



UCA

university for the **creative arts**

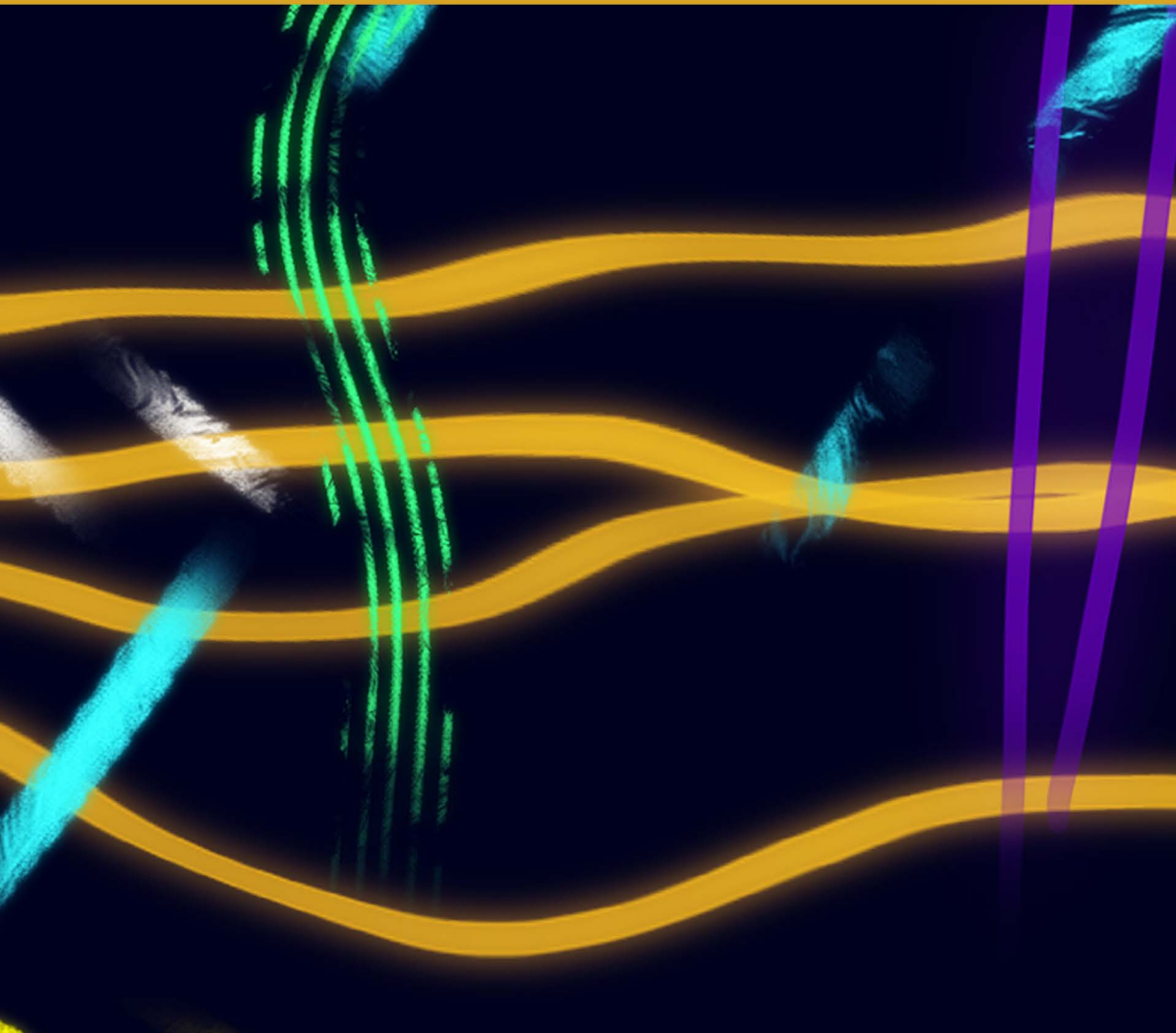
La creation du monde:
When a community of practice **collaborates**

