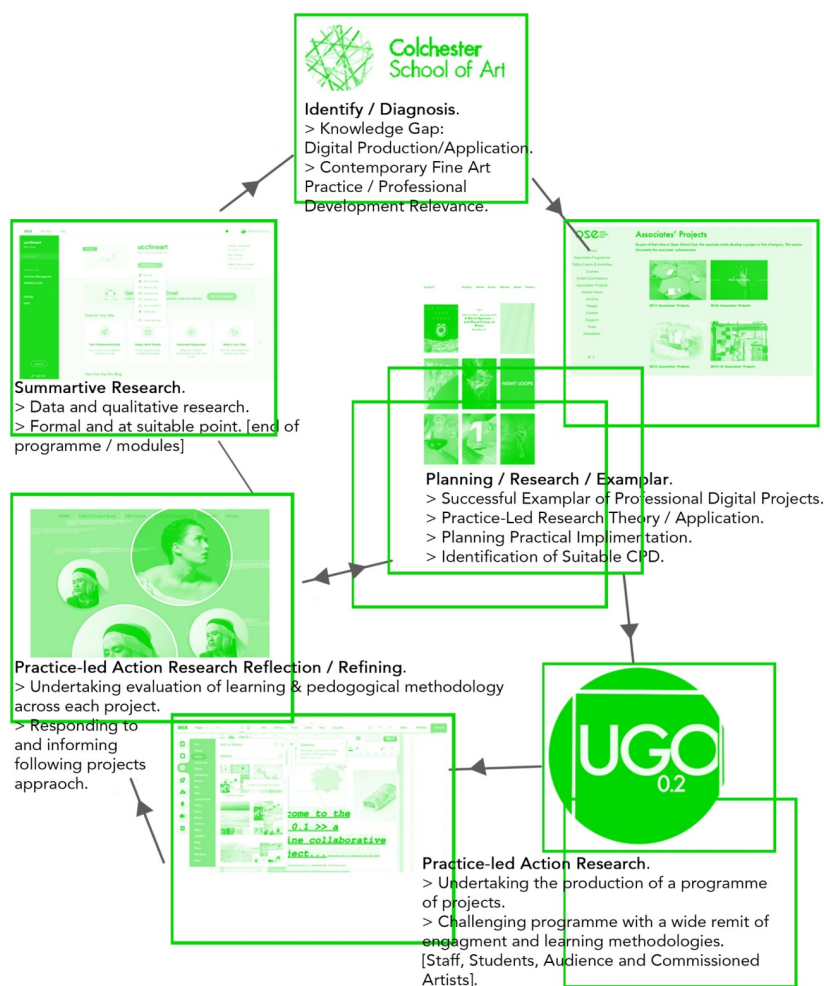


NAME: Jonathan Kelham	SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT: UCC Colchester School of Art
CASE STUDY TITLE: UGO 0.2: Action Research – Implementation and impact of a digital project in a BA Fine Art undergraduate programme's digital project space.	
WORD COUNT: 5487	



¹Fig 1. UGO 0.2 Action Research Model [Adapted from Baskerville 1999]

¹This model was developed in response to the emerging findings of PH CHEP Module 1 Case Study. It shows an action research model, identifying the key knowledge and skills gaps in learning in web based fine art practice, and a proposed reflective framework suggested as part of the PG CHEP Module 2 Case Study.

INTRODUCTION: *The rational for a Contemporary Fine Art Project in a Digital Project Space*

This introduction provides the parameters to the action research case study below. Introducing the context; prior research, current trends and *digital project space (DPS)* definitions, alongside intended outcomes.

The academically competitive² *BA Fine Art undergraduate programme* at UCC declares;

*'Via integrated approaches to practice and theory, you will learn to develop a confident and independent sense of enquiry in relation to contemporary fine art and practice-led research...focused on developing you artistically, technically and holistically, in other words, as an all-round fine art practitioner.'*³

The school of art has significant strengths in its studio⁴ and traditional⁵ workshop provision, which is highly praised in external reports⁶ and in academic achievements⁷. These strengths are predominantly aligned to an *old school art school* arts practices, producing authentic, challenging and highly relevant artists. However, the declaration of *all-round contemporary fine art practitioner*⁸ requires, a significant engagement with a broad arts practice from materials processes to new technologies. The courses ability to provide students with a holistic, multitude of practices for them to critically select is important. Allowing learners to consider their relevance as artists working in 2019 is integral to our own relevance and longevity⁹.

My assumptions are that the DPS is a genuinely required area of expertise for a relevant and engaging fine art undergraduate programme. I seek to establish a practical application in a formalised

¹ The BA Fine Art undergraduate programme at University Centre Colchester achieve 74% 'Good Grades' [1*-2:1], with 100% graduating with a 2:2 or higher, across the graduating cohort for 2018, significantly above national benchmark.

² The BA Fine Art undergraduate programme at University Centre Colchester achieve 74% 'Good Grades' [1*-2:1], with 100% graduating with a 2:2 or higher, across the graduating cohort for 2018, significantly above national benchmark.

