

## GLAD-HE 2023 Post-Symposium Publication

### Gathering Ourselves

*"To gather means to come together, assemble or accumulate (often from scattered sources), to collect, to harvest, to increase in force or to summon up."*

### Editorial

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On the back of our 2021 virtual conference 'Responding, Reframing, Re-thinking: a new era in creative education for our sector', GLAD (Group for Learning in Art and Design in Higher Education) launched its first post-conference special edition, published by Innovative Practice in Higher Education. Building upon this inaugural publication, and after one of the most challenging periods in higher education (HE) GLAD felt that there was a need for the creative sector to come together to gather their thoughts, experiences, and resources, to explore the future facing opportunities. Organised by the GLAD in partnership with the host institution Central Saint Martins, (University of the Arts London) the art and design sector came together to "*gather ourselves*". The symposium held in Sep 2023 was a single day event which encompassed four concurrent strands bring together over 100 participants to discuss current ideas, opportunities, needs, issues and concerns

currently being faced across our sector. Through a series of presentations, workshops, posters, panels, Pecha Kucha and interactive activities, subject-specific debates and provocations were showcased. Examples of HE contemporary arts pedagogic research projects, student-staff collaborations and curriculum innovations were presented. We drew out developments and best practice from within the HE creative arts sector specifically in response to innovations and lessons learned from our adaptive approaches to learning and teaching, building on our learning after the pandemic. Our latest publication "gathering ourselves" brings in new perspectives, drawing directly from colleagues' experiences across art, design and media HE in the post pandemic learning era. It showcases experiential learning in a new light with examples of adaptive approaches for impactful practice, as we learn and grow our creative mindset within the learning and teaching sphere.

GLAD has a strong history dating back to its origin in 1988. Its mission is to engender discussion, debate and consideration of developments and innovation, regarding learning and teaching within HE for the creative sector. The group promotes the sharing of best practice to simulate the student experience. This special edition post-symposium publication is a collection of practitioner led studies from the 2023 GLAD Symposium "gathering ourselves". Following the symposium, Jess Power, Louise O'Boyle and Davina Whitnall hosted a writing retreat (Nov 2023) to support presenters in developing their work into papers or posters to contribute knowledge in relation to art and design practice and the transformative nature of the creative disciplines. The practitioner narratives selected for this publication demonstrate a wide range of evidence informed approaches, grounded extensively in practice-based scholarly work. This collection of papers and poster builds on the previous special edition extending pedagogical approaches and reflective narratives for future practitioners. The common thread throughout the special edition is experiential learning within the creative sector, we see "learning by doing" as the golden thread in a complex tapestry, it weaves together the seven individual outputs into a collection of seamless artifacts, through commonly shared values.

The first paper by Kaye and Ramirez-Figueroa et al. challenges the boundaries of perception and perspectives. It opens new possibilities to represent identities as well as generate allyship, dialogue, friendship and build **global networks** and international awareness within our learning communities. The authors draw out the wider values of learning through “meeting, talking and working with people”. Traditional spaces of cultural display, such as museums and galleries are repositioned through these two case studies. No longer are the artifacts presented as static repositories, but more-so as dynamic arenas for immersive experiences and interactive dialogue within changing environments and cultural settings that resonate with our post-pandemic understanding of the world.

Hogan brings a somatic approach into mainstream creative education through five principles. This work lays the foundations for **experiential learning** using embodiment within design education. It calls for “moving, sensing, being” to be exemplified into core design education to prepare students to navigate the wicked complex challenges of social, economic, and environmental issues. Malik and Lee furthered this approach by using informed notions of devised theatre and physical performance centring physicality and movement to visualise learning journeys. Here begins our third theme of **student as partners**, through enabling learners to translate written learning objectives into a dynamic visual reality we extend the creative mindset, learning beyond traditional approaches to co-create experiences. This poster presents an approach for designing hybrid curriculum within the creative disciplines. It challenges power dynamics within traditional classrooms to create a true **sense of belonging**. Conway and Yilmaz continue the theme of empowerment through creating authentic learning experiences. Their work demonstrates the transformative power of **co-creation** within learning and teaching with students as partners in an interdisciplinary context. This work is furthered by Chance et al. who detail an approach in which students develop (through effective partnerships) to be active agents in co-creating **learning communities**. The findings illustrate this approach to be an asset to student, stakeholders, and academics, embedding professional development and values as a bridge between PGT and PGR studies.

These opportunities positively extend learning through creating communities and networking that transcend traditional boundaries.

The final poster presented by Blezard et al. presents an institutional transformative project that gathered creative outputs to form a case study for transformational change. The findings emphasise the importance of inclusive, collaborative, and transparent cultures within HE by adopting creative approaches and visual communication tools. The outputs were found to facilitate deep engagement, while serving as a platform for sharing and reflecting, showcasing the **potential for creativity** to drive institutional transformation by enriching institutional culture and supporting ongoing inclusivity and excellence within learning and teaching.

Together the seven papers and poster present a synthesis of how the creative sector has gathered to build on our post-pandemic learning. The collection clearly identifies the importance of the creative process in the co-creation of learning and teaching. It demonstrates not just a discipline robustness to endure pandemics, challenges and changes within the HE sector, but the creative process as a pedagogical tool for transformation. Enabling us to re-think and re-establish key elements to support the learning journey, in gathering ourselves, we gather and reconnect to that sense of community and the underlying process of creativity which is often the spark for innovation and cocreation.

GLAD has drawn together an overview of some innovative developments from within the HE sector specifically aimed at showcasing adaptive approaches used within the creative sector. It is clear that the collection of narratives captured through the various case studies featured in this special edition have the potential to be powerful mechanisms to stimulate new approaches in relation to experiential learning, student as partners, co-created spaces for learning, and developing a sense of belonging through the establishments of communities for practice. The potential for creativity and creative practice to pave the way for institutional cultural transformation will enable authentic practice to be at the heart of transformational change. Thus, shaping and informing staff, student, and stakeholder experiences of the

transformative power of creative education. We sincerely hope you enjoy reading “gathering ourselves”.

The editors would like to thank all the contributors to this special edition for their dedication to disseminating their scholarship. We also are grateful to those who contributed to supporting the reviewing process: Danielle Barrios-O'Neill (Royal College of Arts), Natalie Brown (Nottingham Trent University), Ivan Garcia (University of Salford), Jenny Holt (Manchester Metropolitan University), Philip Kennedy (National College of Arts, Dublin), Caroline Mckay (University of Sunderland), Maggie Scott (University of Salford) , Catherine Smith (University of the Arts, London), and James Ward (Anglia Ruskin University).

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