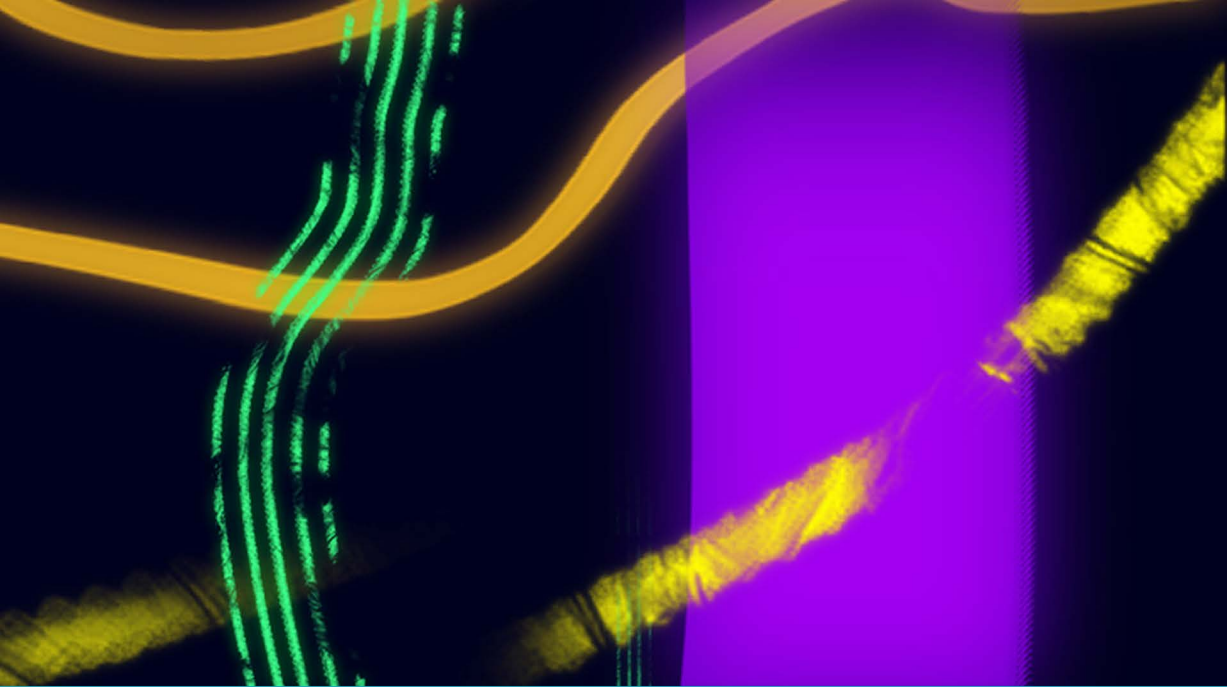
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When the students, alumni and staff of **BA (Hons) Computer Generated Arts & Animation** were challenged, as part of an EU Interreg/ACT partnership, to create an original sixteen minute animation to be synched with a live performance of Darius Milhaud's ballet, **Le creation du monde**, the course team looked to its network of course **blogs** as the means by which the collaboration might be achieved.

The successful execution of the brief was achieved by the community demonstrating the characteristics of **a community of practice** as set out by Wenger (c.2006)

domain/community/practice





Over a period of ten days participants were challenged to produce abstract digital paintings in synesthetic response to consecutive segments of Milhaud's ballet.

Synesthesia is the neurological condition in which one type of stimulation evokes the sensation of another, as when the hearing of sound produces the visualization of a colour. Synesthetic art is the attempt by artists to evoke synesthesia-like effects and so explore the **interrelationship** of our senses.

Participants were not initiated into Milhaud's music prior to the challenge. They were asked to respond freely, to visualise their auditory first impressions; to give colour, texture, shape and form to the shifting moods and rhythms of Milhaud's jazz inspired composition.

In total, three hundred and thirty-four original 'speed paintings' were produced. From this wealth of synesthetic imagery, an original animation was derived to accompany a live performance of *La création du monde* by the Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne.

The Act project's objective is to facilitate cultural events that meet **shared needs** in a common territory.