³ BA Fine Art Course Information. [2018]. University Centre Colchester: 2018-19 Website and Prospectus. Colchester & Online: UK. [accessed 10.10.2018 at <https://www.colchester.ac.uk/course/ba-hons-in-fine-art/>]

⁴ STUDIO; relates to the double heighted, first floor, fine art space which provides 28 students across three years individual and collaborative spaces to generate, research and document their emerging practices. Alongside this traditional studio space, the BFA has its own bookable, flexible studio-based project space. The studio also contains 3 further project spaces, seminar room, computer room and drawing studio.

⁵ TRADITIONAL: In this instance traditional references, key workshop facilities which have a long history and strong association with Arts Practice. These at UCC are very competitive and generous which includes; print room, ceramics, wood workshop, metal workshop and plastics workshop. Each workshop area, at least in isolation, are physical, tactile and 'making' spaces in its broadest sense.

⁶ Allen, Dan. [2018]. BA Fine Art External Examiner Report: PART A Academic Quality and Standards. University of Essex External Examiner Report. Essex.

⁷ 'This is now the fourth and final year of my engagement as External Examiner for BA Fine Art. This year, as in the previous three years the programme has evidenced an excellent relationship between practice and theory. The programme's focus on critical and contextual awareness is commendable with a symbiotic relationship between theory and practice evident in the work and through verbal feedback from students... This may seem standard practice in art schools, but the reality is quite different, few institutions achieve the right balance.'

⁸ Allen, Dan. [2018]. BA Fine Art External Examiner Report: PART A Academic Quality and Standards. University of Essex External Examiner Report. Essex.

⁹ 'There is consistency with UKHEI and National reference points. The average grade is significantly higher than the national average for Fine Art, but the marking is absolutely consistent. In my mind the high marks are testament to two key factors: 1. The unusually high standard of teaching that expertly nurtures high levels of ambition in a caring and supportive environment. 2. The relatively small student cohort facilitates more intensive teaching and enables a highly individual teaching strategy.'

⁸ BA Fine Art Course Information. [2018]. University Centre Colchester: 2018-19 Website and Prospectus. Colchester & Online: UK. [accessed 10.10.2018 at <https://www.colchester.ac.uk/course/ba-hons-in-fine-art/>]

⁹ LONGEVITY; relates to the overarching existence of the course. The current Higher Education climate is highly competitive and all additional opportunities, specialisms and progressive elements will support the courses relevance in maintain currency amongst current and prospective students.

Deleted: .

educational context. Whilst challenging the perceived superficiality by hypothesising a critical framework for the DPS.

There are however issues raised by DPS researchers; Clara M, Barbera E assert the flaws of the DPS, its collectivism. Citing three psychological and epistemological concerns; *"the lack of a solution to the learning paradox, the under conceptualization of interaction and the inability to explain concept development."*¹⁰. The research will challenge the superficiality that can exist in the digitalisation of an arts practice and preconceptions by students and staff. Oversaturation of digital information can undermine the academic rigour in which collaborators and visitors interact with such spaces. Here the temporality, fluid and ambiguous qualities of the DPS are problematic as opposed to empowering.

Throughout the course, I have found little rigorous research directly referencing the application of the project space or the digital project space in an educational context. There are significant contributions already to the digital pedagogy [Hemmi, A. Bayne, S. Land, R. The appropriation and repurposing of social technologies in higher education. 2009], visual arts practice-led action research [Harty, P.J. Sawdon, P.J. Interweaving in hybrid methodologies. 2016], Virtual Learning Environments [Lally, V. Sclater, M. Brown, K. Technologies, Learning and Culture: Some Emerging Themes. 2017] and artist-led learning [Wakefield, Dr M. Informal peer learning between artists. 2013], which have collectively informed the idea.

INTRODUCTION: Professional Development Research & Artist-led pedagogy.

My interest is heavily informed by the pedagogical qualities of the artist-led project space. Originally a vital vehicle for the maintenance of a critical framework by artist post-graduation. I am fascinated by the risk-taking, self-initiated, ambiguity and adaptability of this space and its potential to be embedded within students learning on an undergraduate fine art programme.

*"...characteristic of the current [Artist-led PS] trend is how it has sprung up ...this suggests an evolving and real disconnection between attitudes and interests...and those modes of teaching that hold sway in the majority of art schools, with their emphasis on individual practice and a persistent division between studio practice and theoretical activity."*¹¹

The relatively new framework of the DPS produces a hyperbolic project space, infinitely accessible and multi-purposeful. Undergraduates need opportunities within their formalised programmes to investigate and understand practice-led digital project space [DPS] learning.

¹⁰ Clara M, Barbera E. [2013.] Three problems with the connectivist conception of learning. J Comput Assist Learn. 30:197-206.

¹¹ Charlesworth, J.J. [2010] We Don't Need No...: Why innovative art education is happening everywhere except art colleges'. in Art Review. Virginia Beach: Art Review Ltd. No.42 Summer 2010. pp. 40.

The Module 1 provided a significant precursor for current structures in DPS, in particular Legion Projects which focuses on the implementing commissioned digital exhibitions. Success is evident in the fluidity of the space, how this 'area' is able to, curatorially and technologically; react to the bespoke research interests of the artist[s], each project is different. The projects demonstrate a playful, varied and almost tactile approach to the digital space. Commissions are brave, challenging the potential of those involved and the medium of the 'website', how this can be utilised to present an artist's body of work¹².

