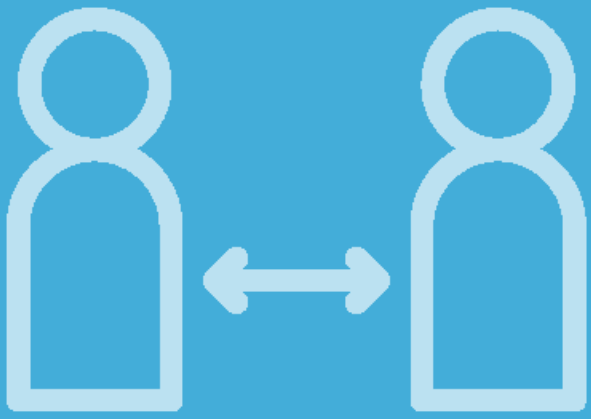


HOW FAR IS CLOSE?

Collaborating from a distance

25-29 May 2020 - Online

Estonian Academy of Fine Arts
Umeå Academy of Fine Arts
Kuno Network

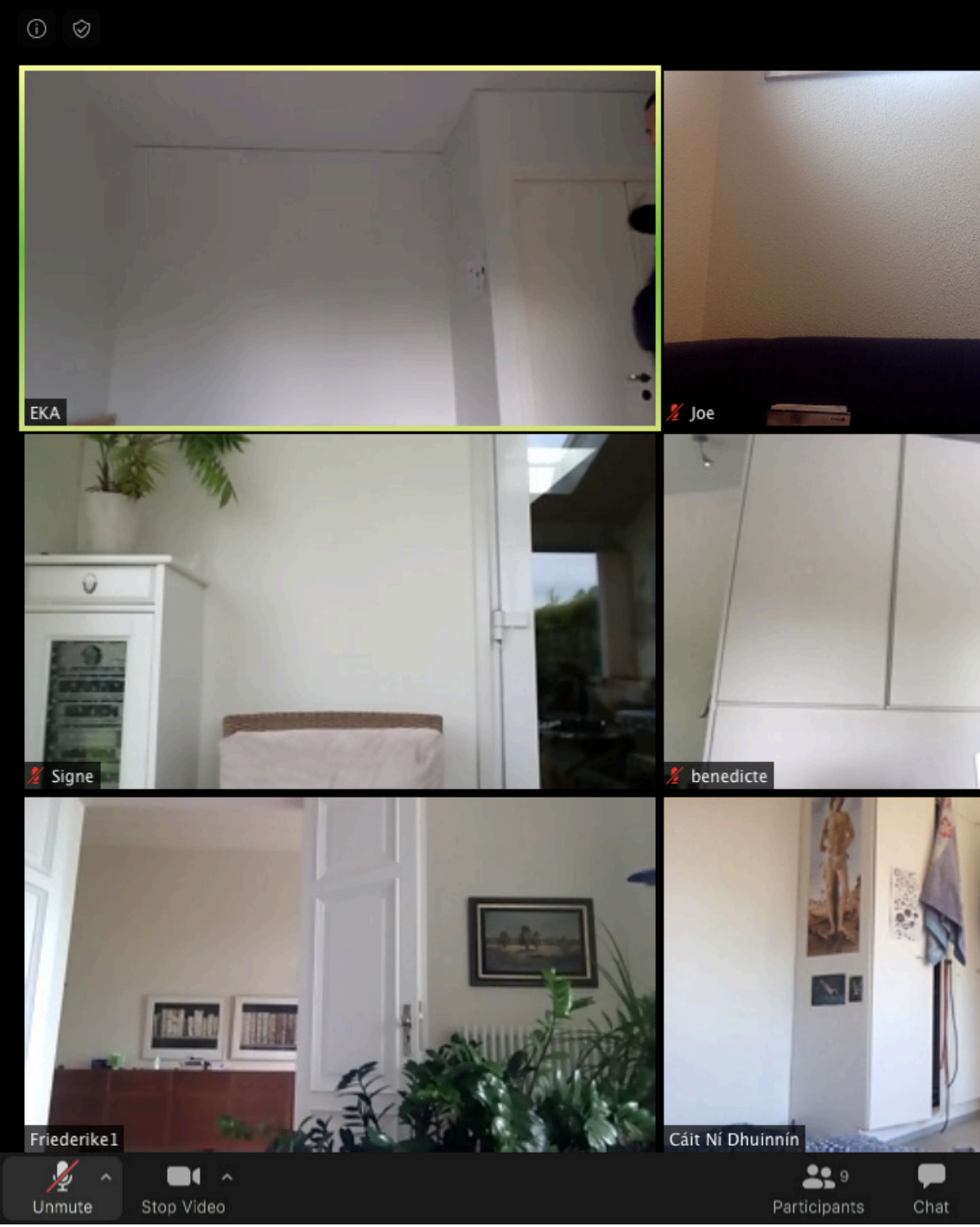
Teacher: Laura Cemin

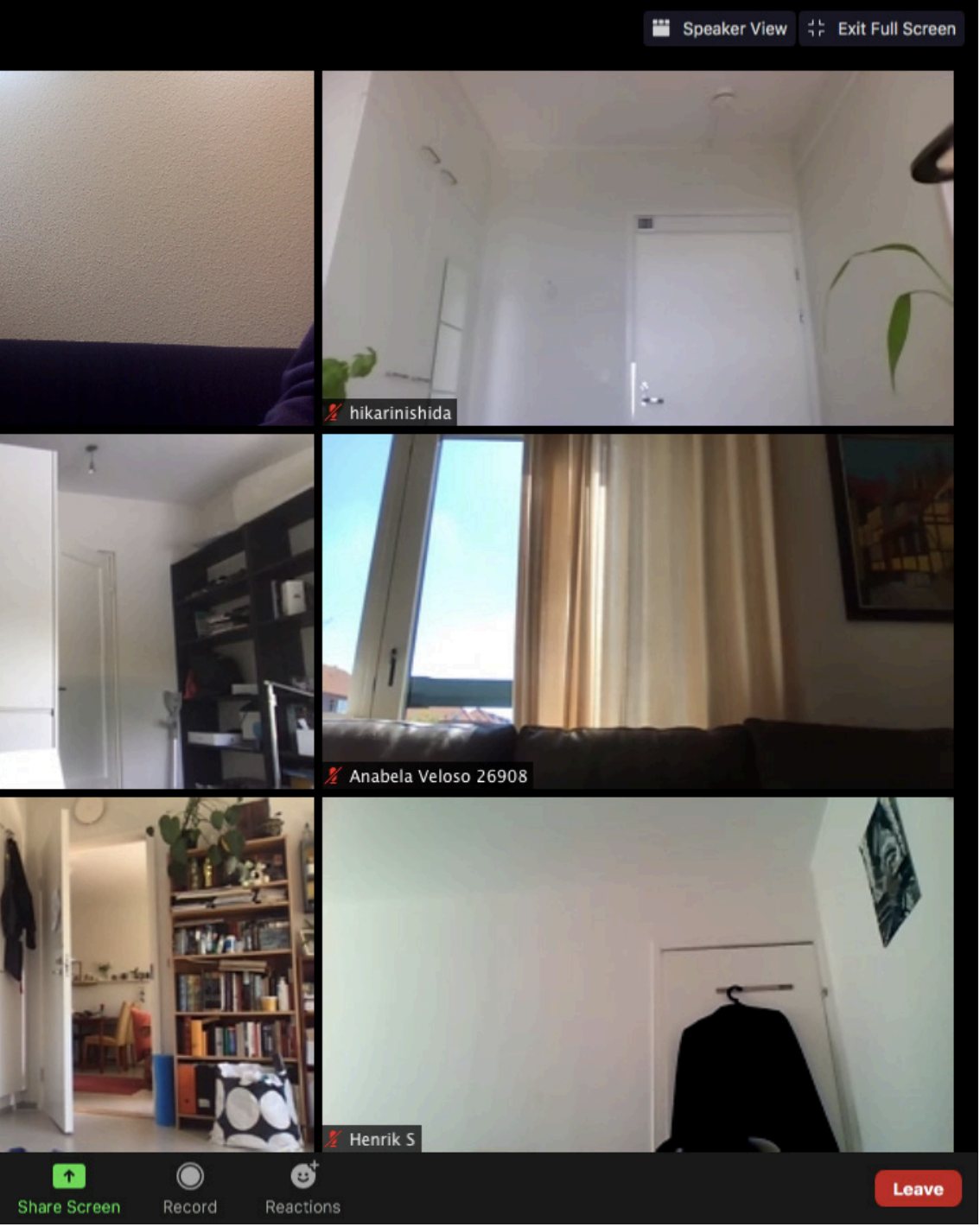
Students:
Anabela Veloso - The Royal Danish Academy
Benedicte Dahm - Oslo Academy of Fine Arts
Cáit Ní Dhuinnín - Uniarts Helsinki
Friederike Steinert - The Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm
Henrik Soderstrom - Konstfach
Hikari Nishida - Uniarts Helsinki
Joe Keys - Iceland Academy of Fine Arts
Lena Schwingshandl - Uniarts Helsinki
Signe Cygan - The Jutland Art Academy

How far is close? - collaborating from a distance was born out of a necessity. How to continue to communicate, exchange and create during a very peculiar time, of isolation and self-distancing?

The aim of the course was to present different strategies and modalities of collaboration while being in different geographic locations.
Collaboration, as the discussion among the students has shown, does not necessarily entail the production of an artistic work, but is a specific way of thinking, a mode of blending practices together to support each other through artmaking.

The students' selection was carried based on their motivation and artistic work. The course was held on the platform ZOOM, therefore each participant (students and teacher) attended it from their own living environment.


EKA
Joe
Signe
benedicte
Friederike1
Cáit Ní Dhuinnín
Unmute
Stop Video
9
Participants
Chat


Speaker View
Exit Full Screen
hikarinishida
Anabela Veloso 26908
Henrik S
Share Screen
Record
Reactions
Leave

The course mixed frontal lectures and practical learning.

ABOUT FRONTAL LECTURES

