Digital Media Labs 2014

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Digital Media Labs 2014

'Artists sometimes tie themselves in knots. Digital Media Labs was the most fun way imaginable to untie some of those knots.'

Neil Winterburn, participant in Digital Media Labs 2014

Today's professional artists and makers have little time to research and develop new ideas and processes. Typically working on several projects at any one time, freelancers often find themselves having to fall back on their existing ideas to fulfill the demands of modern commissions and residencies, many of which leave little time and budget for original research and experimentation.

From our own experience in managing and creating public art, we felt that artists can easily become overly reliant on what they already know when working on a commission without dedicated research and development time, often to the detriment of their own creative and professional development.

This is where Digital Media Labs comes in. We invite practitioners from across a range of disciplines to develop new skills and prototype works in a dedicated environment in order to advance their practice along new lines. Part of our approach at Digital Media Labs is simply about removing the everyday obstacles that sit between focused creativity, multi-media play and new creative works. We primarily work with practitioners specialising in visual arts, sound and moving image but participants have also included makers, musicians and animators.

Participants:
Ben Dalton
Emily Briselden-Waters
Mark Pilkington
Neil Winterburn
Aaron Nielsen
Lalya Gaye
Victoria Bradbury
Sam Meech
Alex McLean
Laura Pullig

Sunday 14th Sept. to
Saturday 20th Sept. 2014

Contents

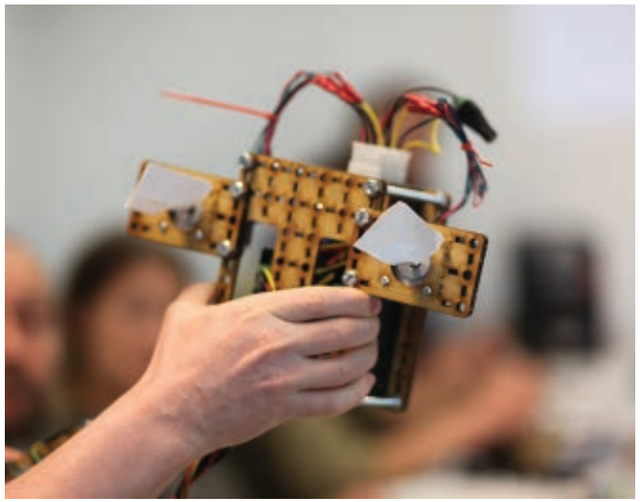
8-73 Digital Media Labs 2014
Visual Essay
66-68 I Hate Touchschreens: Digital Media Labs 2010
by Benedict Phillips
74-75 Where Does an Idea Come From?
by Hwa Young Jung
78-80 Creative Exchange
by Ben Dalton
84-88 Entanglement, Entropy
by Imran Ali
92-94 Thinking, Thinking and More Thinking
by Benedict Phillips
96-100 Credits

The Digital Media Labs are an ongoing series of residential projects that have so far taken place in Hull (October 2010) and Cumbria (September 2014). This publication focuses on the working process of Digital Media Labs that seeks to enable those artists working with and interested in the creative use of technololgy. The lab is a place where individuals can apply their processes in a new context, hothouse their ideas and create new collaborations within a specially nominated peer group.

This publication aims to give an overview and introduction to the process and thinking behind the Digital Media Labs project, with a focus on the lab that took place in 2014. The first section of this publication is a photographic diary of that lab. This is followed by written contributions from two invited guests who focus on the present question of the lab and their experience and interpretation as critical observers. There are also texts written from an inside point of view, one by a participant and one that forms an overview of the past, present and possible future from the perspective of the Digital Media Labs team.

WI-FI:TNAP956DD
Mark Pilkington
Mark Pilkington composer and performer of electroacoustic music. My practice encapsulates both sound and image as a means to extend spatial imaginings between real and virtual space. The coupling of images and sounds within audiovisual media applies to the composition of music, site-specific installation and screen-based works.
Forging the immaterial and creative labor through a network of interwoven and augmented territories. My work increasingly queries the way operations carry great critical and creative potencial. Seeking new modes of critical engagement that incorporate multiple narratives and media also informs the direction of my pedagogy.
Theoretical research focuses on the relationship of artistic genres and their respective aesthetic theories with reference to sound studies, electroacoustic music, sound design, philosophy, and film.
My audio-visual works are performed, exhibited and screened in conferences and festivals in the UK and Europe.
Collaborative interdisciplinary work is carried out with other artists using acousmatic music and visuals.
Education
PhD Portfolio of Original Compositions (2009-2012), University of Manchester UK.
MA in Electroacoustic Composition (2003-04), University of Huddersfield UK.
Awards and Commissions
Morphogenesis 5.1 - Turing 100 Conference, Manchester UK (2012)
Bathing in Sound and Light - Installation RNCM (2011)
A Tribute to Nam June Paik - FACT and TATE Liverpool (2010)
PUSH Festival - IDRA - Sweden (2009)
ACE Summer intensive Electroacoustic Workshop at the Centre de Creation Musicale Iannis Xenakis (CCMIX) in Paris, France (2005)