INTRODUCTION: *Prior Pedagogical Research*

UGO 0.2: Action Research: *Implementation and impact of a digital project space in a BA Fine Art undergraduate programme*, has been developed from, *Drafting a Digital Project Space: Evaluating contemporary project space in relation to visual arts teaching & learning*¹³ [2018]. This provided an overarching investigation into general pedagogical theory which considers the current and recent theory on digital learning technology in an educational context. This drew upon current practices in physical/digital project spaces, from a contemporary fine art framework.

Key Research Learned from Module One Case Study:

1. Imbedding into main modules of learning to reaffirm relevance, support, authenticity.
2. Student opportunities: providing student responsibilities to incorporate a collaborative ethos.
Allowing students to learn specialist elements such as contemporary curatorial practice or co-ordinator / administrator in relation to their evolving professional development planning.
3. The importance of generating ownership, developing a programme involving all stakeholders.
4. A well-balanced Higher Education programme, for both staff and students.

The case study will research a new platform for students to engage with their practice. Informing how I can understand and enhance their awareness, skills and appreciation of internet and digital art in individual and collective practices. I hope to develop, in collaboration with students, a programme of projects which investigate collaborative opportunities for students in digital practice, digital curatorial practice, digital administration, digitalisation of physical practice and digital archiving.

¹² The emerging demand for low-cost, ownership driven programmes can be seen across the UK, in 'alternative-pedagogies'. AltMFA, Open School East, School of the Damned and TOMA at METAL are four examples supporting sustained critical frameworks. Artist-led established galleries such as Eastside Projects and Outpost facilitate associate schemes; ESP: Extra Special People and Outpost Membership Scheme respectively, generating a source of income or support in kind for the gallery, whilst providing its membership with,

"Artists engage with artist-led groups in subtly different ways to organisationally facilitated membership groups. Participation in the former enables experimentation with roles and competencies in a fluid environment where a sense of shared purpose and ownership prevails. The latter are utilised less as 'communities' and more as resources to be exploited and graduated through."

Dr Megan Wakefield highlights this monetary / detachment concern of the organizational facilitated membership as opposed to the artist-led. These membership schemes' focus on the proactivity of the individual, without a constant area to facilitate or a significant level of ownership / stakeholder in the overarching programme. A correct balance is needed.

¹³ Kelham, Jonathan. [2018] *Drafting a Digital Project Space: Evaluating contemporary project space in relation to visual arts teaching & learning*. Case Study Module One. PG CHEP. University of Essex.

*'Interweaving of theory and practice within research, in order to suggest potential approaches to the development of hybrid methodologies in fine art practice-led research.'*¹⁴

Considering the learning approaches discussed, there are hybrid of pedagogical practices which will be informing and leading the action research. Research through play¹⁵, the adaptability of the research to react to learning styles¹⁶ and the interlinking of Growth Mind-set¹⁷ will be vital, the application of which was supported by attending the *Growth Mind Set in Teaching Workshop*¹⁸. The correlation between progressive, important creativity and Growth Mind Set is outlined by Dr Dweck here:

*"Creativity researchers concur. In a poll of 143 creativity researchers, there was wide agreement about the number one ingredient in creative achievement. And it was exactly the kind of perseverance and resilience produced by the growth mindset."*¹⁹

This notion of resilience and proactivity is inherent in the artist-led project space pedagogy. These spaces are characterised by their; risk-taking and self-initiated²⁰ discussed above. Harty, P.J. And Sawdon, P.J. *Interweaving in hybrid methodologies* [2016], identifies six key elements to successfully undertake fine art pedagogy action research, considering their ability to generate an appropriate, relevant and informed visual research methodology. The six statements have informed how UGO 0.2 has been approached.

- > Qualitative.
- > First person research: lived experience²¹
- > Interpretive, generative and emergent approach.
- > Iterative with an emphasis on reflection.
- > Transparent.
- > Multifaceted researcher.

INTRODUCTION: *Focusing the Case Study*

¹⁴ Harty, P.J. And Sawdon, P.J. [2016] *Interweaving in hybrid methodologies*: Journal of Visual Art Practice, Edition 15. pp.30.

¹⁵ New, Rebecca. [2007] Reggio Emilia As Cultural Activity Theory in Practice. *Theory Into Practice* 46:1. pp. 5-13

¹⁶ There is an expansive range of theories related to learning styles. The selection of key theories which seem appropriate and helpful in supporting the development of the student learning in a digital project space could be the whole focus of this case study. Across this set of theories, VAK [N Fleming] plus, Gregorc and Butler's Model respond most directly to the action research methodology mirroring Harty and Sawdon's approach whilst also taking into consideration the predominant learning styles of the BFA cohort. The cognitive approach and non-hierarchical quality of this learning style also feels very relevant, especially in retrospect, the Grasha-Reichmann Learning Style Scale; avoidant, participative, competitive, collaborative, dependent and independent.

¹⁷ Dweck, C. [2017]. *Mindset*. New York: Robinson.

¹⁸ Carman, E. [2019] *Growth Mindset in Teaching: Moving on with PG CHEP Support Day*. University of Essex.

