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Anitra Nottingham

Academy of Art University, U.S.A and The University of Melbourne, Australia

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## Feel the Fear: Learning Graphic Design in Affective Places and Online Spaces

Anitra NOTTINGHAM\*

Academy of Art University, U.S.A and The University of Melbourne, Australia

**Abstract:** *This paper explores the idea of pedagogic affect in both onsite and online graphic design learning spaces, and speculates on the role that this affect plays in the formation of the design student. I argue that embodied design knowledge is built by interactions with design professionals, activities that mimic the daily work of designers, and practices of display such as student work galleries within design schools. Therefore bodies in motion, and the places they move within, take on more importance in the making-up of a graphic design student than we may expect. This idea has implications for online design learning. This paper crosses both Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Non-Representational Theory (NRT), and works three instances of affect. The analysis presented here is targeted towards exploring the contribution of affect to teaching in onsite and online learning spaces. As the practices described here carry through time and space to other design schools, this paper has implications for a broad suite of practices in design education. Thinking through how affect plays out in the onsite design school points the way towards more vibrant online learning spaces.*

**Keywords:** *Graphic Design, Design, Education, Online Learning, Social Media, Actor-Network Theory, Learning Spaces, Non-Representational Theory, Material-Semiotic, Socio-Material.*

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\* Corresponding author: School of Graphic Design | Academy of Art University | San Francisco, U.S.A | e-mail: [anottingham@academyart.edu](mailto:anottingham@academyart.edu)

## Introduction

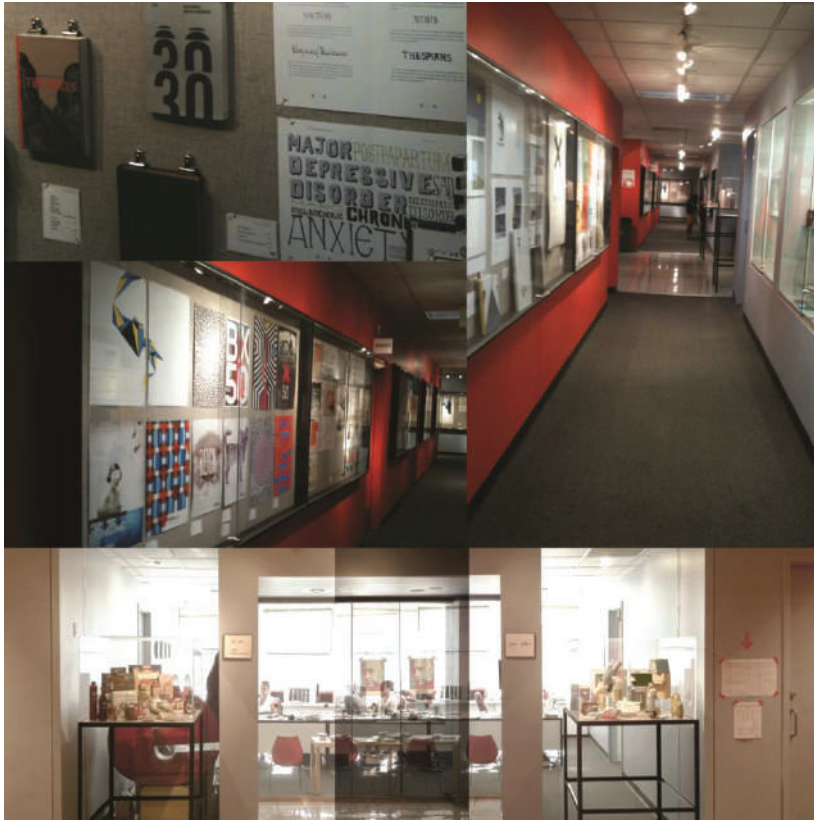
Most design schools are vibrant places, where a myriad of encounters between students, teachers, and professionals can occur. Some of this vibrancy comes from the materiality of the design school itself, which more often than not contains curated displays of exemplar student design work on its walls (see Fig 1). These practices of display contribute to making the design school a learning place, capable of generating emotional attachments that enable (or thwart) learning (Sagan 2008). Overlooking the affective potential of design learning places has consequences for online learning. Many learning management systems are created in the style of “instructivist” spaces (Cheers, Chen and Postle 2011), the equivalent of an online filing cabinet: aesthetically dull, utilitarian. The main problem with this approach is that these sites are configured in ways that actively block opportunities to encounter others—and the exemplar work of others—outside of the sequestered virtual classroom.