a common territory

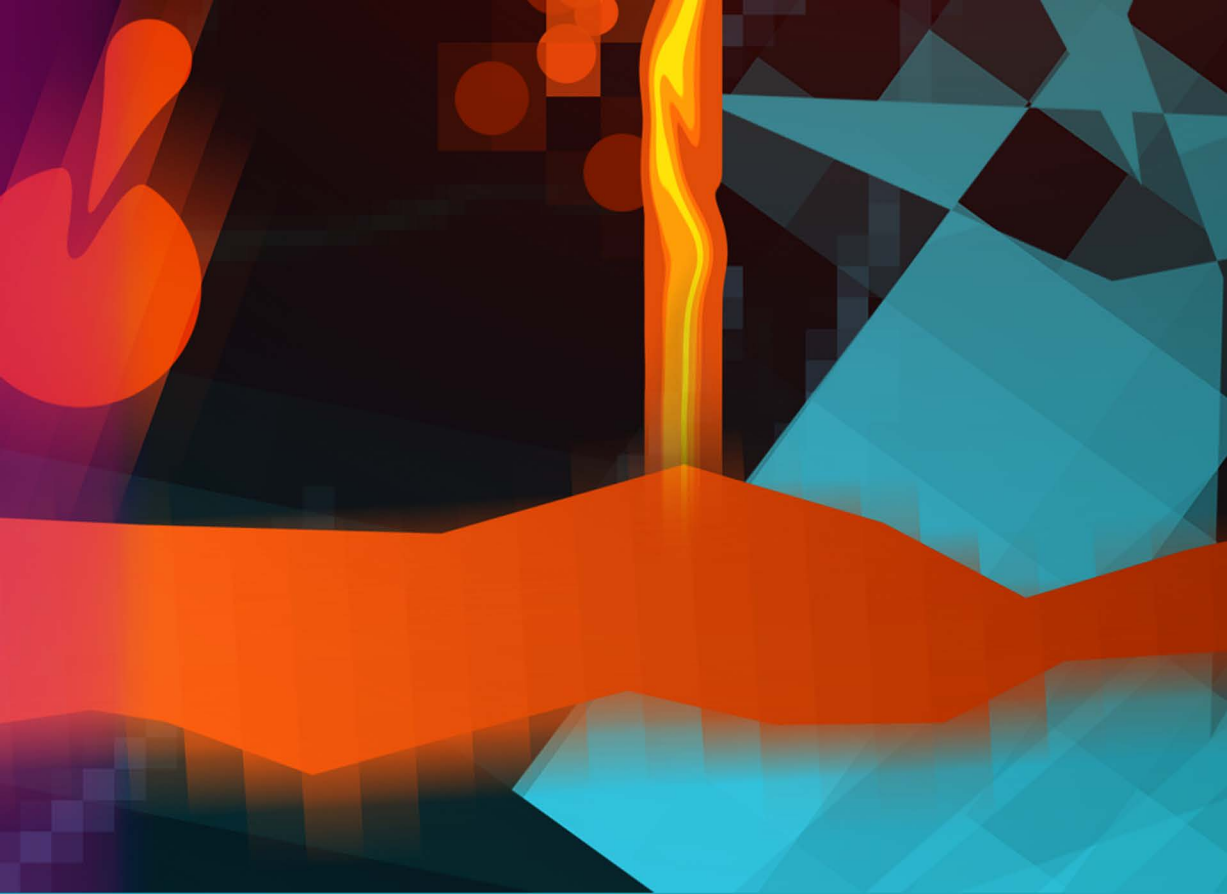
Speed painting is an artistic technique wherein participants are given a limited time only in which to complete a painted composition. Speed painting is common practice on the course, with students using the technique by which to generate project ideas quickly without 'over-thinking' the outcome, and as stand alone challenges of painterly skill.

The paintings were created digitally using a graphics tablet and *Adobe Photoshop*.

After completing their speed paintings in response to Milhaud's music, students were asked to upload their paintings to their individual blogs. The student's paintings were collated daily and showcased on the ACT blog, the course group blog, on **Behance**, on **Scribd**, and via **Linkedin**.

The ACT blog is dedicated to the creative development of the ACT project.





Assessment is often the most significant factor in influencing students' decisions around learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2006), and convincing students to participate in non-assessed activity often proves challenging.

Analysis of the ACT project using 'sense of community' theory (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) revealed that the strong sense of community around the CG Arts course was a significant factor in motivating **participation**.

The design and characteristics of the project offered clearly defined criteria for **membership**, provided ways by which members could increase their influence in the community, fulfilled their needs, and enabled them to further develop their shared emotional **connection** with other members of the community.