¹⁹ Dweck, C. [2015]. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. United Kingdom: Joosr.

²⁰ Kelham, Jonathan. [2018] *Drafting a Digital Project Space: Evaluating contemporary project space in relation to visual arts teaching & learning*: Case Study Module One. PG CHEP. University of Essex. & Burgess, L. & Addison, N. [2007] *Conditions for Learning: Partnerships for Engaging Secondary Pupils with Contemporary Art*. The International Journal of Art & Design Education. NSEAD/Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 26.2. pp. 185-198.

²¹ Varela, F., & Shear, J. [1999]. *First-Person Methodologies: What, Why, How?* *Journal Consciousness Studies*, 6, 1-14.

In September 2018 I received a UCC Research Grant to extend investigation into project space pedagogy as an action-research digital project. This resulted in a more ambitious Module 2, subsequently the methodology will focus on the set up and one of the projects produced. The funds allowed UGO 0.2 to select prestigious artists / curators with specialist knowledge to challenge and develop the research.

An early outline of the research, declares “a test-space for digitalisation of research interests by alumni, students, staff and invited artists on the BA Fine Art programme at Colchester School of Art.”²² Because of the additional funding, the formation of the 2018-19 digital project space programme had a greater scope and depth, beyond what could be realistically covered in this case study.

Commissioned projects²³ have targeted research interests and/or knowledge gaps. The funding has allowed commissioned artists to visit the School of Art, provide presentations and seminars on their projects and undertake the processes of realising the digital projects in the physical spaces of the school.

METHODOLOGY: Implementing UGO 0.2

The research methodology is practice-based, and research informed. The implementation required technical and pedagogical elements.

Module 1 identified suitable and appropriate cloud-based web development platforms. Considering accessibility, adaptability, educational institution infrastructures and the varied learning styles of students. A broad and intuitive platform was required. Wix was identified as the most appropriate web host for the following rational; intuitive / easy to use [see: FIG 2A. and 2.B], adaptability with internal IT support frameworks, potential for higher end coding/HTML editing, visually of dashboard and cost [see: FIG 2.]. An established website host provided students with good knowledge of platforms for future professional roles; artist, publisher, educator or gallery website/projects.

²² Kelham, J. ABOUT. UGO 0.2 Project Space. 2018. Online at [Accessed 10.10.2018 at www.uccfineart.com/ugo-0-2-about]

²³ Olivia Bax's²³ *Handle This*²³ [GIF. 2018]. An artist comfortable in physical sculptural practice. Bax did not have specialist skills or experience in the digital translation of her practice research, mirroring the concerns and situations of a number of students.

John Robinson's²³ *Velazquez Variations*²³ [Performance. 2019]. This project provided students with a new experience of performance as process documentation to generate paintings.

Dave Evans' *Similitudes* [chan-style message board. 2019]. This collaborative project with level 6 students as part of their Professional Fine Art Processes module, provided students with the experience of remote curation, dialogue and research via encountering images whilst on the internet.

Chris Alton's²³ *The Union of Human Intelligence Taskworkers*²³ [digital banner. 2019]. This project provided students with an example of collaborative practice across internet specific communities.

