

Lesley Ung (MPhil) Faculty of Health & Environmental Sciences

As the world becomes increasingly mediated by artificial intelligence, where algorithms map emotions and machine learning predict behaviour, what remains irreducible is the unmediated act of a hand-dragging across the surface – the stumble of a line, the tremor of an unplanned mark, something that remains outside prediction. The project argues that embodied, spontaneous drawing and animation access affective states that technology cannot map – in particular, those bound to death, loss and grief. The emotional states often emerge somatically, before they can be recognised in thought and appear in the body first, unsettled and unresolved.

Situated between creative practice and phenomenology, this research asks: What is the expressive potential of spontaneous, embodied drawing and hand-drawn animation, in articulating anticipatory affective states associated with death, loss and grief, experienced somatically and pre-reflectively, before cognitive formalisation?

Situating Pallasmaa's (2009) thinking hand at the core, this research treats mark-making as a form of somatic knowledge production. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) embodied perception, Heidegger's (1962) tool-being, and Spinozist affect, as developed through Deleuze and Massumi, contextualise how intuitive lines might register the unsettling awareness of impermanence and uncertainty.

The study adopts a post-positivist, practice-oriented methodology centred on drawing and animation as primary methods. Structured through an industry animation framework, the research incorporates heuristic tools, such as a reflective visual diary, to trace emergent, embodied knowledge. Through this, the process becomes a way of navigating and externalising the inarticulable feelings, recording the process of materialising anticipatory grief.

By positioning unplanned mark-making as both a creative and epistemological act, this research contributes to visual design and animation. In this presentation, I will share a series of animation tests that explore the emergence of affective states. These works demonstrate how spontaneous, embodied drawing and animation, combined with practice-based methods, can give form to pre-reflective emotional experiences.

Keywords

Hand-drawn animation, Embodied drawing, death, loss and grief, Practice-oriented research, pre-reflective

References

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