The students were introduced to artworks developed through distant collaboration during the last century (with a strong focus on contemporaneity).
Moreover, possible funding opportunities to support projects carried by artists based in different countries were presented.

The questions explored during frontal lectures have been:

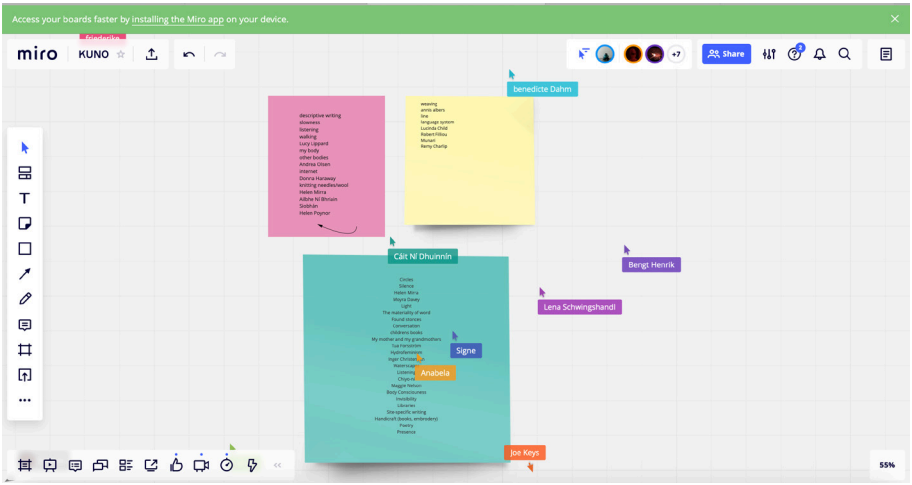
- ◊ What does it mean to collaborate?
- ◊ Should all collaborations be horizontal and non-hierarchical?
- ◊ How does a collaboration start?
- ◊ How to end a collaboration? (not all are succesfull)
- ◊ Why do we collaborate?
- ◊ How to be clear without hurting others?
- ◊ How to meet/organize/find resources?
- ◊ Which impact has our collaboration on the environment?

ABOUT PRACTICAL LEARNING

Throughout the course, tasks were given to the students to, first of all, establish the feeling of a group, even when not sharing the same physical space. The online format presents a new challenge and different “group-building” strategies need to be developed/old strategies adjusted.

DAY 1

◊ The students had to present their interests and artistic practices by listing their mediators. A mediator, as defined by Deleuze, is a reference (a person, a concept, a material) through which our artistic practice speaks.
The lists were shared on the platform miro.com, in form of sticky notes. The notes were arranged on the white canvas acoording to similarities and affinities between the practices.



◊ Prior to the course, the students were asked to choose a piece of text (poem, literature, text-based artwork) and an object. At the end of day 1, they presented the chosen elements to the group and they exchanged them. Each participant received a new text and a new object, completely unrelated to each other, and they were asked to create a small work for the following day.