It’s my contention that the spaces of onsite design schools are more than a backdrop for learning (Holland, Gordon and Lahelma 2007), but instead are affective places that do much unattended to pedagogical work. Further, I argue in this paper that fresh understandings of how affect in onsite design school is assembled, and what it may contribute to the making of novice designers, could provide clues to improving the online design student experience. I will prosecute my case by examining theories of affect, and speculating on the ways affect may be used to “catch students up in learning” (Mulcahy 2011).

Presented as background to on-going research into design learning environments, this paper focuses on graphic design education and draws concepts from two practice-based theories: Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Non-Representational Theory (NRT). ANT is a material-semiotic theory, which sees the social as emerging from the myriad relations between human and non-human actors. ANT is “a way of doing and writing research” (Arnseth 2011) which allows us to analyse how the materiality of learning environments is implicated in the development of design students. NRT shares an interest in materiality, but, unlike ANT, draws our attention more closely to human expressive qualities. NRT is, in essence, about:

practices, mundane everyday practices, that shape the conduct of human beings towards others and themselves in particular sites. ... It is concerned with practices through which we become ‘subjects’ decentred, affective, but embodied, relational, expressive and involved with others and objects in a world continually in process. ... The emphasis is on practices that cannot adequately be spoken of, that words cannot capture, that texts cannot convey – on forms of experience and movement that are not only or never cognitive (Nash 2000 p55)

I work three empirical instances of affect here: the hallway gallery of the onsite School of Graphic Design at San Francisco’s Academy of Art University (AAU) (see figure 1), its retired blog *The Digital Wall*, and its new Pinterest home @aauugd (see figure 2). The methodology employed here is empirically based, in that it utilizes a narrative strategy drawn from Bruno Latour’s exhortation that researchers “just describe” (Latour 2005, 144) all the actors, human and non-human, they observe in the field. The three descriptions used here are generated by: a video walk through of AAU’s onsite school, and two written observations of the online spaces, I call these descriptions “data stories”. The resulting analysis of these data stories is targeted toward revealing



**Figure 1.** Images of the hallway gallery of exemplar student work in the School of Graphic Design at the Academy of Art University, San Francisco. Clockwise from left: a close-up of one of the cases, a view looking down the main hallway reveals a student looking at the wall, a panoramic image of the School of Graphic Design office (the large “e” is on the left) displaying the precisely placed “authorized” flyers, and a close up view of one wall of the hallway. Source: Anitra Nottingham (2011). Bottom image of the design office: a panoramic photo by Hunter Wimmer (2011).

something of how affect may be assembled in design learning places, and what pedagogical work such affect may be doing.

### *Graphic design, embodied knowledge, and hallways*

Graphic Design knowledge displays characteristics of embodied knowledge as described by Blackler (1995) in that it is learned by doing and by dialogue, and is (at least partly) tacit. Graphic design is taught by means of the design studio, where teachers and students collaborate on projects together and conduct both individual and group critiques—thus mimicking the practice of professional designers. In this process, graphic design teachers seek to develop a *design eye* in their students: a mode of analysis that sorts good from weak design. This design eye assists the design student to reflect upon and improve upon his or her own work. But the design eye is not developed by human action alone; places and things are complicit in this process. Most graphic design students move through, and dwell within, the walls of design

schools. A key component of this daily experience is the myriad encounters students have with exemplar student work usually displayed on the walls of the design school. These interstitial, often ad-hoc, gallery-style spaces are characteristic of an education in graphic design. The AAU *hallway gallery* (Figure. 1) could be described as one of a “tribe” of hallways that exist in many other design schools. Different members of this tribe wear their individual quirks and preoccupations on their walls. Some members of the tribe may be relatively barren but will still ‘speak’ of their designer-ly preoccupations through unique architecture, while other hallways are highly designed and carefully curated spaces.