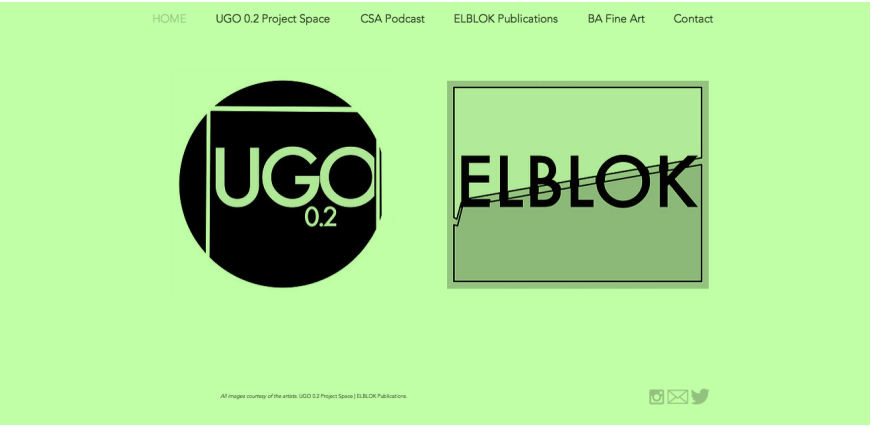


FIG 2. UGO 0.2 Homepage | 2018²⁴

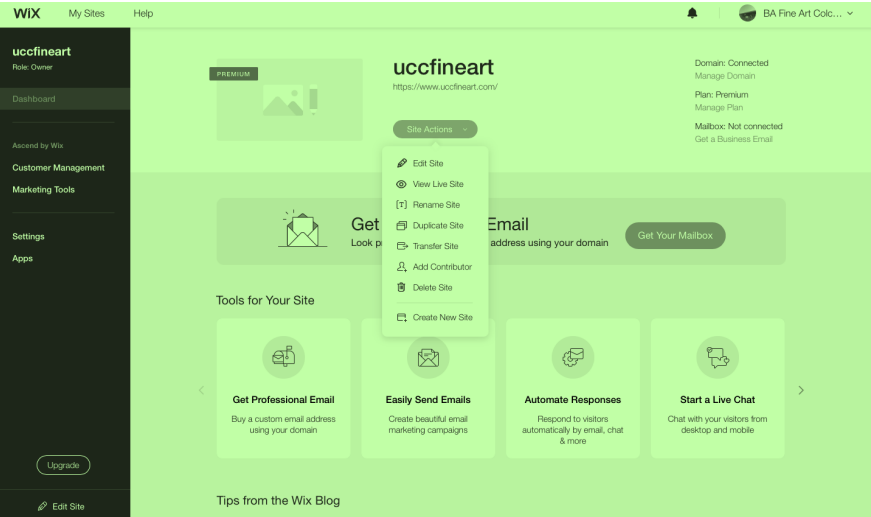


FIG 2.A. UGO 0.2 Dashboard | 2018-19²⁵

²⁴ The UGO 0.2 homepage was designed to provide a clear and open presence, the visual design was intended to be accessible and simple. This removed associations with the wider marketing brand of UCC. The design aligned to a visual audience, without prescribing a house-style to the projects, which might discourage students or artists.

²⁵ The website host and builder Wix.com does not require coding ability or previous web building experience, allowing the opportunities to be accessible for all. But collaborators can build effective and varied outcomes which have a strong visual design.



FIG 2.B. UGO 0.2 Dashboard | Website Editing | 2018-19²⁶

Once the domain name etc. was secured, I undertook the development of two projects across the summer of 2018. These served as exemplars for the returning cohorts, providing modelling on the potential of the project space and how they could then generate future ideas. Showcasing, potential, use, ambition and outcomes demonstrated the DPS' unique qualities. This modelling [*'Most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action.'*] allowed the facilitation of ideas, expectations and enthusiasm for students to link to their own practice to become more inherent, earlier. Across induction week, October 2018, I introduced each year group to the digital space, the examples and invited students to apply for the post[s] of digital project co-coordinator. A level 6 student successfully undertook the role, leading on projects; *Handle This* and elements of *Certified Copy*. This provided her with experiences unique to this element of the undergraduate course.

The two modelling projects were carefully selected:

DOC 0.1 [2018]²⁷ was basic project, providing students with a scaffolded and interactive introduction. An open access, low-fi collaborative digital project space focusing on authorship, ownership and procrastination, challenging visitors to consider the artistic merits of the format. The durational artwork allowed users to edit: remove. add. alter. the online word processor document, while collaborating

²⁶ An example of the simple 'drag and drop' aspects of curating the projects and the potential ways in which curators, co-ordinators and artists can alter the projects to test and challenge their practices.

²⁷ Kelham, J. [2018] DOC 0.1. UGO Project Space. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Kelham, J. Online [Available at www.uccfineart.com/DOC_0.1]

with other users in real-time. One second year student raised her disengagement with this project, rejecting its artistic merits and value.

"It would be good to have a talk to the second years about what UGO is supposed to do - I have had a look and understand nothing."²⁸

Subsequently we organised a second discussion with the nine second year BFA students. However, the agreed time was only attended by two students, despite reminders; this did not include the student who highlighted the confusion over the intent of UGO. Those in attendance felt that the digital space did further their understanding and awareness of the platform. The following actions were agreed; the addition of the press release to the webpage of the projects and agreement to engage with and edit DOC 0.1.

Upon further reflection, this disengagement correlated to a lack of *UGO 0.2 workshop* undertaken with both first and third years who I teach. Additional diagnosis suggests a programme wide workshop should have been implemented, this would have counteracted the strong, mature individuals in the group who often exhibit fixed mindset behaviours and heavily influence the younger cohort. However, alongside this project another *Certified Copy*²⁹ [2018] was launched, re-presented in a contemporary online exhibition context the work by a 2018 BA (Hons) Fine Art graduate artist Emma Theedom. This was intended to provide a different, more formalised and 'professional' modelling of the DPS to rework, revisit and document series of works. This was designed to counterbalance DOC 0.1, appealing to more traditional presentation interests.

As identified in the introduction, I was able to isolate knowledge gaps via the *UGO 0.2 Action Research Model* and approach artists with specialist skills pertinent to our specific context. The funding and the digital platform allowed for a responsive and active methodology across the academic year.

Reflecting upon this approach, a core steering group has been set up for next academic year 2019-20, who have been given direction on returning in October 2019 with a series of project proposals. Having a collective responsible for the direction of the DPS will place ownership and intent onto the students, this might be challenging but those able to invest in it will be rewarded³⁰. The 2018-19 archives serve as exemplars, students have full editing access and web tools. The alternative artist-led spaces

²⁸ Anonymous. [2019] *Email from Second Year Student*. University Centre Colchester.

²⁹ Theedom, E. [2018] *Certified Copy*. UGO Project Space. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Kelham, J. & Gunnarsdrottir, I. Online [Available at www.uccfineart.com/certified_copy]

³⁰ Instilling a Growth Mind Set.

incorporate specialist committees, programmers and curatorial roles which individual artists undertake one a yearly basis, guaranteeing new directions appropriate to its stakeholders³¹ and longevity³².