DAY 2

◊ The students, one by one, were asked to propose a task to the group, to be performed collectively. The tasks had to last around 2 min.

◊ The students presented the outcome of the task from day 1.

MORNING TASKS

Rub your hands against each other.
Place them on top of your closed eyes.
Open the eyes.
Stare at the darkness.

_____

Hug a tree, or something made of wood if you don't have a tree close by.
A good hug must last at least 20 seconds.

_____

Get a glass of water and drink it – together with the group – in as few sips as possible.

_____

Find some sort of object you like and feel connected to, and have it with you throughout the class.

_____

Listen to 'I forget and I can't tell' by Arthur Russell in a place you feel comfortable

_____

Take paper and pen, sit next to a window of your choice and draw for one minute a detail of what you see. Share it with the others via your screen camera.

_____

Find a position to sit comfortably.
Close your eyes.
Bring your attention to the sounds outside your window. Listen.
(after a few seconds)
Try to focus on one sound. Focus on that one sound only and try to follow it.
(after a few seconds)
Bring your awareness back to your room.
Open your eyes.

———————

Think of any animal. Imagine you are that animal. For 1 minute stretch your body as that animal would stretch.

DAY 3-5

The students were divided into pairs and trios and each group was asked to develop a collaborative artwork within the framework of Zoom platform.
Each group received individual mentoring.
At the end of the workshop, the students presented sketches, texts, performances, and more in response to the given task.

List of projects presented:

Contract for a duo collaboration -Step 1: Time in Common
Signe Cygan and Hikari Nishida (p.12-13)

> At the end of the course, Signe and Hikari agreed to collaborate and signed the contract. You will find here a copy of their document as well as a contract template - free to use and share.

Digital Circuits
Anabela Veloso and Cáit Ní Dhuinnín (p.14-19)

Arm's reach
Mail project
Lena Schwingshandl and Joe Key (p.20-27)

our Archive
Henrik Söderström, Friederike Steinert, Benedicte Dahm (p.28-34)

Contract for a duo collaboration - Step 1: *Time in Common*

This contract is meant for two parties to commit to a first distance collaboration. By doing the tasks in this contract the parties will get to know each other and be able to find out whether to continue their collaboration or not.
When the contractors start Step 1 they may only have *time* in common. After completing this step, they might find other common denominators to investigate in a potential Step 2. This contract will last until all tasks are completed.

On __29th, May 2020_____ (date),
in_____Zoom 597-976-8797_____ (place of the signature) at___14:37____ (time)
___Signe Cygan_____ (contractor n°1) and ___Hikari NISHIDA_____ (contractor n°2)
living _Rosensgade 18b, 3. 13-14, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark____ (address of contractor n°1),
__Junailijankuja 5A 00520 Helsinki_____ (address of contractor n°2)
agree upon following:

Desynchronized in time
1• To send to each other emails containing a link or information of one or two mediator(s)* maximum
Contractor n°1 sends an email with one or two mediator(s) during uneven weeks.
Contractor n°2 sends an email with one or two mediator(s) during even weeks.
This task lasts throughout Step 1.
2• To walk 30 steps from their building/house door and take a picture. The picture must be sent to the other person either digitally or physically.
3• To take a walk to a post office and collect on the way an item to send via mail to the other person when arriving at the post office.
4• To send each other a map by mail of their own city upon which they have drawn a path.

Synchronized in time (agreed date and hour)
5• To send a piece of music to each other via email and listen to it. Recommendation of a place to listen can be sent.
6• To go outside and record their surroundings. Afterwards send it digitally to the other person.
7• When receiving the map, use it to navigate in their own surroundings.

When all tasks are completed the contractors will set up a meeting to discuss whether to continue the collaboration and to proceed to formulating Step 2 or end the collaboration.

To make the practical arrangements the parties will email each other during the valid period of the contract.
During any time if either one or both parties don't want to go further, they can respectfully inform the other part of it and the collaboration will end.

Contractor n°1 Contractor n°2

*A mediator is a reference to someone or something that feels relevant to you.

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When the contractors start Step 1 they may only have *time* in common. After completing this step, they might find other common denominators to investigate in a potential Step 2. This contract will last until all tasks are completed.

On _____ (date),
in_____ (place of the signature) at_____ (time)
_____ (contractor n°1) and _____ (contractor n°2)
living _____(address of contractor n°1),
_____ (address of contractor n°2)
agree upon following:

Desynchronized in time
1• To send to each other emails containing a link or information of one or two mediator(s)* maximum
Contractor n°1 sends an email with one or two mediator(s) during uneven weeks.
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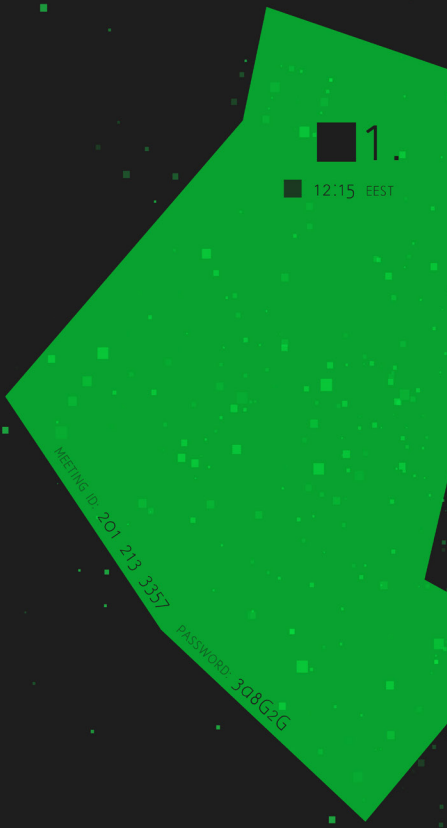
_____ _____