Research has shown that the critique in graphic design education is a form of signature pedagogy, as described by Shulman (Shreeve 2011). Signature pedagogies are “pervasive, routine, and habitual” (Shulman 2005) pedagogic practices within a discipline that create links with professional practice and prepare students for working life in the profession (Shreeve 2011). A characteristic of signature pedagogies is the practice of “benchmarking” which forces students to measure themselves against others (Shulman 2005). Group critique in the graphic design studio is an example of benchmarking, and so is a hallway gallery. Benchmarking encounters are commonly affective encounters (Shulman 2005), capable of producing the excitement of competition as fear or doubt in the design student. The key contention of this paper is that affect, arising from encounters in the classroom, leaks (Massumi, 2002)—by means of exemplar student work—to design school hallway galleries, and is a crucial ingredient that helps the student “catch” (Mulcahy 2011) the *design eye*. Traditional psychological readings would indicate that this transmission of pedagogic affect happens in relations between human bodies. However, post-structuralist notions of affect enable us to re-imagine places and spaces—even if they are non-living or virtual—as bodies, and as such, participants in affective relations. I will show that the AAU hallway is in fact a more stable version of the affective encounters that occur in the classrooms around it every day and is both an affect filled display, and a calculated pedagogical act.

### *About affect and affective relations*

Affect is both the “body’s capacity to affect” and to “be affected” and is a slippery concept, often described using terms such as “forces” or “energies”, “intensities” and “shimmers” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 1), amongst others. Affect when it happens to a human body can turn into feeling(s) or emotion(s); this Massumi describes as “intensity owned and recognized” (Massumi, 2002, p. 221). Affect arises *in-between* relations (Anderson 2006); as such affect is always *becoming* and has a “not-yet” quality (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 3): contingent, of the moment, and capable of change. The body’s capacity to **be** affected means affect seems to come from the outside **in**, and as bodies have, in turn, the capacity **to** affect, affect can be transmitted from the inside, **out** (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). A sports event is a commonly used example to describe a circulation of affect: the “feeling” that “runs” through a crowd and can manifest as cheering or groans depending on what happens on the field (Massumi, 2002). For the purposes of this paper however, we might best think affect as a “shimmer” like that experienced in an art gallery: a hushed feeling of subdued excitement that can render the most rambunctious individuals quiet or introspective. Thinking affect in terms of a visit to a gallery acknowledges the subtle, micro variations of the “shimmer”, as opposed to the more energetic idea of “intensities” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010).

Broadly speaking, much contemporary work theorizes affect in one of two ways: either *psychobiological*, or as *bodily capacities of affect* (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). A psychobiological reading emerges from the work of Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank's re-reading of the work of Silvan Tomkins (1967). Here, "affect becomes an object" that is human centered and "capable of leaping from one body to another"; it is "contagious" and capable of "being caught" (Ahmed 2010, 39). Whereas a post-structuralist notion of *bodily capacities for affect*, as developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1978) (and based on the ideas of Spinoza from his *Ethics*) conceives affect as *contingent to*, but not necessarily *connected with* emotion within human bodies. This reading of affect makes room for non-human participation in affective relations, because affect is a feeling or sensation that is contingent to the body, but capable of circulating around and through objects, spaces, ideas and people. Thinking affect with Deleuze and Guattari enables non-human objects—such as a hallway or a blog—to be re-thought as a body, as bodies are "defined by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect" (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 2) and for affect to become attached to these kinds of non-human entities.

In a place like the AAU hallway gallery, it is the student work pinned on the walls that is a non-human "body" capable of triggering a series of affective relations with human bodies passing by. Deleuze states that a piece of art (or say a piece of design) doesn't have affect embedded within it, but it is capable of *producing* any number of affects, depending on the affects and percepts which are located inside the viewer (Deleuze and Guattari 1996). For instance we can see red, we can experience excitement, so red in a piece of art (or design) may, depending on percepts of the viewer (say they grew up somewhere where red is perceived as lucky, or perhaps dangerous) trigger an affective relation which is capable of becoming something—a feeling or emotion—once inside the mind of that viewer. The potential for affect then exists between the exemplar student design work and the student body. Whatever feeling an individual student experiences in the AAU hallway gallery however, is contingent, specific to the student and their individual bodily capacity to be affected.