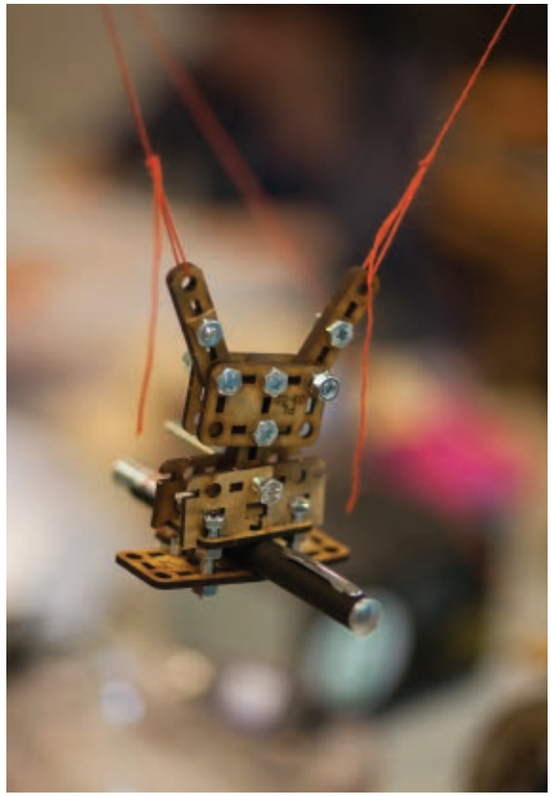
OOBS
PL 01'S

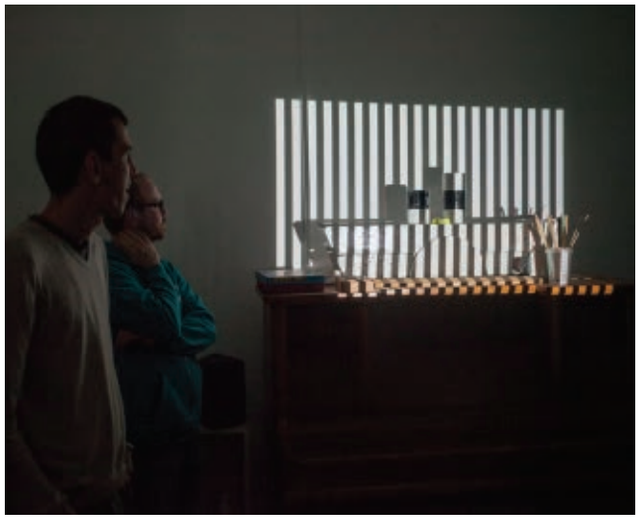


F.O.N

SPARKLING

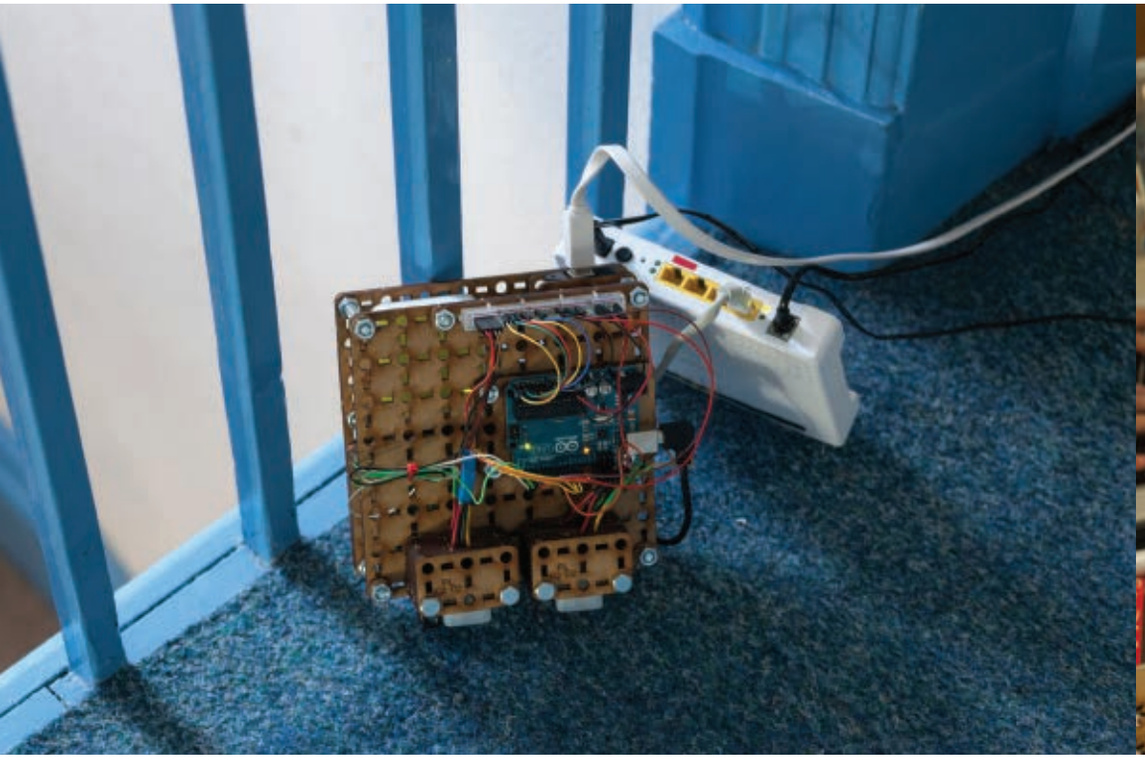
JANOME

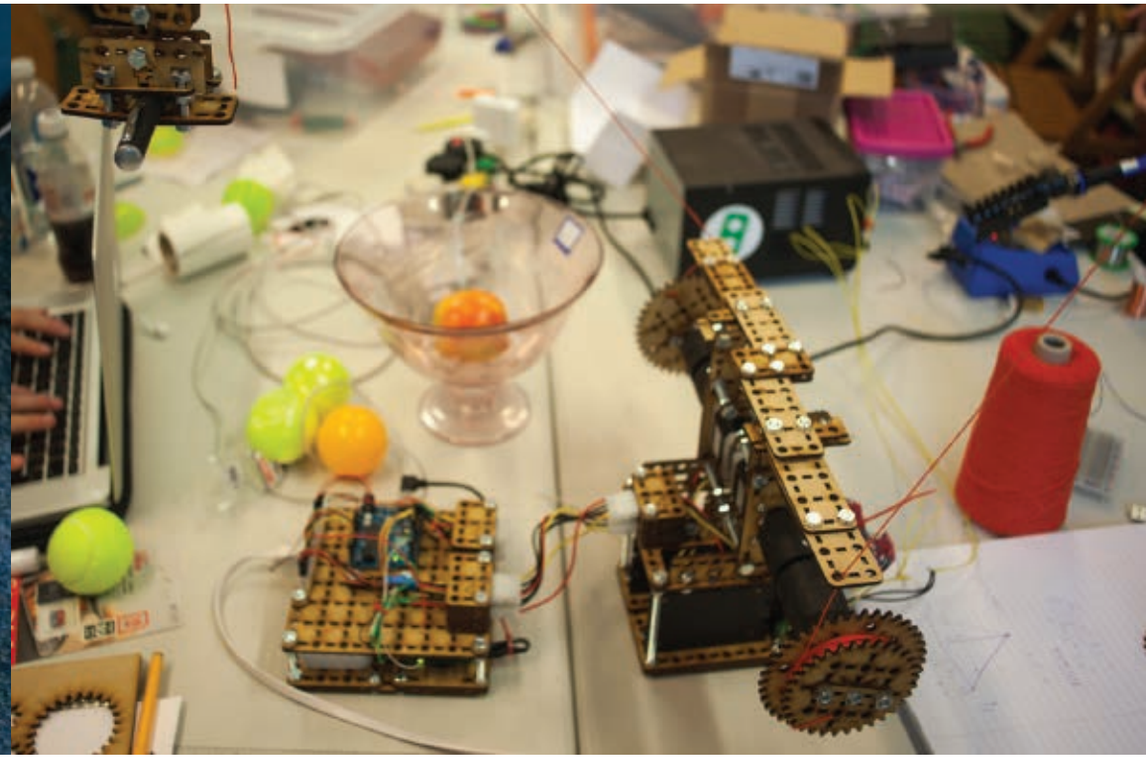


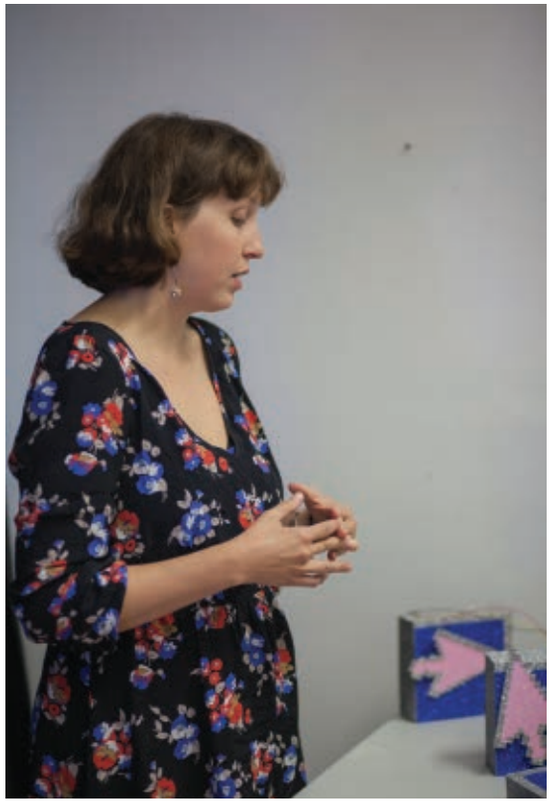


WI-FI

MUCH
SIX TIMES







'I Hate Touchscreens'
Digital Media Labs 2010

Benedict Phillips

Towards the end of 2008, I became lead artist for NHS Hull. My job was to develop a creative vision and commissioning programme for a new flagship city centre development, which became known as the Wilberforce Health Centre. 2008 was also the year that Apple computers returned to using touchscreen technology with the first iPhone. On discovering that the centre would use touchscreens to sign in to the services to be based there I started to consider the idea of touchscreen art. I was also conscious that Hull University was the home of Prof. George W. Gray (look him up).

It had occurred to me that by the time the health centre opened in January 2012, everyone would be either using or be familiar with touchscreens. It is hard to remember how rare these now ubiquitous devices were in 2008. Working with Dave Lynch (my tech adviser on the project) we got our hands on an old touchscreen and began to play. Between us, in less than an afternoon we had an idea and a working mock-up of a touchscreen artwork.

So why not commission touchscreen artworks for the building?
I quickly discovered that there didn't seem to be many artists out there working in this medium. If I was going to have touchscreen art in the new health centre, it was clear that I would need to develop a new model for commissioning digital public art. This is when the idea of a lab or residency with artists nominated to take part in a week of hot housing and prototyping touchscreen art started to take shape. This became the model for the first Digital Media Lab. Central to it's function was the idea of experimentation and play, that the artists would have space to make new work with no idea what the commission brief would entail until they had completed the week.