Contractor n°1 Contractor n°2

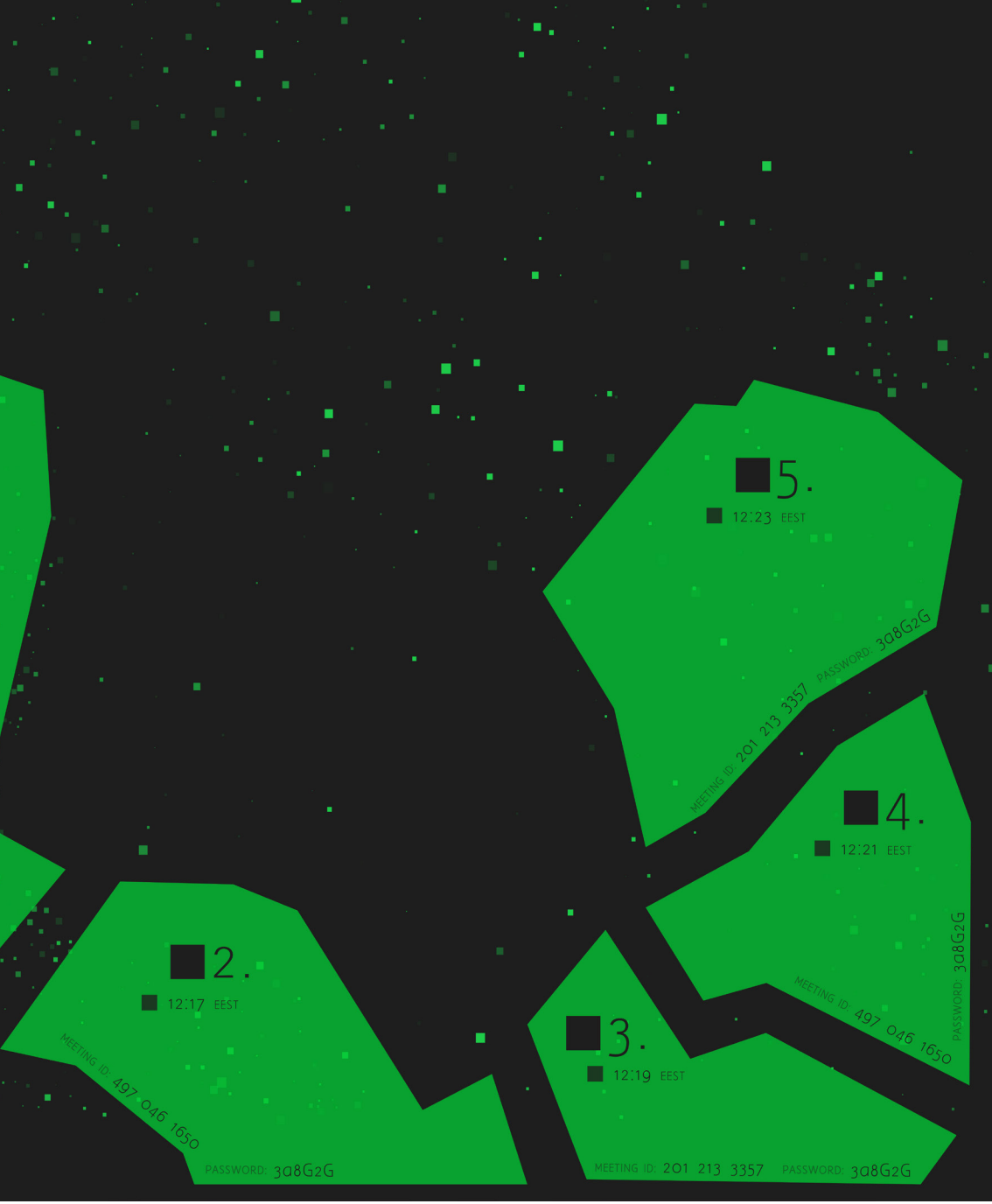
*A mediator is a reference to someone or something that feels relevant to you.

DIGITAL CIRCUITS
TAKE THE TOUR

Anabela Veloso + Cáit Ní Dhuinnín



happening on zoom


5.
12:23 EEST
MEETING ID: 201 213 3357
PASSWORD: 3a8G2G
4.
12:21 EEST
MEETING ID: 497 046 1650
PASSWORD: 3a8G2G
2.
12:17 EEST
MEETING ID: 497 046 1650
PASSWORD: 3a8G2G
3.
12:19 EEST
MEETING ID: 201 213 3357
PASSWORD: 3a8G2G

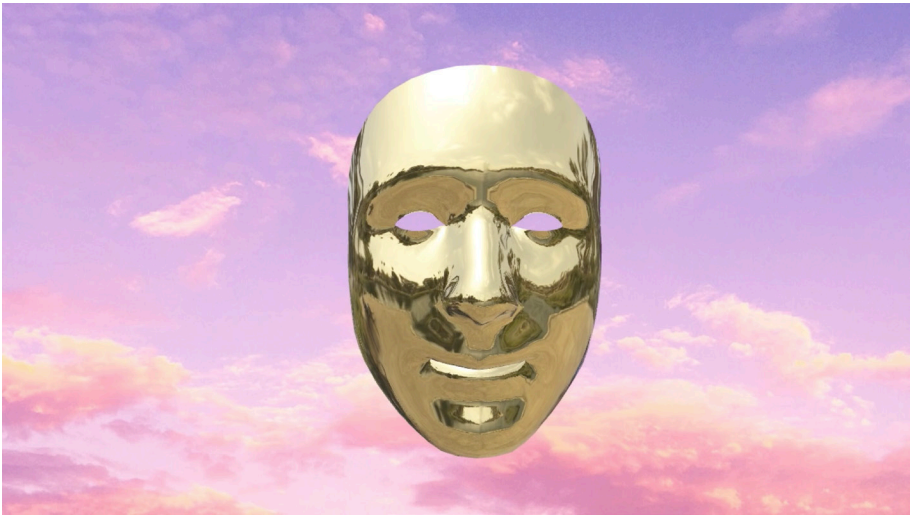
so 26908

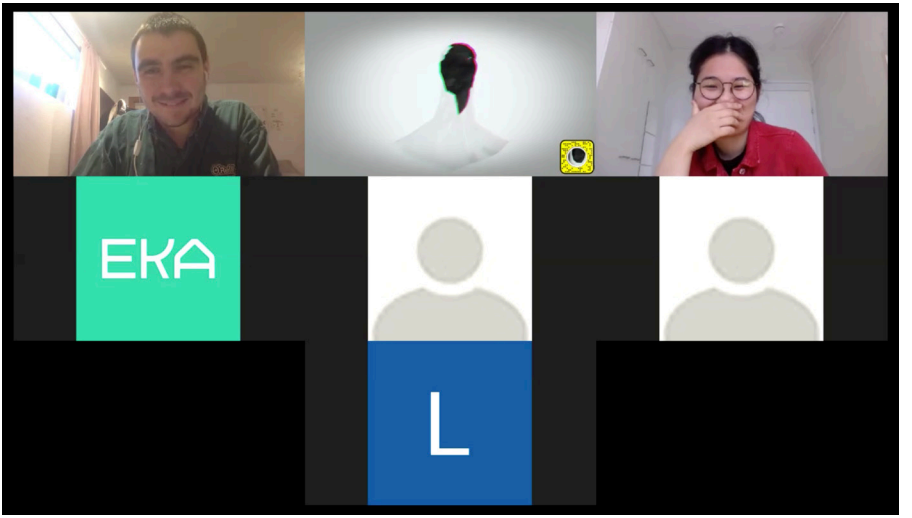
Digital Circuits is a collaborative work in progress. It is a virtual tour that takes the visitors on a journey to five different meeting 'rooms'. Each 'room' is occupied by a persona or personas. These personas have something to say. They communicate with the visitors. Their messages are of a digital nature speaking for entities beyond our grasp. Perhaps they reveal that which is hidden in plain sight.