### *Theoretical perspectives and affect*

Bruno Latour employs an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) sensibility in his reading of bodies, objects and affects in the 2004 article "*How to talk about a Body?*". ANT, developed by Latour, Callon and Law in the 1980s, turns our attention to the socio-material practices; the way that objects, people and ideas come together (or not) in webs of relations or *actor-networks*. Bodies, according to Latour, can coexist with objects that have the capability to affect them, and transform the body into something other. Describing the learning experience of making "a nez" (literally "a nose" or perfume expert), Latour draws our attention to the role of material objects in learning, in this case the odour kit, which attunes perfume students to the minute differences between different smells. Here the students are "bodies learning to be affected" (Latour 2004, 209) by "hitherto unregisterable differences" between smells, through the "mediation of an artificially created set-up" (Latour 2004, 225). We could view the AAU hallway as a kind of "odour kit", an object set-up for the pedagogic purpose of attuning the student body to "hitherto undetectable differences" between different kinds of design.

Non-Representational Theories (NRT) provides another useful way of thinking about how bodies can be formed by the places within which they dwell. Non-Representational Theories are a series of diverse ideas which focus on spaces, bodies,

objects, activities and practices—what can be described as the “background “hum”” of everyday life (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 7). Non-Representational Theory as described by Nigel Thrift suggests that our embodiment: habits, dispositions, our ways of being in the world emerge from the multiple interactions —including affect— that make up the world we inhabit (Thrift 2007). *The world of the onsite AAU School of Graphic Design* for example, is an unfolding series of interactions between people places and objects, and affects. There are many kinds of affects possible, many kinds of interactions, and many kinds of outcomes, and the material world has affordances that enable some, and prevent (or restricts) others (Thrift 2007). Becoming a designer against another background, in another “world” from that of the AAU Onsite School of Graphic Design, with its hallway and affects, would therefore produce another sort of designer. This idea has obvious implications for online learning, which I will return to later.

### *Affect and the Formation of Taste*

The *design eye* I have described is a kind of informed taste. Bodies and affect have a role in how we form our taste—our likes and dislikes. The ability of affect to pass through bodies is what allows us to be affected by the atmosphere of a place — “what is out there is getting “in”” (Ahmed 2010, 36-37) but affect can both “circulate” and “stick” to bodies and worlds (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 1), producing attachments to places and things. Sara Ahmed states that “evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn toward things” (Ahmed 2010, 39) in that we move closer to the things we like and further away from the things we don’t like. Getting physically close to (especially touching) an object has an ability to connect us to it, and further that connection is “preserved through habit” (Ahmed 2010, 35) which would suggest that the more we move in a space, the more capable we are of becoming attached to the place or object.

Ahmed additionally states, “to be affected by something is to evaluate that thing” (2010 31), suggesting that the more time we spend in a hallway, the more we interact with it, the more chance there is that affect sticks to it and that we will begin to evaluate and pass judgment on it because “affect is what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values and objects” (Ahmed 2010, 29). This idea allows us to connect the AAU hallway gallery and its affects to student bodies and the formation of taste; it’s not just the display of work that matters, but the proximity, habit, and the daily affective relations that allows students to make value judgments about the design in the hallway.

To instill a design eye online may be a matter of engaging online students in a series of affective relations by making digital displays of student exemplar work “sticky”. To think about how we might achieve this let’s examine how affect is assembled onsite by turning our attention towards the AAU hallway gallery.

### *Onsite Places: the AAU Hallway Gallery*

*Picture the hallway in an art and design school in downtown San Francisco, where the communities of graphic design practice encounter one another. Officially authorized to be here are students, faculty and staff, visitors, potential students, parents, and (at night) the maintenance and cleaning staff. But they are not the only members of this community present. This community is not just composed of the people; there are a host of things here, what Bruno Latour terms the “missing masses”. Let’s step out of the elevator and meet some of them.*

*This hallway is a bright but not overpowering red on one side, giving an energetic feel to the space, and on the other, a sky blue. This color combination shouldn't really work, but somehow does—the people who painted this space know how to use color for effect. On the previous floors, you have seen A4 sized printouts in a mishmash of styles, sizes and typefaces announcing classes and sports games taped haphazardly to the wall near the elevators. Here, they have been cleared away, and instead there are only the state required and AAU policy safety and recycling notices, and two flyers produced by the design school attached to the wall with red construction tape placed at precise angles on each corner. Leaning casually against the window from inside the design office directly ahead is a large sculptural, red, metal, lower-case e.*

*This hallway is a square donut, walk in either direction and you will end up at the same point, so you wander to the right because this is where the “deep cases” begin. These cases are lit by recessed spotlights and are packed full of 3D student design work: packages, posters, bottles, boxes arranged hierarchically with smaller work at the front, a layering that allows the eye to move up and down and then sideways, prompting movement from group to group, moving the body along the case. At the first right angle turn, a large poster acts as a focal point, drawing you around the corner. Shallow locked glass cases flank the entire length of this section of the hallway, overhead spotlights directed towards them.*

