



School: School of Creative Industries

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Project Title: Coding the Contemplative Collective

UOA 33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies

300-Word Statement

The research investigates how aesthetic objectives related to contemplative practice might be embedded within the space of a screen-based platform and how these objectives are shaped when authors from distinct domains (technology, business, and the arts) collaborate on a single artistic project.

Infinity is a generative artwork iPad app that creates an animated audio-visual experience meant for contemplation, relaxation, or meditation. The app is graphically and sonically interactive on a minimal level in keeping functionally with the aim of encouraging stillness. It considered how the principal aesthetic and contemplative objectives would be affected by the use of a mobile device as a medium, or 'space'. It questioned whether the mobile platform creates new modes of human experience rather than merely transplanting a mode of experience from one medium to another.

\$ echo was an ephemeral web-based artwork that involved leaving several servers unprotected and monitoring incoming attacks originating from China, triggering the display and sonification of the 5,196 names of the school children killed in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake (a dataset donated by artist Ai Weiwei) along with scrolling information showing the live attacks. The project encouraged users to reflect on government censorship of the internet, and of hackers' ability to resist these forms of control.

The collaborative context for each project shaped the final artworks through managing the multiple perspectives on what constituted a suitable level and type of interactivity for a contemplative space. In *\$ echo* the competitive atmosphere of a hackathon at Tate Modern prioritised a product that elicited maximal impact, even though the dataset suggested a contemplative approach. *Infinity's* user-centred design process (carried out at the University of Nottingham's Mixed Reality Lab) directly prioritised the contemplative objectives, with production and testing interrogating how users respond to an app that attempts to balance aesthetics with contemplative practice.