At the beginning of this collaboration we discovered that we had a shared interest in the psychology of self and the role the internet plays in this. After reading and discussing the article *The Internet Can't Save Us From Loneliness in Pandemic* (Christopher Mims, The Wall Street Journal, June 1st 2020), a particular quote became significant for us "Communicating through the internet also necessitates the construction of a digital self, which is by nature incomplete and often false".
We recognised the opportunity the internet offers for 'reinvention' of the self or the temporary adoption of an alternate persona. Filters, backgrounds, different contexts all enable us to become someone else, if we wish. With the click of a button we are transformed.

We started to develop areas of interest that would communicate our research, interest and critical approach to this topic. Arising from this we discussed cases of how data is used for manipulating people and political situations as well as the indivisible role of internet/technology users as consumers and producers. For example, when a person uses an AI assistant, they are contributing to the production of knowledge in that AI service, essentially training the AI assistant. The way this technology survives is by relying on the ingestion, analysis and optimization of vast amounts of human generated images, texts and videos (Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, Anatomy of an AI System, 2018). We as humans are visible, tracked, labeled, quantified and used in the technological sphere.
Who labels us? Who uses it? What for and how? We came to discuss what the hidden consequences of this system are, without any answers.

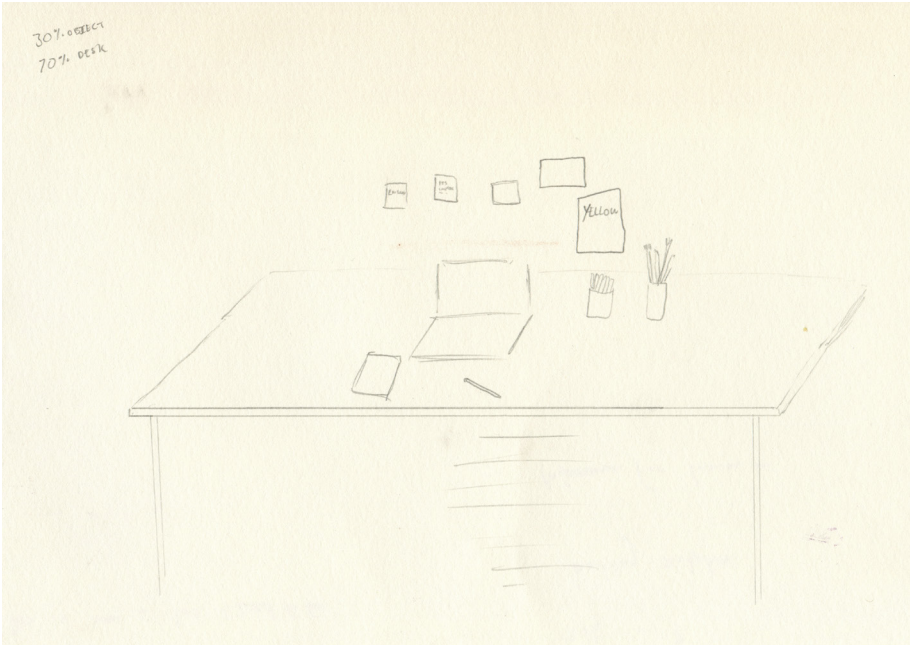
Anabela Veloso and Cáit Ní Dhuinnín





p.14-15 Map of *Digital Circuits*
p. 16,18,19 Documentation of *Digital Circuits* - Zoom Performance

10% to the right
60% to the left
Jo's desk 21/09/2020


30% object
70% desk
Yellow

Collaboration with Lena

Discussing our ideas for a collaboration we began to speak of the objects around us, at our desk, at our feet, at arm's reach. There was a small attempt to introduce ourselves in the art we make, however I felt an uncertainty in why I was showing these objects to Lena, and I sensed she had a similar ambivalence. Like, how can one show a stranger their artwork, their craft, their passion in a 20-minute video call? The context is wrong, but it is our only context, the reason we know each other is because of this framework, this KUNO course, this zoom meeting.

I got the feeling we were trying to understand each other, maybe through the objects around us we could do this.

As we have started this project, I am seeing this idea of getting to know a stranger is what is most exciting. The string of objects is like writing to a pen pal, how much can you fit in a letter, how much can you fit in one sentence. What is the appeal of a pen pal? Is it knowing someone faraway, is it the giving and receiving?

Containers – mail project?

Arm's reach

The intimacy in sharing objects is becoming serious I feel. This project always felt sincere, but as we go through the items, I suspect it is getting harder to avoid truly meaningful objects. Perhaps this was something we touched upon in the performance, and as we find out more about each other's personality, the more real it gets.
Maybe what once felt like an exercise, now is becoming a friendship and a dialogue

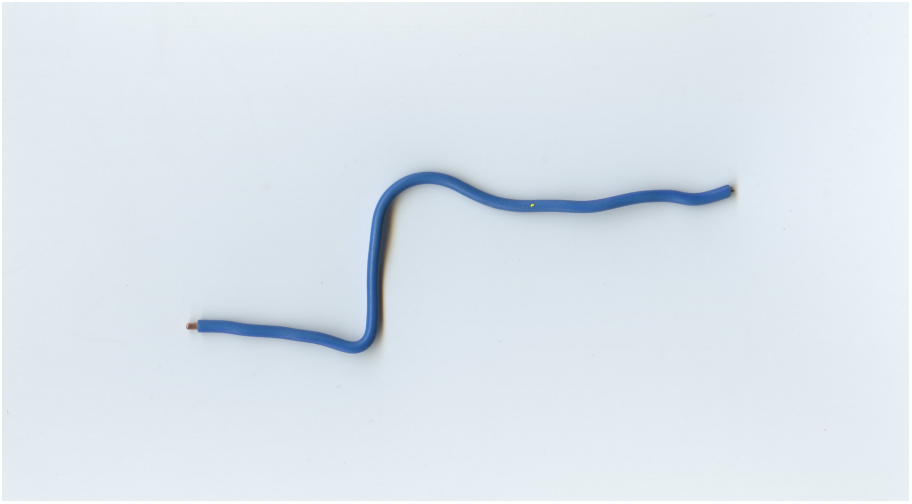
Joe Key

p.20 *Joe's Table drawn by Lena; Lena's Table drawn by Joe*
p.21 Documentation of zoom performance with objects
p.24-27 Mail project