*On previous floors, student work was mounted in cardboard frames, but here work is printed on heavy matte paper and hung simply, affixed to the drab grey fabric wall by pins that hold and bracket each corner. All the pins are the same. The gaps between the pieces are optically balanced; there are no empty spaces. The visual effect is of a multitude of pieces placed and grouped precisely to fill the space seamlessly. There is no sense that arguments or disagreements happened while this arrangement was decided; it is consistent as if designed by one person. You encounter two students standing in absorbed concentration in front of separate cases, seemingly unaware of each other. As you approach, one of them repositions himself to stand up straighter and moves further away from the case.*

*Around the next corner a potential student and her family gather at the end of the hallway speaking intently as they cluster close to and gesture towards the case in front of them. Here there is noticeably less natural light, and few people. When you look closer at the student work you notice that it seems less finished—competent, but compared to the work you have viewed so far, not quite as perfect. Rounding the last corner, you find that the cases lining both the walls here house multiple versions of typographic exercises: variations on a theme, subtly different arrangements, demonstrating the by now familiar pre-occupation with small precisely placed type. Nothing on the walls you have seen so far looks like the average everyday design you see in the real world, rather it looks like the idealized version—a designer's idea of what design could be.*

*The material environment of the AAU hallway is shown as a kind of visual “background hum” in which unauthorized or sloppy design has been cleared away. The large e (perhaps literally) says “typography is a big thing to us” and is supported by the multitude of type examples on the hallway walls: the “familiar pre-occupation with small precisely placed type”. Above all is the careful display of the student work, the multitude of pieces placed and grouped precisely to fill the space seamlessly which allows no respite from the constant stream of a certain sort of design, which rains down upon the students moving within the space. Drawing on Latour's ideas of bodies being capable of transformation via a network of relations with objects, this description*



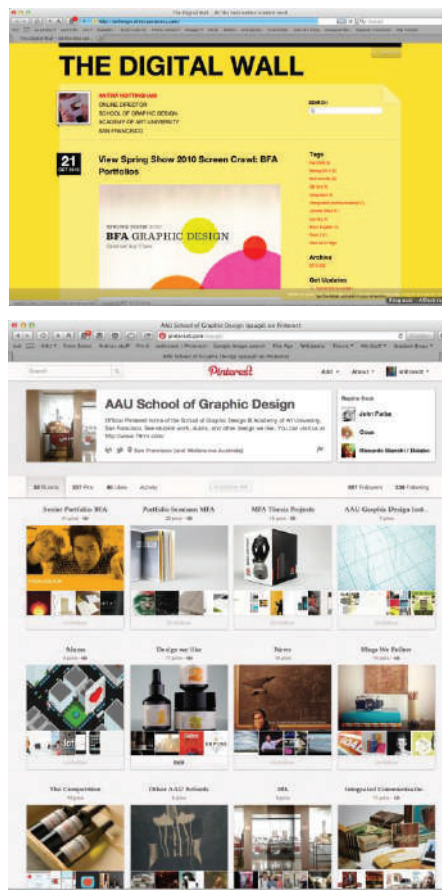
shows the AAU hallway as a pedagogic object set up to attune the students to look at design the same way that the odour kit attunes the student *nez* to the minute differences between odours. Latour states: “Before the session, odours rained on the pupils without making them act, without making them speak, without rendering them attentive, without arousing them in precise ways” (Latour 2004, 207). In the same way repeated movement of the student body within and through the hallway attunes the student to the particular brand of design it displays, making them attentive, arousing them in certain ways that assist them to judge differently all the design that is “rained down” upon them, both inside *and* outside of the hallway.

This description shows the range of affective responses the AAU hallway is capable of eliciting from those who pass through it: from quiet absorption, to self-conscious re-positioning of the body, through to subdued excitement. The use of student work in this hallway over the work of others is crucial to generating affect. It’s possible for an individual student to experience any number of feelings in this hallway—excitement, pleasure—but the work of their peers primarily enhances the capacity for a student to experience fear of not measuring up to the competition. As students are in “constant relations with their environs”, and because affect is not “a one way street” (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 207), this affective relation may loop back in unpredictable ways depending on whether it encounters challenge, submission, or outright resistance (Thrift 2007). The outcome of this calculated pedagogic act is not certain or pre-ordained (Thrift 2007, 114). The intended pedagogic effect then is precarious and contingent, and never predictable.

