through Online Arts Education

Falmouth Flexible MA and BA Arts courses

In Conversation with Jesse Alexander (MA Photography) and Barbaby Lickens-Richard (MA  
Illustration)

By Catarina Fontoura

What is the importance of authenticity in online learning and how does it presents itself in distance learning interactions?

# Domestic Spaces as Teaching and Learning Spaces

We invite colleagues, students and tutors into personal spaces and that reality shapes the teaching and learning relationship forming environment.

## Domestic and Global Soundscapes

Domestic Soundscapes

Urban and Rural Soundscapes

which bring the contexts around individuals to the live learning activities.

‘Marking with Cemre, who is based in Istanbul and hearing the call to prayer from her local mosque’ - which brought the geographical and cultural spaces that we inhabited whilst teaching and learning making a very global experience.’

‘It promotes empathy in a way that doesn’t occur within the institutional physical space’

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Jesse Alexander, Course Leader MA Photography

We know from Pedagogical research that learning is affected by emotions and we know emotion is important in education—it drives attention, which in turn drives learning and memory, all driven by physiological processes as described and resumed by Robert Sylvester from instance in '*How Emotions Affect Learning*'. (Sylvester, 1994, 60-65)

This inadvertent sharing of personal contexts and environments can be very positive as positive emotions of a comforting personal space become associated with a cognitive process of learning, but it also poses a **challenge** to both tutor and students if there are difficult situations to manage at work, as it can become more difficult to distance oneself emotionally from the event, in a way that perhaps is facilitated by leaving the physical learning and teaching space of the institution.

The course therefore becomes **embedded** in people's lives  
as well as peoples' contexts become embedded in the  
course, making each learning journey individual.

Distance Arts Education also **mimics** in a very authentic way, the working life of freelance practitioners, making the transition between university and life as a working creative, seamless.

'The way in which a freelance illustrator works is also the way in which we are teaching the course' (...) and students have more opportunities to create and manage both their networking skills and lives online, creating a well and truly developed professional online persona.'

Barnaby Linkens Richards, MA Illustration

# Creative Pedagogical Practices, Communities and Resident-like Student Behavior

Students also report feeling their learning experience is authentic due to their expectations about distance learning – the communications are personal and not at all automated and the **community** that is formed online.

This has been identified by students and staff as one of the most important elements in creating an environment where students can behave in a resident-like way, making the virtual space their own. (White and Le Cornu, 2011)

# Creative Pedagogical Practices, Communities and Resident-like Student Behavior

Residents, on the other hand, see the Web as a place, perhaps like a park or a building in which there are clusters of friends and colleagues whom they can approach and with whom they can share information about their life and work. A proportion of their lives is actually lived out online where the distinction between online and offline is increasingly blurred. (White and Le Cornu, 2011)

# Creative Pedagogical Practices, Communities and Resident-like Student Behavior

The 'sticky curriculum' and the transformative value students and teachers can find in distance learning curriculum and community.

'The sticky curriculum demands identity work; participants in the studio become active agents in learning' and is actively 'sticky curriculum' that is actively shaped by lecturers, technicians and students. (Orr and Shreeve,2017)

'Trying to make the online learning spaces – the curriculum, modules and courses – non prescriptive and as open to interpretation by the people experiencing it, learners and tutors, as possible. Enabling tutors to speak from personal positions, providing students with as many perspectives as possible. '

Barnaby Linkens Richards, MA Illustration

‘We are putting in place a personal methodology that is going to **stick** in that students mind and allow for students to start a rich dialogue with their own work at a much more critical level, for years to come.’

Barnaby Linkens Richards, MA Illustration

# Creative Pedagogical Practices, Communities and Resident-like Student Behavior

- Having truly present partners in the learning journey enables Resident-Like Behaviour
- Online, you are only truly present if you sharing and discussing and engaging. Truly active peer learning is facilitated by formative only projects and sessions.
- Present work in a shared space as a key element of becoming a resident in the online studio space.
- Having a very good idea of what the 'big picture' of the programme is, what the journey is and what is coming.
- Networking in smaller groups of students that travel together through the programme

# The Project

## **Dialogues:**

Tutor and Student Voice in the Falmouth Flexible Arts-  
Based Courses

## **Literature Review**

**Written / Video Piece**