wednesday, 27th of may

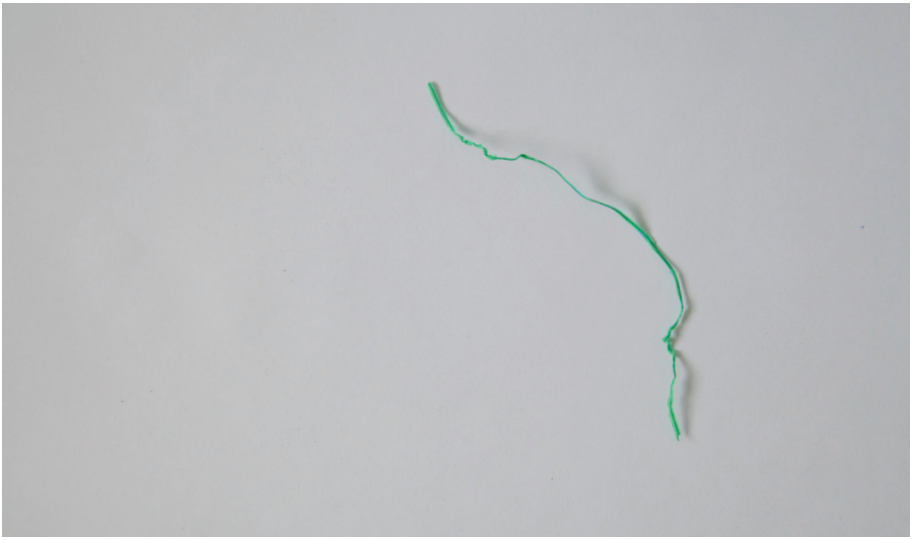
a piece of chain I found on my studio desk. either too long or too short.
don't know what to use it for, but thought it might be useful one day.

Thursday 28th May 2020



A piece of wire encased in blue rubber, I contemplated chewing it when I found it on the bus ride home, but thought better of it.

thursday, 28th of may



a piece of wire enclosed in green plastic. used to retain a cable I think.
I like its color and delicateness. I'll keep it until I find something to be held by it.

Friday 29th May 2020

Once I had an allergy test, to determine what I was allergic to. Dust and pollen. The suggestion for dealing with dust was to keep my window open, the suggestion for dealing with pollen was to close the window. Perhaps I am lucky, I have two windows in the basement I live in.