Now consider an AAU student, who doesn’t walk this hallway—could they have the same capacity to be affected by seeing the work of their peers? Walking the AAU hallway gallery is 3D immersive experience. By contrast, the students of the AAU Online Graphic Design School inhabit physical spaces that may have nothing in common with the carefully curated design of the AAU hallway gallery. Take as an example the spaces described to me in a letter by AAU online-only student Lisa: “*My AAU campus was in my basement studio 26 miles west of Chicago, Illinois. Most mornings I had a roughly 4 second commute to school, traveling from my futon to my laptop.*” Nevertheless online design students become designers (as Lisa did), just as their onsite counterparts do. Thrift (2007) would suggest that the online student embodiment, their way of being in the world, must be different because they do not inhabit the onsite world of the AAU school of design. Therefore is the “online becoming” of the designer more difficult, more precarious, because online students do not walk a design school hallway and experience its affects in a bodily way? Let’s now consider an online student, thousands of miles away experiencing a hallway built of pixels.

### *Online Spaces: The Digital Wall*

*The AAU online graphic design world consists of a private learning management system (LMS), which is primarily white with black type and a heavy black bar across the top, and a similarly designed onsite school blog: 79nm.com. The Digital Wall, an online student work gallery blog, uses a yellow and black Posterous template (see top, figure. 2) and in both design and location, stands outside the two authorized virtual bodies of the AAU School of Graphic Design. The Digital Wall displays work in the order it is uploaded, or can be viewed by tags, negating any attempt to place work in a controlled*



**Figure 2.** Top: a screen snapshot of *The Digital Wall*, the retired blog from the Online School of Graphic Design at the Academy of Art University. Bottom: a screen snapshot of @aaugd, the new Pinterest home for the School of Graphic Design at AAU. You may view the original video walk through of the AAU hallway gallery, filmed by Hunter Wimmer (2010) here: <http://pinterest.com/pin/166914729909629631/>

sequence. It is out of date: the last entry was a year ago. There are no comments, no students have “liked” this blog, yet there have been over 5000 hits. This blog is perhaps doing much unnoticed work; work that is unacknowledged by either students or administrators.

There is something undoubtedly more immersive about a body moving through the hallway than one looking at a screen. The immersive quality combined with the everydayness of the onsite AAU hallway gallery gives it power, something *The Digital Wall* fails to achieve because it has not (yet) inserted itself into the flow of the AAU online students’ everyday (digital) life: *There are no comments, no students have “liked” this blog.* Notably *The Digital Wall* does not exist within the virtual body of the school: *does not reference or relate* in the way the AAU hallway does to the physical school. In so doing, the Digital wall does not promote a sense of belonging or connect the blog with the physical, or virtual, AAU “body”. There are visitors but sadly any work the blog

does is: *unacknowledged by either students or administrators, who cannot see these bodies, or how these bodies may be reacting to the work they see.*

The AAU hallway is a gallery. In a gallery we are watching others look at the art (or design), and being aware of others watching us look. Hennion argues that our taste is “the taste of others” in that “we rely on others in a reflexive way to constitute our tastes” (Hennion 2007, 103). A student can accept the valuation of the work in the hallway as good or not, but whether we accept or reject a valuation, it is done in the presence of others (Hennion 2007). *The Digital Wall*, as currently configured, is not a gallery; it does not allow the visitor to stand alongside others and be seen to be looking; it does not allow for the formation of taste in the presence of others. However there are ways to make a space like *The Digital Wall* a more gallery-like experience. After all one can’t truly know if a fellow gallery visitor likes a piece of art, but if they “thumbs up” or “like” it, this allows us to fix our subjective view alongside the views of others. This one instance demonstrates the possibilities inherent in online spaces; these spaces can enable powerful connective experiences, leading to potentially generative learning. Recent developments in social media have enabled such a space to exist. We will now look to the successor to *The Digital Wall*, AAU’s new Pinterest Home: @aaugd.