Beyond necessity, two big influences on my thinking were the ethics and collective spirit of Field Study, co-founded in 1993 by myself, D. Dellafiora and E. Kirwan and the artist residencies of PVA Media Lab

which I attended in 2001; both of which informed the structure of the Digital Media Labs model developed by myself, Glenn Boulter and David Lynch.

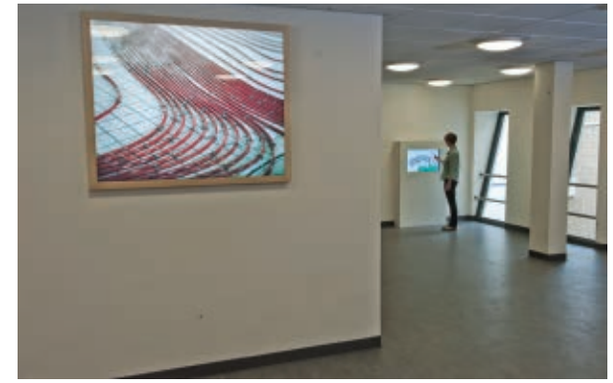
The project is centred on collaboration, both between the participants, the organisers and the nominators. We asked ten organisations to nominate four artists they felt had an interest in developing their digital practice and a track record of public commissions. Importantly, the commission brief would not be handed over to the artists taking part until the end of the residency, avoiding the possibility of artists competing or pitching during the week and fostering a strong collaborative feeling during and after the lab.

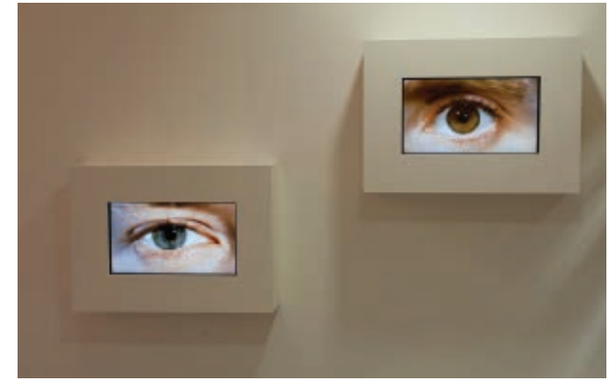
The week long Digital Media Lab took place in October 2010 and was a frantic experience. Many artists positively showed contempt for touchscreens by the time we reached the half way point, through works such as 'How Clean is Your Mouse?' by Bob Levene and Ellie Harrison who created dirty cooker hobs that you could rub the dirt off, but just when you think you have cleaned the last bit off, it's dirty again (see it in action on the digitalmedialabs.org website in Ellie Harrison's blog). The artists selected to take part in Digital Media Labs 2010 were: Ross Dalziel, John O' Shea, Bob Levene, Ellie Harrison, Victoria Lucas, Stuart Childs, Lawrence Molloy, Michael Day, Ellie Weir and David Priestman.