For the case study I actively integrated the learning framework and opportunities of the DPS into the blended learning³³ module context, identifying appropriate learning outcomes, points in BFA programme and module delivery. This imbedded action research focused on the most relevant level 6 module. Designed across the summer the BFA Level 6 Refinement of Fine Art Practice³⁴ module culminated in a selected group show *Similitudes* to curated by artist/ curator Dave Evans.

SIMILITUDES DAVE EVANS

Similitudes was the fifth project to be launched in April 2019, the selected curator *David Evans*³⁵ was invited to undertake the commission, as a direct response to the identified diagnosis process of the *Action Research Model* applied to identify knowledge gaps³⁶. Specifically, *what is my practices relationship to the digital? [digitalising my research interests]*

Similitudes was a remote, internet-based group project curated by Evans, taking *work in progress* as a loose framework. A 'professionalised' submission and selection process, generating conversations as the exhibition. The project was inbuilt into the latter stages of the *Level 6 Refinement of Fine Art Process* [30 credit], the rationale for this was as follows; The two 30 credit *Level 6* studio-based modules in the final year, one in each semester,

*'demonstrate your ability to create a synthesis between your ideas and concepts and the materials, processes and forms you have employed. The work you undertake and produce for this module may also serve as a precursor to the work you will produce for your Professional Fine Art Practice [Degree Show].'*³⁷

The latter stages of the module, where the summative and formative feedback is vital, act as significant critical springboards for the following term, the *Refinement [BAFA01H]* and subsequent *Professional Fine Art Practice [BAFA04H]*³⁸ are inextricably interlinked. The initial proposal of *Similitudes* was to

³¹ Reflecting the 'buying-in' of the artist-led manifestos such as *Open School East* and the work of Burgess, L. & Addison, N. [2007] *Conditions for Learning*. Which both 'encourage engagement with and ownership of learning... within formal pedagogic situations, pupils are unlikely to make personal meaning unless adults recognize them as both subject to and agents of learning.' [Burgess & Addison. pp. 187]

³² Burgess, L. & Addison, N. [2007] *Conditions for Learning* 'Lave & Wenger have developed an understanding of how communities of practice are developed and sustained. They explain that for such communities to function they need to generate and engender a shared repertoire of ideas, commitments and memories, which takes time. As Hein insists, co-constructive pedagogy cannot be expected to take place on demand.' pp. 185 [Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity* in *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education* 6(2):185-194 - June 2003.]

³³ Lechoslaw, J. and Ethan, X. [2017]. *Blended Learning*. Hauppauge: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

³⁴ Kelham, J and Stubbs, S. [2018] BA Fine Art. BAFA01H: Refinement of Fine Art Practice. 30 Credit Module. Essex: University Centre Colchester Module Guide.

³⁵ Dave Evans is an artist and researcher based in Liverpool, UK. Further information see: www.evansdave.com. He makes Wireless Local Area Networks to explore the potential in creating DIY, personal and communal platforms for sharing information. He is working towards a PhD *Online Asceticism as Emancipatory Digital Practice*, Goldsmiths, UoL, speculating on how historical asceticism might influence contemporary digital networks. Evans was approached for this considerable knowledge, both technical and conceptual, in relation to online digital practices.

³⁶ Identify / Diagnosis as part of UGO 0.2 Action Research Model [Adapted from Baskerville 1999].

³⁷ Kelham, J. [2018] *Refinement of Fine Art Processes*. Level 6. 30 Credit. BA Fine Art. BAFA01H. Essex: University Centre Colchester. University of Essex.

³⁸ Kelham, J. [2019] *Professional Fine Art Practice*. Level 6. 30 Credit. BA Fine Art. BAFA04H. Essex: University Centre Colchester. University of Essex.

provide a new opportunity for students to investigate the potential of digital collaborations and to consider the digitalisation of their predominantly physical art practices.

Having this project at this point [between semesters] provides new knowledge and opportunities to consider the digitalisation of practice, generate evidence, alongside professional curatorial and selection experience. These invaluable opportunities also feed into the semester two *Level 6 Professional Development Planning* [30 credit]³⁹, designing the collaboration here provided optimal transferability of its multiple-experiences to inform various modules.

Evans describes the works submitted, reaffirming the *old school art school* diagnosis⁴⁰

*'Given that literally everyone old enough to touch a screen is now meant to be completely in thrall to devices connected to the internet, I was pleasantly surprised to receive the images submitted for this UGO 0.2 Work in Progress digital exhibition.'*⁴¹

The submitted imagery was all physically produced, with the exception of one film work. This resulted in a number of email conversations with Evans regarding the unexpected production and authenticity of the work. Evans explains *'nor did there appear to be the preoccupation with instagram-ability that every artist is supposedly obsessed with. That left me, as curator, in a curious position. Do I force these images into a digital context where there is none? Inevitably some sort of web-based image browsing must've fed into each practice, could that be a starting point?'*⁴² This became the reflection and redefining point in the project, affiliated to the model⁴³ responding to the shift in expected curatorial material.