participation/membership/connection

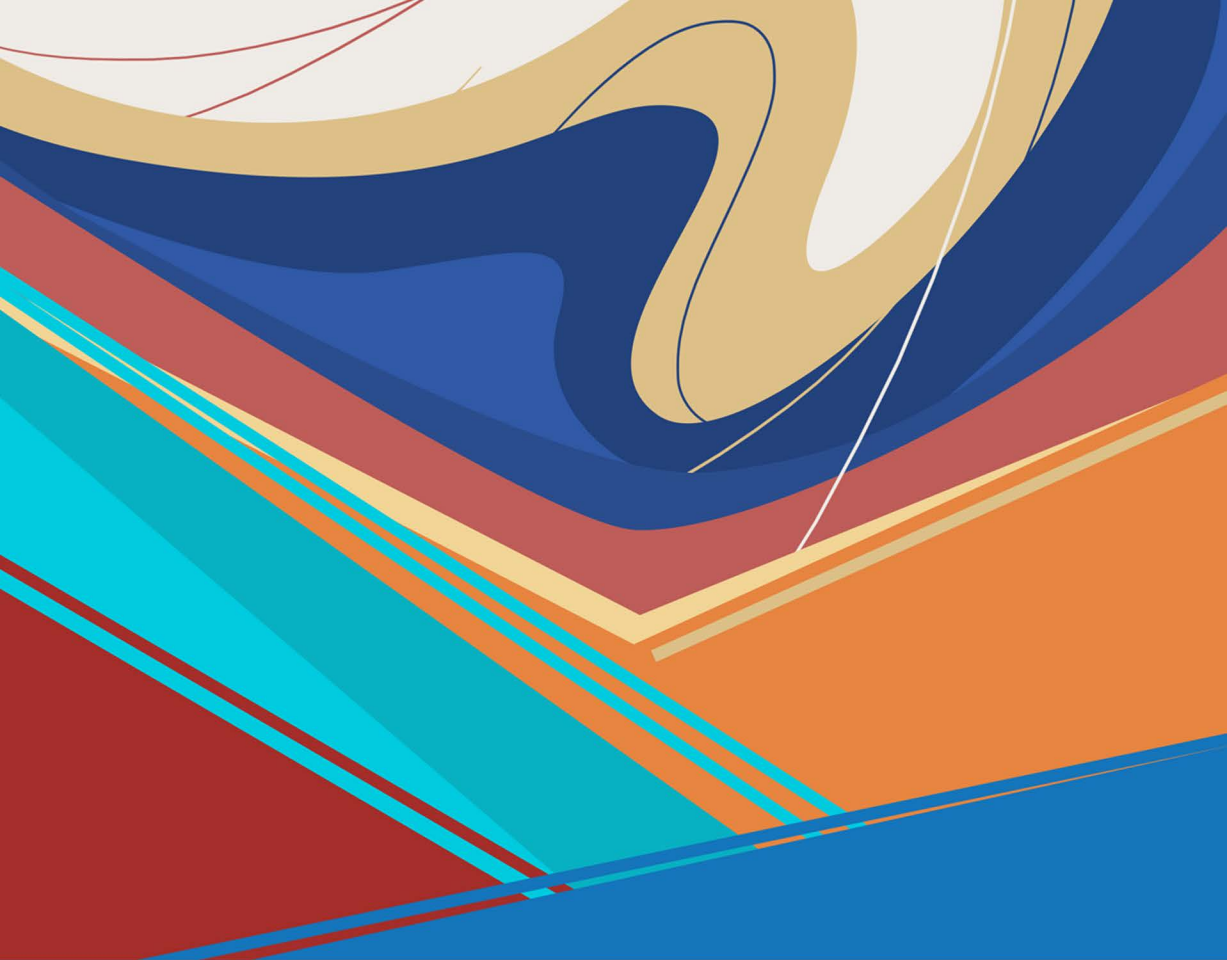
Analysis indicated that the opportunity for students to communicate and verify their identity (**Ma & Agarwal, 2007; De La Ronde & Swann, 1998**) did influence participation, bringing both extrinsic benefits in terms of **recognition** from the community and intrinsic benefits, including increased self-belief and confidence in their artistic abilities.

The chance for **experimentation** and the development of professional practice and artistic style outside of assessed work was also an important motivating factor.

The opportunity for students to increase their **visibility** in the community, while not necessarily a motivating factor at the start of the activity, did influence **participation** as the activity progressed as students began to see the exposure that the speed paintings afforded on the group blog.



participation
experimentation
recognition
visibility



An unexpected finding of the study was that the non-assessed, 'fun' nature of the activity was also a significant factor in motivating students to participate. This was evident in comments from all student interviewees that the ACT project provided an enjoyable break from coursework.

The implications for learning and practice are that **non-assessed, fun activities are beneficial to course culture and student experience** if introduced effectively. Careful planning means defining boundaries, timescales and expectations clearly. The non-assessed nature of the activity provided students with a valuable opportunity to develop their professional practice, skills, and creativity without the pressure of assessment.

However, the study suggested that an existing strong **sense of community** is an important prerequisite in terms of determining the success of non-assessed activities.

sense of community

View the animation here:



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