The lab resulted in three permanent commissions within the health centre in Hull, but we were later to observe significant results of the week emerging much more gradually across the course of the following few years. After the commissions had been awarded, the artists involved in the lab started feeding back on how they had used the experience, and over the following two years a steady stream of messages, rumours and updates made their way to us about new collaborations that started during the lab and how they had come into being.

Re:Dock had realised the Open Source Swan Pedalo with input from various lab artists and mentors. Ross Dalziel was touring a Hacked Crazy Golf Course. Bob and Ellie were exhibiting in the first UK exhibition of touchscreen works. Also inspired by the Lab, The Superposition was founded in Leeds by artists and scientists including Dave Lynch (technology director of Digital Media Labs) and Hull lab touchscreen commission artist Lawrence Molloy.

All this having been said, the touchscreen works in Hull still seem to be going strong and anyway, I personally still quite like touchscreens…





DIGITAL MEDIA LABS PRESENTS

ROSS DALZIEL

I make artwork responding to technological and social spaces often trying to set up a dialogue or relationship between the two; social groups like a canoeing club or bell ringers are used as material and a context to explore something; how a city works or a musical topography. I m interested in the development of technology and how we connect to it and how art relates to what Edward Tufte calls the Envisioning of Information . I also like to use the warmth of humour or some kind of joy or play to technology based work; making synthesisers with potatoes, a Nintendo DS choir, the sinking of a cardboard galleon or Colombian cover versions of Joy Division songs.

Works take the form of social interventions, interactive and sound based installations.

My artistic practice is informed by technology led education and public engagement work with young people which has become a form of practice based research for me.

I played with FLV video in Prezi using some footage from my good friend Chiz Turnross rockman video... I soon left this and obsessively cutout a variety of hull themed badges finishing up with some Digger Stunts.
Prezi is nice as an exercise but difficult to really have enough control to make a touch screen piece that works...will use in the future for sure though, was nice way to quickly generate something interactive and a sense of space.

I m really interested in how you could connect touch screen actions and gestures with physical things far away; Ive been using recordings of nearby church bells that have been punctuating our days in Hull as a signifier for making something happen at a distance; even an extreme distance.

Ideally my prototype would allow objects placed on touch screens orientated as a table to trigger bells ringing far away, or lighting up objects outside. Finally I d follow up with making games on 2 screens, where you have to run between them to catch a virtual object causing a physical event in space like flashing a light on a nearby building.

Where does an idea come from?
Hwa Young Jung

Where does an idea come from?
How do you know if it's feasible?
How do you find the right people to work with?

I think these were some of the questions the folks running the Digital Media Lab were looking to address during the 2014 residency. I arrived at Piel House in Barrow-in-Furness on a sunny day in September, during the halfway point of the residency to be nosy parker and talk to the ten artists spending an intense week in the park.

Glenn, Benedict (two thirds of the Digital Media Labs team) and I sat on the grass outside the house and they told me more about the first residency in Hull four years ago, and why they wanted to run another one.

I won't get into too much about the former residency - nice PDF about that at digitalmedialabs.org - but one of the main outcomes from that was not the commission at the end of the week, but what the intense week gestated and produced two years later. Creative new projects, lasting connections and collaborations. Benedict wanted to try out a new method of commissioning art work, and was using this week to give residents a free rein to experiment and play, without a specific outcome.

For a group residency set-up, the mixture of practices, levels in stages of artistic careers, and a wild card helped create a break from reality. All the artists knew at least a few people, which takes away some of the nervousness of meeting and working with new strangers.

This approach of providing a playground to have fun and make new friends gave the residency a feeling of summer camp. The isolated location of the park in Barrow, specific group activities, free run of the house, communal meals and lodgings added to the idea of suspended time and place.

The residents indulged my intrusion and chatted to me whilst they continued to tinker about with their projects, which spanned the spectrum of software, projection mapping, knitting machines, plants, servos and glitter paper.

I asked if they had an idea of what they wanted to do before coming, and if it had matched up to their expectations so far mid-week. The main feeling from everyone was the value of having the time and head space to develop ideas and proto-types that have been stewing on the back burner. I got the sense that most had a vague project or skill they wanted to work on before coming, and these ideas took a few twists and turns informed by the collaborative environment of the residency.

I understand there was no explicit pressure to produce an outcome, but residents knew there was a show and tell and the end of the week, which was recorded with an open invitation to the public. I think even without having a closing ceremony, the residents would have worked hard to produce something to share.

I think it was quite risky to have ten people in close proximity, doing so many activities together, which may differ from the artists' own methods of practice. That it worked out so well can be put down to the preparedness of the organisers but also luck that all the chosen artists were use to working collaboratively, and came to it with an open mind. It seems like the format of the residency was also an experiment, one that mirrored the open approach given to the residents. It's very liberating to go into a project with an open mind, and think this is where lots of new ideas come from.

The big brother setup of the house had created some unusual in-jokes, and I could see faint threads of future collaborations and friendships forming in the future. I look forward to what everyone will do in two years time, and hope it includes 'carpet sliders'.

Creative Exchange
Ben Dalton

Over the last two years I have been part of an ongoing investigation into forms of ‘creative exchange’, that is, processes for enabling and sustaining knowledge exchange which emphasise and draw from creative practice.

The aspect of creativity that matters particularly for me is the emphasis on engaging within complex systems, and the role that accident and playfulness (in it’s full extent testing boundaries of conflict and pleasure, rather than it’s sentimental Innocent Smoothie form) serve in advancing how we think about things.

To understand the position of knowledge in creative practice I have been referring to Karen Barad, who articulates an ‘onto-epistemology’ (theory of matter and mattering) of entangled material practices. She is careful to set out how “both theorists and experimentalists engage in the intertwined practices of theorizing and experimenting” and how “theorizing and experimenting are not about intervening (from outside) but about intra-acting from within, and as part of, the phenomena produced”.