our Archive

Henrik Söderström, Friederike Steinert, Benedicte Dahm

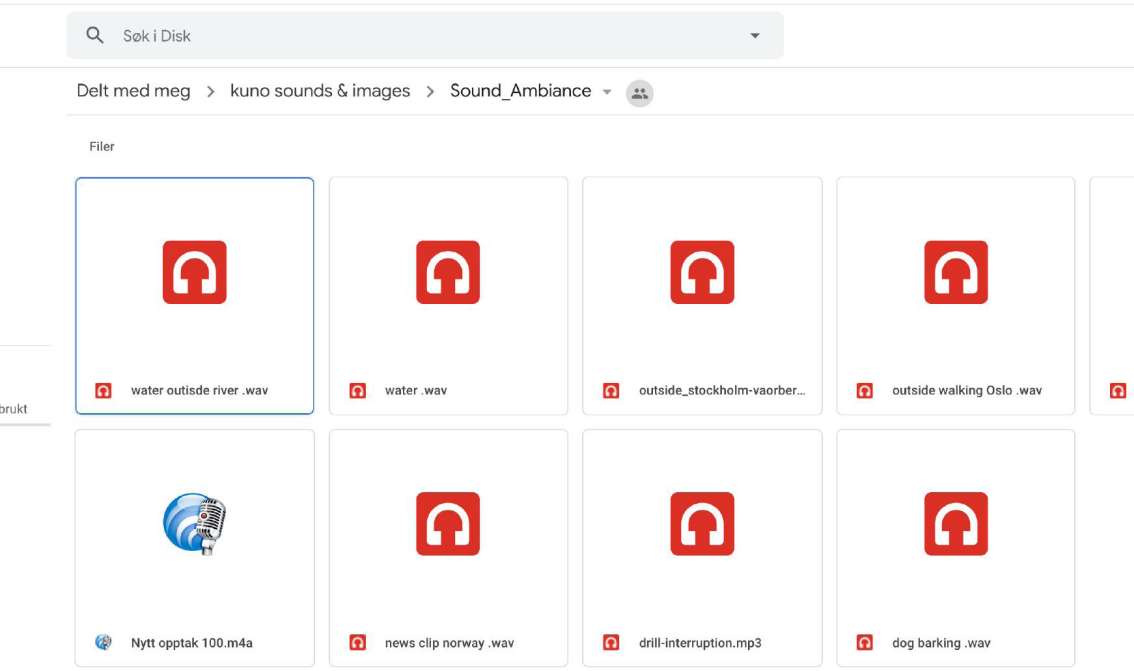
The beginning / process

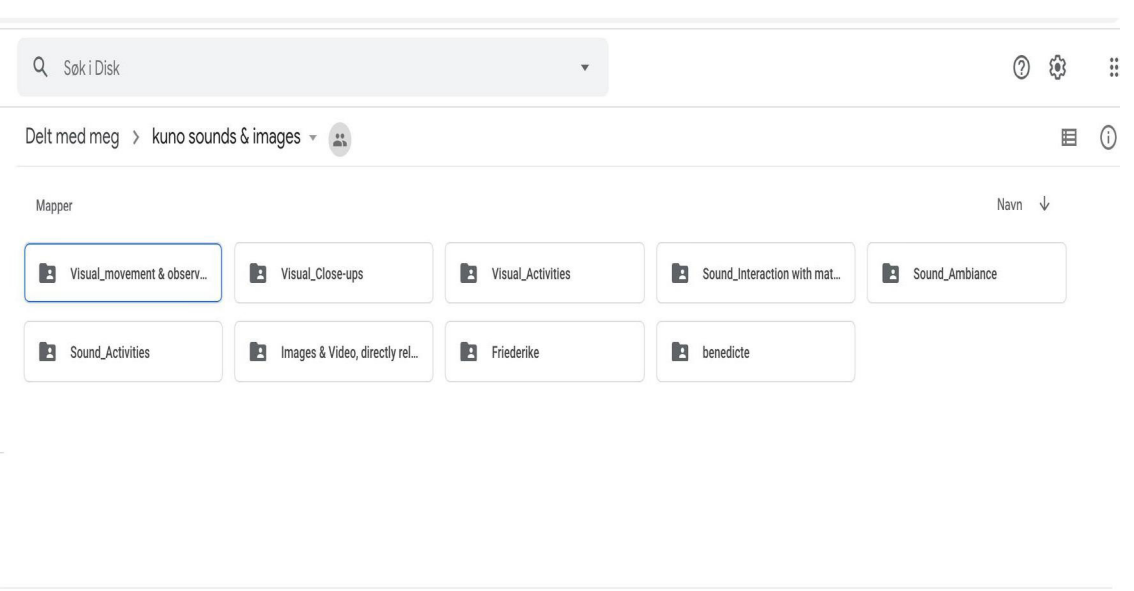
Friederike told us a story about an earlier project related to knocking on wood as an act common across different cultures and countries.

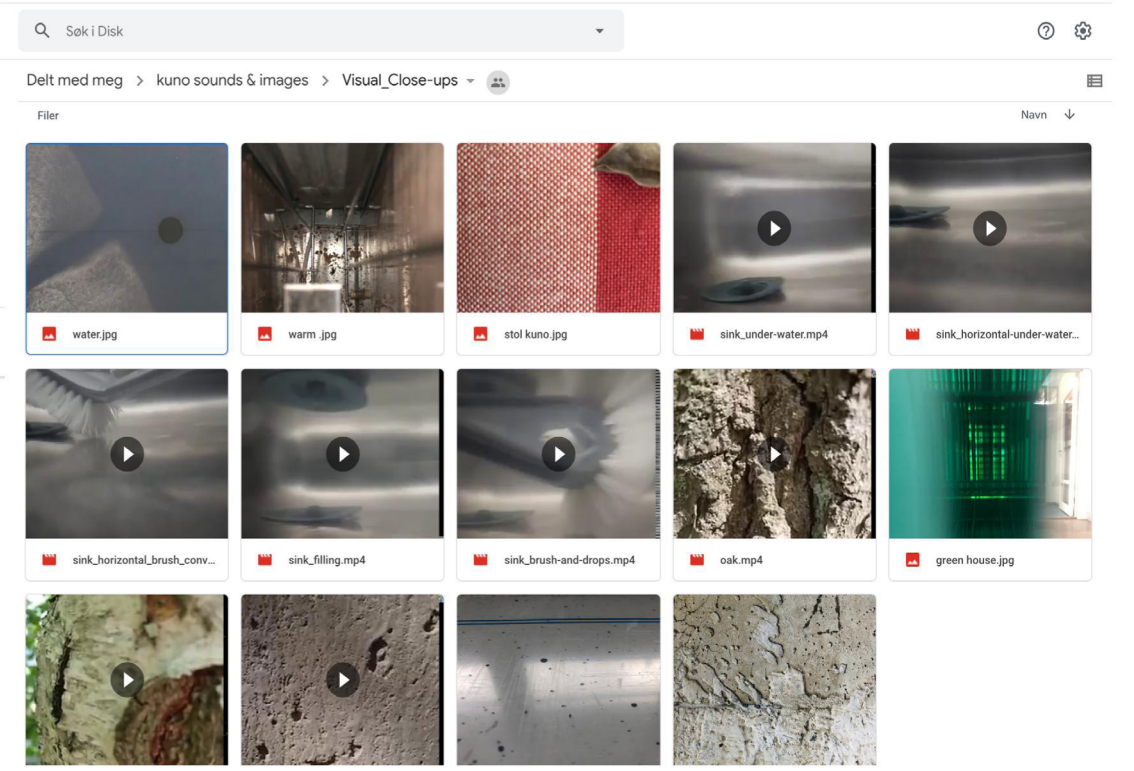
We then started with recording everyday sounds and taking still images/videos with our phones,to collect them together in a google drive folder.

We talked about making an archive, or to use the material to make something interactive or combine he images and the sounds.

Examples from the Google Drive folder:




Søk i Disk
Delt med meg › kuno sounds & images
Mapper
Navn
Visual_movement & observ...
Visual_Close-ups
Visual_Activities
Sound_Interaction with mat...
Sound_Ambiance
Sound_Activities
Images & Video, directly rel...
Friederike
benedicte


Søk i Disk
Delt med meg › kuno sounds & images › Visual_Close-ups
Filer
Navn
water.jpg
warm .jpg
stol kuno.jpg
sink_under-water.mp4
sink_horizontal-under-water...
sink_horizontal_brush_conv...
sink_filling.mp4
sink_brush-and-drops.mp4
oak.mp4
green house.jpg

The idea now:

The aim of the project is to create a sound archive f
or artists and art students, beginning with the Kuno
art universities.

It is an open and collaborative project, which aims to
create a space for artistic
experimentation.

Every project is as much the project of the person
who has created the piece, as it is the
project of the people, who have recorded the sounds
and who have therefore given an insight into their
private life in 2020 – and beyond.