Via dialogue between Evans and myself, the notion of web-based image browsing and encountering images re-focused the project. The project began to form visual exchanges between artists and curator, across a chan-stlye⁴⁴ message board informed by Claire Bishop's *Artforum* essay *'The Digital Divide'*⁴⁵ in which she discusses contemporary art's relationship to the global digital network. She asks *'can communication between users become the subject of an aesthetic'*⁴⁶, questioning the need for *'representation or an object form'*⁴⁷ when the digital exchange itself could suffice.

³⁹ Kelham, J. [2019] *Professional Development Planning*. Level 6. 30 Credit. BA Fine Art. BAFA03H. Essex: University Centre Colchester. University of Essex.

⁴⁰ Diagnosis referenced from INTRODUCTION *'The school of art has significant strengths...'* pp. 2.

⁴¹ Evans, D. [2019] *Similitudes* Text part of Cawdry, C. et al. [2019] *Similitudes*. UGO Project Space. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Evans, D. Online [Available at www.uccfineart.com/similitudes]

⁴² Evans, D. [2019] *Similitudes* Text part of Cawdry, C. et al. [2019] *Similitudes*. UGO Project Space. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Evans, D. Online [Available at www.uccfineart.com/similitudes]

⁴³ UGO 0.2 Action Research Model [Adapted from Baskerville 1999].

⁴⁴ Chan-Message Board: An imageboard or image board. A type of Internet forum which operates mostly via posting images. The popular and controversial Internet image board chan invites users to discuss topics on nearly any subject, including video games, cartoons and sports. What separates chan from other forums is the anonymous, temporal nature of the discussions.

⁴⁵ Bishop, C. [2012] *The Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media*. In ARTFORUM. September Vol. 51. Issue 10.

⁴⁶ Bishop, C. [2012] *The Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media*. In ARTFORUM. September Vol. 51. Issue 10.

⁴⁷ Bishop, C. [2012] *The Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media*. In ARTFORUM. September Vol. 51. Issue 10.



FIG 3. Chan-Style Image Board for *Similitudes* | BFA Y3 & Dave Evans | UGO 0.2 DPS | 2019⁴⁸



⁴⁸ Evans, D. [2019] *Chan-style Image Board the platform to develop image conversations between students and Evans, as part of Evans, D [2019] Similitudes UGO Project Space*. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Evans, D. Online [Available at <http://ffzg.net/UGO/>]



FIG 3A. *Similitudes* | BFA Y3 & Dave Evans | UGO 0.2 DPS | Project Programme 2019⁴⁹

*Similitudes*⁵⁰ was the resulting digital exchange of images, through a process of association, perhaps bypassing an overarching aesthetic in favour of the exchange, and results in a richer, less static reading of the 'original' work at this developmental stage.

The project provided students with an alternative aesthetic and curatorial experience than covered at any point within the undergraduate programme. The developmental works allowed for the students to engage in a more informal and spontaneous way, as opposed to approaching this as a showcase. This was scaffolded by the intentionally basic messaging board⁵¹, selected by Evans and a two-week window for students and curator to respond to the evolving image exchange with additional images. Statistical results, in terms of participation showed 10 / 11⁵² of the BFA year 3 cohort submitted, however two failed to undertake the image exchange. In consultation with Evans, these two students

⁴⁹ Evans, D et al. [2019] *Similitudes* UGO Project Space. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Evans, D. Online Online [Available at www.uccfineart.com/similitudes]

⁵⁰ [uncountable] (formal) similitude (between A and B) | similitude (to somebody/something) the state of being similar to something *the similitude between humans and gorillas.*

⁵¹ Cawdry, C. et al. [2019] *Similitudes*. UGO Project Space. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Evans, D. Online [Available at www.uccfineart.com/similitudes channel message board available at ***]

⁵² The student who did not submit for selection had recently had surgery and was focused on recovery.

were removed from the final presentation, a series of text and GIF formatted looped image exchanges⁵³ [see Fig 3A.].

The project demonstrated the breadth in the web-based project space for this small selected cohort; collaborating with a digital aesthetic specialist curator based in Liverpool and fed effectively into the Professional Development Planning modules 'blog' and other evidencing elements such as Curriculum Vieta and Artists Biographies. In critical reflection, *Similitudes* proved how UGO 0.2 has scratched the surface of the DPS potential, which has resulted in informing the final commission in the 2018-19 programme, *The Union of Human Intelligence Taskworkers* [2019].

FINDINGS & CONCLUSION: Evidence

The DPS has contributed to an expanding experience for students. This is evidenced in the module evaluation feedback questions identified in the table below. [see supporting evidence 3.] There appears to have been a genuine engagement with the opportunities for learning which have informed critical reflection and progression in student ideas. The following is an extract from a level 6 Professional Fine Art Practice submission;

*"the methodology of Similitudes was an interesting way of viewing a piece of work, you get stuck in what your aesthetic, style and medium looks like, what you almost forget are the other associations to form, colour and mundane objects..."*⁵⁴

Another student discussed:

*"As a response [to Evans conversations] I started to play around with the idea of balance, support and leaning...I was struggling with how to present my pillows and theses images responses started to inform my thinking, how I could build my own plinths. This idea of an in permeant support but a stable stand to hold until a permeant solution is found, almost in limbo."*⁵⁵

Both independent observations demonstrate the experience of *Similitudes* as a positive experience which has clearly informed their practice in a wider context. The blended learning approach appears here to suggest a successful application of learning. Each specialist area is designed and implemented to support the development of a holistic fine art practice approach. The table below, in a more generalised perspective highlights key questions, pertinent to the DPS. All responses sit in the UCC declared 'above benchmark' representing positive feedback.