The Digital Media Lab format serves as an excellent example of collaborative, creative activity, fostered from within by a format developed by Benedict Phillips, Glenn Boulter and Dave Lynch. I wanted to note some of the aspects of the residency form that I think are particularly relevant to the success of creative exchange embodied in the work, collaborations and extended networks of activity that emerge from the current and previous Digital Media Labs. I have had the privilege to be involved in both labs, in the first as an invited technical advisor and the second as a nominated artist.

Time to think: The residency format, of intense activity over the length of a week is long enough for ideas to be tested and developed, and working ‘prototypes’ to be built. A week leaves time for all those attending to present aspects of their practice. Time to sleep on ideas, and to take conversations in to social time over meals and drinks helps to foster meaningful collaboration and iterative development. Meal times, walking, showering, shopping, exploring, game playing, all of these things feature regularly in narratives of how ‘good ideas’ come in to form, and leaving space for these to happen in a schedule proves incredibly productive.

Structures for thinking: Having constraints to work with and against also seem key to idea development, particularly over short time scales. In the first lab, a medium constraint of touch-screens elicited inventive uses and abuses of the technology. In the second lab, the ‘brief’ was more open, but themes of performance and light shaped thinking. In addition, the second lab used a format early in the week of presentation, workshop and structured activity to provide a framework for ideas and collaborations to form. I was aware of how quickly ideas cross-pollinated.

Space to work: Spatially, the residency was set up to allow shared working and personal space, with additional environments (such as a basement for ‘messy’ work). Each participant quickly established their own temporary working contexts, with desks unique to their interests and tools. The Octopus house offered a form of focused isolation positioning the activity within the ‘resources’ of the park, and away from familiar routines and distractions. In a form echoed by the un-monastery retreat, the labs have been sited in cities largely away from the homes of those participating, which acts to create an intensity of collaboration and investment. A digital space, with sufficient internet access and a blogging diary format, aided the processes of notation and documentation of work in progress.

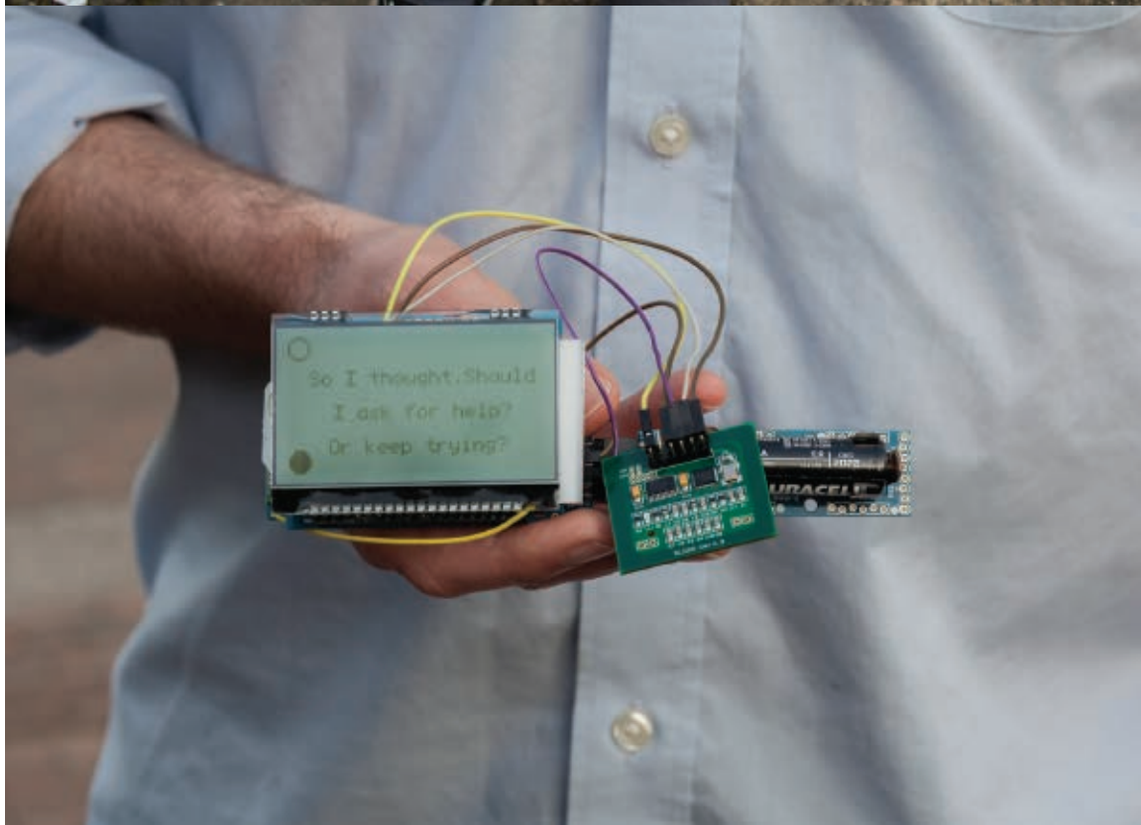
Diversity of people: The nomination process around a residency theme helps to select a range of participants so that expertise and forms of practice are varied, and people have plenty of scope to learn from each other. A range of expertise and arts practice in the participants, often with orthogonal conceptual and systematic approaches created a wealth of perspectives. Conversations about circuit design, musical structure, local history, projection mapping, storytelling, nuclear power, textiles and laser performance diffracted through each other with ease.

Some digital media institutions can find themselves replicating entrenched inequalities, but suffer the obvious deficiencies of such lack of diversity. An organisation which is able to ensure a lab with a greater gender balance for

example, is less likely to be dysfunctional in other ways too. The hierarchies within the lab were also flattened to a certain extent in productive ways. The lab organisers made sure that they presented their own work along-side the participants. Meals were prepared by fellow artist Alan Pergusey, and were a shared, discursive time. All lab participants shared tasks such as washing up, transporting equipment, and so on. This aspect of communal lab-citizenry has a powerful influence on how ideas are discussed and help is sought and given.

Tools on hand: The participants who were selected were comfortable with their own technical systems of production, and were asked to bring with them resources not only for themselves, but with the potential to share. Piel House quickly filled with specialist equipment, mixing traditional forms of production with novel software and hardware. Free and opensource licensing of many of the tools used echoed the sense of shared resource in the lab.