### *Online Places: @aaugd*

*@aaugd, the new Pinterest home for the AAU School of Graphic Design is in a constant state of becoming. Within minutes of its creation, followers flooded in to watch it being built, image by image. At this moment, late on a Tuesday night, @aaugd has 237 images displayed in carefully curated groups or “boards” and is “followed” by 626 others, not all of them students at AAU.*

*Pinterest, a social media platform, allows users to gather, curate, and arrange visual assets so that they may be accessed and shared with others. When image tiles, or “pins” are selected, they “flip” and enlarge obediently at the user’s command, flipping again and merging with a stream of images when dismissed. There is movement here, a sense of travel, as the interface scrolls up and down, advances and retreats. A user may “get close” to any pin they find interesting, and can scroll quickly past any they don’t. There is much human exchange here, but it is somewhat “silent” compared to chatty spaces like Twitter and Facebook. A “like” allows a user to “collect” an image to view, but not to share with others. A “repin”, more sought after by users and sometimes capable of creating a slight frisson of affect, allows the user to collect and add an image to their own collection, and simultaneously share it with others. A repin is validation, and any AAU student work uploaded, or repinned, by @aaugd is effectively branded as exemplar student work by the mere fact it is worthy of being shown to @aaugd’s followers. It’s not obvious to any but the individuals interacting in this virtual space that many teachers and students are encountering each other here, by repinning and liking each other’s pins.*

*The Pinterest interface mimics the “pinboard” or “moodboard” that marks the beginning of many a design project. An architect designed the Pinterest user interface and its rigorous clean simplicity may be a legacy of his design school training. The grey background in fact bears a remarkable similarity to the grey cloth of the physical pinboards in the AAU hallway, a perfect neutral grey that allows all the content to “pop” from the “wall”. The interface allows the labels of the @aaugd posts to be somewhat obsessively formatted, with carefully placed slashes between the discrete sets of information, not unlike the precisely placed pins of the physical hallway—despite the fact that this formatting may be effaced at will by the next user.*

The material affordances of *@aaugd* allow AAU design students to form taste in the presence of others (Hennion 2007)—their teachers, peers, and the broader design community—on a broader scale than the now retired *Digital Wall*. The Pinterest interface is more sympathetic to the AAU design school preoccupations, even its interface *bears a remarkable similarity to the grey cloth of the physical pinboards in the AAU hallway*. Potentially, Pinterest is a more “sticky” way for students to experience exemplar student work by allowing users a sense of movement, and the ability to pause and move “closer” to the student work: *A user may “get close” to any pin they find interesting, and can scroll quickly past any they don’t*. In some ways, this hallway—shareable, viewable anywhere on any device that has an internet connection, and unconstrained by physical space limitations—is a more powerful version of the online AAU hallway gallery. Potentially, the affective qualities of the Pinterest interface via its movement, and the ability to “touch”, collect and spend time with images, could render this gallery more affective, more “sticky” to the student viewer.

### Conclusion

What sort of graphic designers students become is not just the consequence of the teachers, ideas, and tools they encounter and learn to manipulate, it is additionally a consequence of inhabiting a certain kind of “world of Graphic Design School” with its many objects, affects and interactions. Design school hallways, the signature pedagogy of graphic design education, which form part of this “world of design school”, work affect on student bodies. Hallways are therefore places of transforming and becoming. These hallway galleries can be seen as objects set up for a pedagogic purpose; they are made to attune students to look at design differently. Encountering the work of peers increases an individual student’s bodily capacity to experience fear, a potent emotion that saturates many other design school experiences. The nature of affect to stick, and be preserved through habit, means the proximity and daily travels through a hallway can do work to form taste. As interstitial spaces, hallway galleries afford the kinds of encounters that allow students to form taste, or develop the “design eye”, in the presence of others. However, because affective relations can loop in uncertain ways, fail, or encounter resistance, a hallway like the one at AAU is a pedagogic act with uncertain outcomes.

We can take some important clues from the material world of a place like the onsite AAU hallway to build better online spaces. A digital version of an onsite hallway should work to insert itself into a student’s life in a way that cannot be easily ignored, and should allow students to experience the virtual gaze of others. *The Digital Wall* shows how such a space may fail; *@aaugd* points the way towards a future where experiencing design school through a flickering screen may become a more truly immersive and transformative experience. *@aaugd* is a signpost towards a more vibrant online learning *place*, one more capable of allowing design students to “catch” a “design eye”.

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Anitra Nottingham

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