⁵³ Cawdry, C. et al. [2019] *Similitudes*. UGO Project Space. University Centre Colchester. Curated by Evans, D. Online [Available at www.uccfineart.com/similitudes]

⁵⁴ Anonymous. [2019] *Annotations Refinement Fine Art Processes Module*. University Centre Colchester.

⁵⁵ Anonymous. [2019] *Annotations Refinement Fine Art Processes Module*. University Centre Colchester.

Module Evaluation & NSS Questions	Year 1 Grand Average	Year 2 Grand Average	Year 3 Grand Average
<i>The module content introduced me to new ideas/gave me new skills</i>	97%	75%	MEF 85% NSS 90%
<i>I have been able to access the learning resources I needed</i>	89%	77%	MEF 85% NSS 70%
<i>Overall the module has been a positive experience</i>	90%	79%	MEF 85% NSS 100%

Considering the following statistical information for the DPS, *Doc 0.1* and *Similitudes*, there is a sustained and generally positive overview. The statistical information on *Similitudes* does suggest less revisiting from students, considering eight students were involved in the project, only 50 page visits have been made. Duration of the project might have impacted upon this, in comparison to the open source *DOC 0.1* which suggests a more sustained engagement. This could be due to its evolving format and interactivity of the project as opposed to *Similitudes* 'static' launch as a resolved outcome. These observations return to the question *What constitutes as success?* [Learning. Output. Quantified]

The research has highlighted the inevitable movement towards artists engaging in a digitally informed practice. However, not all physical material-based artists need to reinvent themselves as 3D software artists, but that an awareness of the effective utilisation of the digital, was missing from the modules being delivered at all stages of the undergraduate programme. This is particularly inherent in the level 6 modules, which are designed to inform students of a movement towards a professionalisation of their practice.

Visitor Analytics	UGO 0.2 Digital Project Space	Doc 0.1 Project [Launched in October 2018]	Similitudes Project [Launched in March 2019]
Visitors [Unique Visitors]	1,086 [866]	144	50
Page Visits	3,301	144	50
Accessed as Landing Page	81	26	18

FINDINGS & CONCLUSION: *Impact of the Digital Project Space Case Study on my Professional Development*

The study has been the starting point for addressing an area of underdeveloped research area and considerable context for the emergence of a research informed model. This has provided a genuine and actionable contribution to learning. There is still additional research to be undertaken, in transdisciplinary art practice and art school teaching. Hjelde⁵⁶ approaches from a *dual position* on practice: art practice and teaching as practice, and this seems on reflection something that the study would have benefited from. The research strand in art/teaching practice will need to be carefully considered in the multifaceted possibilities of the DPS to support staff, student and invited artists to develop new knowledge and transdisciplinary practices. With future research outcomes via a visual handbook or framework for the implementation of the DPS within future BA Fine Art programmes.

Two aspects raised in Module 1's aims still remain relevant:

'The digital project space itself will encourage participants to adopt a scholarly and reflective approach to their professional development as HE practitioners. To gain further understanding on ways in which students can and will engage with their research.'

This study and its eventual guise, will provide a skeleton format to develop new and innovative ideas of how UCC documents its research, to champion the course and the School of Art.⁵⁷

Continued professional development opportunities to support a successful DPS as an effective tool, were identified and funding secured via the UCC professional development fund.

Art Education: *The Making of Alternatives*. The Association for Art History's Annual Conference 2019 [University of Brighton]. April 2019.

Next steps for digital practice and capability in the UK cultural sector - skills, audiences and innovation. DCMS, Google Arts & Culture Lab, MTM London & HLF. Westminster Media Forum. April 2019.

The application of the DPS case study has supported a refined version in the 2019-20 BA Fine Art programme. The practice-led case study has provided a 'test' [risk-taking] programme of projects and student engagement to establish a unique element of the course which is both student-centred and contributing to professional fine art practice. This ethos with the additional established 'steering group'

⁵⁶ Hjelde, K. [2016] Constructing a Reflective Site. *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Volume 15.

⁵⁷ Kallham, Jonathan. [2018] Drafting a Digital Project Space: Evaluating contemporary project space in relation to visual arts teaching & learning. Case Study Module One. PG CHEP. University of Essex.

for 19-20 will increase correlation between the cohorts as: art students and emerging professional practitioners.

The impact however has been wider reaching;

- > New DPS teaching tool, reflecting the evolving contemporary fine art practice.
- > Student Professional Practice Opportunity as DPS Curator/Co-ordinator directly relating to Level 6 module.
- > Exemplar Admin/Set up for application to other courses [model of good practice].
- > Enhance student learning: digital technologies, digital curation, digital collaboration.
- > New VISUAL platform for Research Documentation.
- > Online promotional material for course.
- > Exemplar case study for School of Art | UCC.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Kelham, J. [2018]. *UCC Research Grant Proposal*. University Centre Colchester.