The success of the first Digital Media Labs is measured not only in the commissions developed for the health centre site in Hull, but in the long lasting networks and projects that have emerged since. The impact of the second lab can already be seen in the new work and approaches presented at the end of the week in Barrow, but the full extent of the knowledge exchange, of the influence on our ways of theorising and experimenting will only emerge as the repercussions of the lab continue to extend.



Entanglement, Entropy
Imran Ali

All good for Saturday, 11am would be great, Friday night could work but you have to share a twin room with Ben Dalton.

Entanglement. My former boss Norman met Ben at MIT Media Lab. I looked him up when he moved to Leeds. We had coffee. Ben introduced me to Linda. Linda and I started a co-work together. Our first resident was Richard. Richard invented electric spraypaint with Dave. I developed a mancrush on Dave's brain.
I'm headed to Barrow where Linda grew up and there are *30 Days Of Night*.
Dave has asked me to come write about his Digital Media Lab.

Ah looks like you can have a room to yourself now if you're interested?

I'll drive. The A65 wormhole will get me there faster than slingshotting around Manchester's mountains and motorways.

Great, really cool! Thankyou :) Finishes at 3, presentations 12-2, networking after etc.

As pretty as this route is, I'm caught in the event horizon of a slow-crawling tractor on single country lane.

Yep, have you an ETA?

I think I've annoyed Dave. I will be late. Entropy.
Why Barrow? The English Chicago is at the end-of-the-world. Once an island, now a peninsula–that rhymes with "furnace". Only one road in; no wonder the vampires come here.

Would you be up for/ have the capacity for/ writing about the lab model from your perspective which would end up in a publication later in the year.

There's a confluence of people, place and project here that's suggesting reflection, not journalism. It's deeply human infrastructure. I'm unsure how to write this…

Digital Media Labs have divided a cohort of ten artists, technologists and makers into pairs. There is a resident artist chef. For the last week, they've been playing, inventing and creating together in a house in the middle of Barrow Park.
Big Brother with geeks.

At the start of the lab, co-founder Benedict Phillips challenges everyone to deduce his matchmaking algorithm. Today we discover it's devilishly serendipitous – who was looking at whom. Fluctuation of the pupil? Involuntary dilation of the iris? Benedict runs a mutated Voight-Kampff test…

I'm late, but haven't annoyed Dave. The text message was ghost written by Jenny as he drove. His Reggie Watts supernova hair is shorter than a few weeks ago. I speculate if this has diminished his powers; Jenny tells me Dave has developed new powers…

I ran a similar labs programme with academics and technologists in the Summer. There's something deeply satisfying about curating this kind of human alchemy. What will I find amongst this entanglement of people and ideas in the park at the end-of-the-world…

Code as Poetry
Dr. Alex McLean isn't here. I'm not sure what Live Coding is. I'm thinking it's like Homer Simpson's notion of live animators… *"No, Homer, very few cartoons go to air live. It's a tremendous strain on the animator's wrist".*

It's revelatory – the code is *music*, written live into a compiler that drives speakers in each corner of the room, assembling and crafting a performance procedurally and algorithmically. I'm annoyed I didn't already know this, or that Alex is an academic at the university where I run my own creative lab programme! I'm reminded of Ge Wang's *Code as an Expressive Musical Instrument* (http://on-the-fly.cs.princeton.edu) and his work at *Smule*, but *this* isn't *that*, it's code as an expressive musical instrument.

Though code is language, its invariably considered as prose, not poetry. I have to know more – what other kinds of art can be expressed live by code?

Sardonic Apps

I know Aaron – my third favourite Canadian after William Shatner and an ex-girlfriend. Yorkshire seems to attract a lot of Canadian technologists. One and a half of whom are here today. There are teams, players, a laser-cut Rube Goldberg aesthetic, and a web UI, but I didn't quite follow the rules of Aaron's *Fancy Yoyo Experience.*

Yes, it's a web-operated yoyo but I think it's described as a *sardonic* app – it doesn't understand when you're winning or what causes you to win… *"it's virtue is its uselessness?"* Aaron tells us. But it *is* useful, as a commentary on app culture in the same vein as Sam Lavigne's satirical works such as *LazyCoin – a currency that quantifies lack of activity. The more you do nothing, the more value you create!*

Yarn From Pixels

I haven't seen a knitting machine since the 80s. Like a 2D being trying to comprehend a third dimension, my brain's never been able to comprehend how a sweater is made from a line. But then I look at screens all day… worlds, words and webs woven from flickering, strobing lines.

Lalya Gaye's knitting pixels from yarn. A two-tone knitting machine, printing scarves with designs specific to politics and social changes. *Afropean* she says, a cold-weather garment for the diaspora of warm weather origins.

Patterns are encoded into punchcards, twenty-four pixel tiles where stitches are pixels and yarnbombing goes all *New Aesthetic* with the digital erupting into and orchestrating the physical. Elsewhere, Sam Meech rigged a camera to watch the machine (also programmable with an Isadora UI), using its action to drive a light installation. A knitted disco, coded in *Purl*?

Park/Life

Placeware, Nearables, Smart Cities, it's all of that and none of that. I knew Barrow Park was the backdrop for this cohort, but it hadn't occurred to me that it was also a *design material*.

Emily Briselden-Waters frames the park as a public space where personal things occur, surfacing the stories of those who used it, including residents of an adjacent care home.

"We used to drop things in water and see how fast it'd come out the otherwise of the bridge - daft things like that."
"Ian had walked his first steps in Barrow Park."

Their memories become part of the fabric of the park, through typography, projection and curated night trails triggered by movement. Nesta's Rethinking Parks programme explores models of sustainability and service. Emily knows what the rest of us do, that parks are really our collectively concentrated and situated stories.

Silicon Botanist

Our digital metaphors are all streams, ecospheres, walled gardens – any surprise that an unfurling *Internet Of Plants* is a thing? Laura Pullig's work reminds me of Kati London's *Botanicalls*, Disney's *Botanicus Interacticus* and my own growing obsession with silicon botany.

Laura is hacking and instrumenting plants, as sensors and performers – a plant that senses the wind velocity could alters the speed of a projected visualization. The premise is to enable plants to become *performers* and enable part of a chain of events and messages between themselves and I suppose ourselves and machines. Old networks mediated by the new; the Anthropocene installs the Nature app.