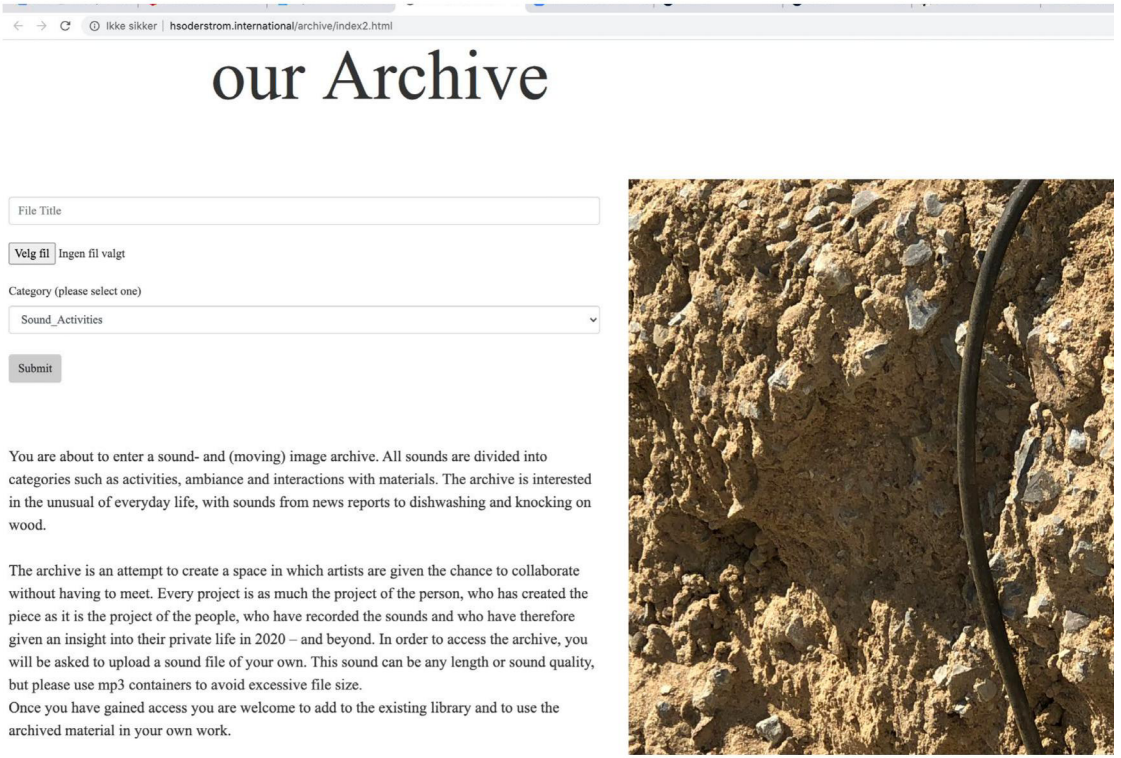
In order to access the archive, the person has to
upload a sound file.

Once you have gained access you are welcome to
add to the existing library and to use the archived
material in your own work.

Prototype of the website:

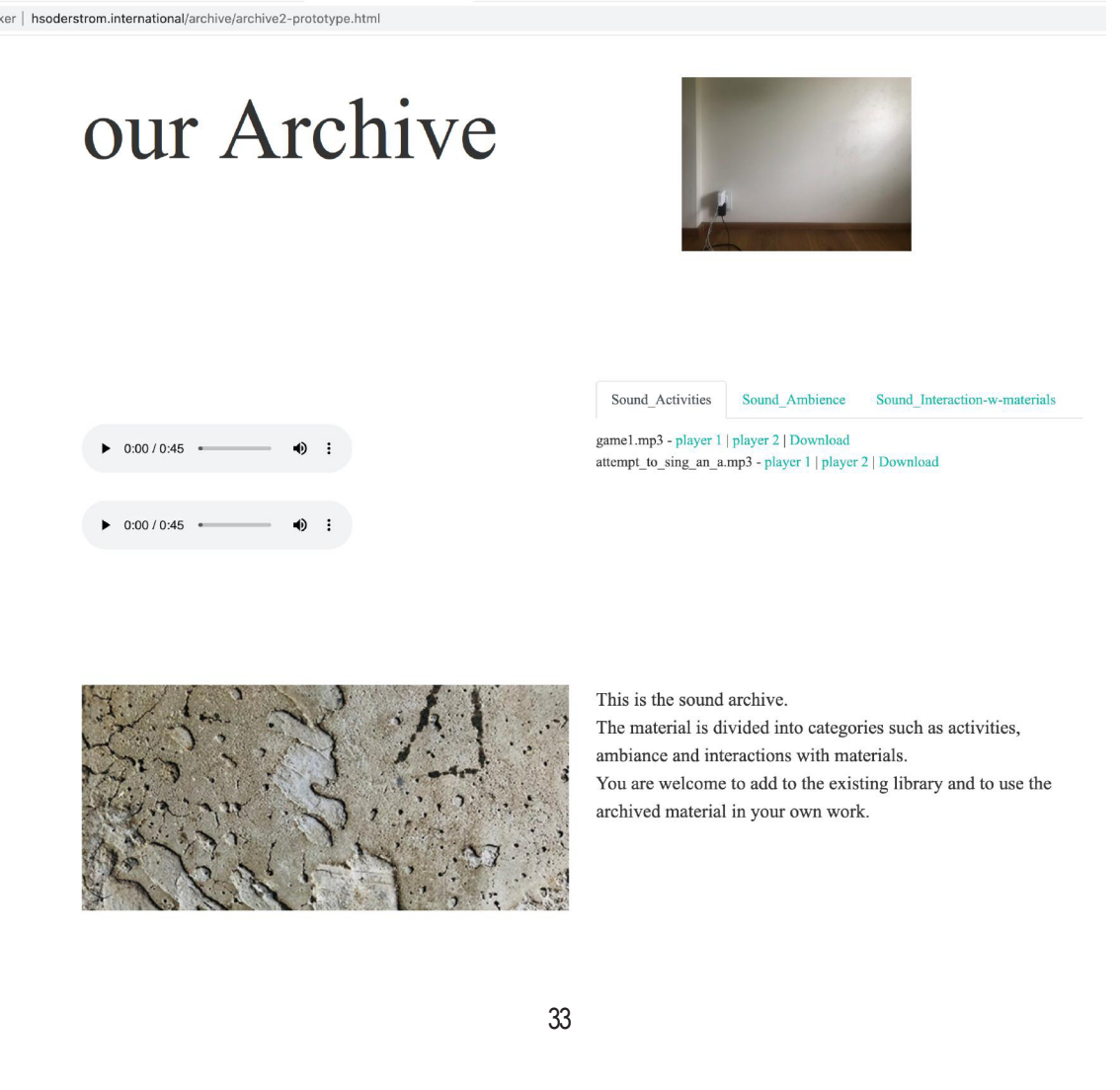
We wanted to build our own platform rather than use Google Drive to have more freedom in design and organization, and to try to be independent of big data companies.

Protoype of the first page:



Prototype of the second page:

The website has a simple web 1.0 aesthetic and includes multiple audio players to encourage users to play with mixing and combining different sounds.



Questions we are working on:

How much freedom should the contributors have in what they can upload?

What is the difference between this and free sound websites or internet archives?

Personal, community like, or open to everyone?

Do we want it to be sound, images and videos, or just sound?

How to organize the material (alphabetically, chronologically, random) so all the sounds can be heard?