A Data Staff

Ben Dalton is the *half* in the one-and-a-half Canadians at the lab. A technologist savant, with his MIT Media Lab education. Ben is thinking about how live events might be digitally archived and the process of capturing a live performance.

Good. For much of the previous year, I've been part of a long R&D project on institutional and personal archives, the Pararchive project. Archives are my thing right now.

Ben talks us through the inception of his *Wild Man* character, a personality that makes the capture of a performance explicit through performance itself. The Wild Man's staff is an object of narrative *and* archiving, capturing rich data wherever it is present, a little like a theatrical mutation of Sascha Pohflepp's *Blind Camera.*

I like this, humanizing a very abstract act with haptics, tactility and humour. Wait, didn't Moses have a staff too? I'm thinking about a *Data Bat*, with which I could literally beat sense into people…

Invisibility Cloaks

Lo-res anxieties about surveillance culture permeate modern life and there's a disappointing post-Assange resignation that a democratizing medium has become an infrastructure of tyranny.

So can we be connected and offline? Victoria Bradbury and Neil Winterburn are talking about playful offline communication – grounded in anonymity, misdirection and avoiding the gaze of big data.

Their design fiction, centers on an ACME-like invisibility cloak used by Victoria and Neil to shield themselves from others and allowing them to steal digital messages left in public places.

More interesting than the invisibility cloak, is the notion of short-range messages triggered by proximity and shielded from surveillance. This notion of almost physically passing messages to one and other affords a slower, more reflective mode of communicating… perhaps something that could actually be prototyped?

Observations

There's alchemy here, I've struggled to separate one person's work from another, the projects from the park, the code from the weaving and the poetry from the prose. It doesn't matter.

What the labs engineer is a vibe and a tone and an attitude. The outcomes are secondary, the relationships and human connectedness that's formed is the real product.

In a park at the end of the world, I found the blended artefacts of ancient and new cultures – data staffs, yarn made of pixels, invisibility cloaks, messages suspended in the ether, satirical software and code as poetry.

An energetic entanglement of ideas and intellect that burned brightly for a week must now give way to entropy.

Thinking, Thinking and More Thinking...
Digital Media Labs 2014
Benedict Phillips

In 2012 we started to re-imagine the concept of the Digital Media Labs project. To do this we began by talking amongst ourselves, then we talked to other people about it, then we designed a new structure, looked at it again, and then re-wrote our plan completely! This seemed to go on for over a year… but with help, support and rigorous interrogation from fellow professionals in the creative industries, such as consultant Andi Stamp, our research and development began to reveal the project's qualities and the direction of travel for the new Digital Media Labs.

The second lab expanded upon the idea of building networks for collaboration and mentorship. This included consolidating our remit to working with organisations and artists from across the North, i.e those within approximately two hours travel of each other, centring on Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Newcastle.

Every lab in it's design and execution is a piece of research into how to run a lab. The Digital Media Labs have had to evolve with each iteration because they are responding to developments in culture and technology and this is an essential part of the make up of the project. This means that we have to constantly be in the process of developing the model and, in a way, that's the point.

The artists receive a fee for their initial presentation during the lab and are then asked to undertake the rest of the week on a cost-neutral basis with accommodation, transport and all meals provided by Digital Media Labs. We have also developed our approach to supporting artists to be as flexible as we can, for example supplying family rooms for artists with young children.

We are aware that there seems to be a paradox between our strongly-held belief in the idea of the professional artist, and that of providing an opportunity

with no daily fee attached. We position the lab as being first and foremost an opportunity for the artists to develop their work and ideas. Anything that we ask the artists to do in terms of 'work' for us (e.g a talk as part of a day long symposium on day one of the lab) we pay for. Everything beyond that point is voluntary and comes without strings attached.

We feel that our approach and flexibility is significant in relation to contributing to new models for digital commissioning and artist development, as well as building networks and functioning as a catalyst for peer-led projects. Within the wider industry, we feel that the thinking around the Labs can positively contribute towards a greater emphasis on and understanding of the conditions and timeframe required to produce work of greater originality and quality. The idea of the traditional 'gate-keeper' in the arts is one that is presently in flux and many of the artists who have taken part in the labs straddle multiple roles such as freelance artist, curator, commissioner, maker and academic.

For the artist, we see broad benefits including networking with organisations, commissioners and meeting with other freelance practitioners under a common cause. From this we hope to see new opportunities generated that are idea-led and peer-led rather than organisation-led. In many ways, this is all an experiment, a calculated risk. We consider our approach as you might a scientific practice: there is pure research practice (genuine exploration of ideas not driven by outcomes) and applied research practice (applying knowledge and experience gained from research to design and create works for public consumption as well as projects informed by the lab experience).

This publication is designed to tell the story of the process of the second lab, rather than telling you what the artists did - there are a whole series of blogs at www.digitalmedialabs.org for that! Instead, it is about capturing the ways in which we created an environment that encourages creative freedom and an openness to experimentation. The project is built on the skills and imagination of the artists attending and on our belief that the process of the lab generates a temporary environment that is energised, questioning and exciting. We hope that this publication reflects our intention, to set the stage and challenge artists to let go of their day-to-day working practice just long

enough to forget ideas of what they should or shouldn't do. We believe that the lab environment should be one in which the artists can lose themselves.

After all, you cannot discover something new if you already know what it is!

Since the last lab took place, we have run a series of talks and presentations across the North of England to share the project's process. An exhibition has also been devised to fit in a small bespoke case and will be touring over the coming year. Digital Media Labs is always looking to expand the diversity of its partners and the reach of its creative opportunities. As I write this, new ideas are already in development for the next Digital Media Labs Project, so watch this space…

About the Digital Media Labs Team

Benedict Phillips
Creative Director

Benedict Phillips is an artist, activist, writer and curator. Benedict's practice encompasses a broad range of methodologies, often responding to his profound dyslexia as well as researching and reacting to the people and places in which he finds himself. He has exhibited nationally and internationally, working with numerous organisations including the V&A, Arts Council England and Arts Catalyst.

Glenn Boulter
Project Director

Glenn Boulter is an artist/curator based in Cumbria. He has produced audio-visual works for sites including the Royal Opera House 2 and the Sao Paulo Biennial and is a founder member of sound art collective Octopus, with the role of organiser/co-curator of the Full of Noises Festival.

Dave Lynch
Technology Director

Dave Lynch is an artist, director and inventor working internationally at the intersection of moving image, interactive installation, performance and projection. His practice combines elements of art, science, military, maker and media cultures as part of it's tactics, technologies and production.
Lynch's research investigates models of cross disciplinary collaborative practice through play and doing. His work has been featured on BBC 2, Wired.co.uk and in The New York Times and VICE.

About the Contributors

Imran Ali

Imran is a founding partner of CARBON:Imagineering, a boutique emerging technologies and R&D practice. Imran is also a trustee of both IOU Theatre and the Impressions Gallery. Previously, Imran has written for Giga Om, O'Reilly Media, Corante and TechCrunch UK, served as Deputy Director of Technology Research for Orange UK; the advisory boards of O'Reilly's ETel conference, Treasuremytext and the eComm 2008 conference, as well as serving on the boards of Ensembli and bmedi@.

Hwa Young Jung

Hwa Young is an award winning multi-disciplinary designer working in the arts, cultural and sciences, facilitating collaborative workshops and projects.
She has been involved in grassroots led community spaces, makers and artists in Manchester and internationally for over five years - running hackathons, exhibitions, workshops and few laser cut trophies along the way.

Ben Dalton

Ben Dalton is currently investigating the theme of 'design for digital pseudonymity' at the Royal College of Art, London. He holds a permanent position as Principal Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts, Environment & Technology at Leeds Beckett University. He is currently a research member of The Creative Exchange hub and an AHRC funded doctoral researcher into Digital Public Space at the RCA. Ben has recently shown work, given talks and run workshops on themes of digital identity performance and control, including at 31c3 Hamburg, ICA London, FACT Liverpool, FutureEverything, Berghs Stockholm, WWW2013 Rio de Janeiro, Sensuous Knowledge Bergen, and DIS Newcastle.

Index of Images:

Page 1 & 100 (inner covers)
- Laura Pullig, Piel View, Day 3
Page 4/5 - Artists arrive, Piel View, Day 0
Page 8/9 - Breakfast, Imperial Hotel, Day 1
Page 10/11 - Mark Pilkington, Piel View, Day 1
Page 12 - Mark Pilkington, Barrow Park, Day 1
Page 13 - Neil Winterburn, Barrow Park, Day 1
Page 14/15 - Aaron Neilsen, Piel View, Day 1
Page 16 - OOBB, Piel View, Day 1
Page 17 - Charity Shop Challenge, Piel View, Day 2
Page 18/19 - Charity Shop Challenge, Piel View, Day 2
Page 20/21 - Sam Meech, Piel View, Day 3
Page 22 - Alex McLean, Piel View, Day 3
Page 23 - Victoria Bradbury, Piel View, Day 3
Page 24 - Ben Dalton, Piel View, Day 3
Page 26/27 - Lunch, Piel View, 2
Page 28 - Lalya Gaye / Sam Meech, Piel View, Day 3
Page 29 - Ben Dalton, Piel View, Day 3
Page 30 - Ben Dalton, Piel View, Day 4
Page 31 - Aaron Nielsen, Piel View, Day 4
Page 32 - Lalya Gaye, Piel View, Day 2
Page 33 - Alex McLean, Piel View, Day 5
Page 34/35 - Lalya Gaye, Piel View, Day 4
Page 36 - Emily Briselden Waters, Piel View, Day 3
Page 37 - Emily Briselden Waters, Barrow Park, Day 5
Page 38 - Sam Meech, Barrow Docks, Day 2
Page 39 - Sam Meech, Piel View, Day 5
Page 40 - Mark Pilkington, Piel View, Day 3
Page 41 - Mark Pilkington / Lalya Gaye, Piel View, Day 4
Page 42/43 - Mark Pilkington, Barrow Park, Day 4
Page 44 - Aaron Nielsen / OOBB, Piel View, Day 2
Page 45 - Aaron Nielsen / OOBB, Piel View, Day 5
Page 46/47 - Field Trip, Coniston Water, Day 4
Page 48 - Field Trip, Coniston Water, Day 4
Page 49 - Neil Winterburn, Coniston Water, Day 4
Page 50/51 - Field Trip, Coniston Water, Day 4
Page 52/53 - Field Trip, Coniston Water, Day 4
Page 54/55 - Bread Board Orchestra, Piel View, Day 3
Page 56/57 - Ben Dalton, Piel View, Day 3
Page 58 - Ben Dalton, Coniston Water, Day 4
Page 59 - Ben Dalton, Barrow Park, Day 5
Page 60-63 - Neil Winterburn & Victoria Bradbury, Barrow Park, Day 5
Page 64-65 - Victoria Bradbury, Cookes Studios, Day 6
Page 66 (upper) - Light Work by Benedict Phillips, Wilberforce Centre, Hull, 2011
Page 66 (lower) - Blink by Victoria Lucas, Wilberforce Centre, Hull, 2011
Page 69 (upper) - Photographic work by Steven Gibson, Wilberforce Centre, Hull, 2011
Page 69 - (middle) Sound installation by Glenn Boulter, Wilberforce Centre, Hull, 2011
Page 69 (lower) - Blink by Victoria Lucas, Wilberforce Centre, Hull, 2011Page 2/3
Page 70/71 - Artist profiles, DMLabs Hull, 2010
Page 72/73 - Aaron Nielsen & Hwa Young Jung, Piel View, Day 3
Page 76/77 - Presentations in Barrow Park, Day 5
Page 81 (lower) - Neil Winterburn, Barrow Park, Day 5
Page 81 (upper) - Sam Meech, Piel View, Day 0
Page 82/83 - Neil Winterburn, Piel View, Day 1
Page 89 (upper) - Aaron Nielsen, Cookes Studio, Day 6
Page 89 (lower) - Charity Shop Challenge, Piel View, Day 2
Page 90-91 - Lunch, Piel View, Day 2
Page 95 - Alan Pergusey, Piel View, Day 3

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To read the artists' accounts of the week and see the works they developed in more detail, please visit the blog section of the project website:
digitalmedialabs.org

digitalMedialabs.org

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Website: digitalmedialabs.org

Interested in hosting or co-producing a lab with us?
Contact: ben@digitalmedialabs.org

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