• Paper / Proposal Title:
Creaturelystories: Digital Storytelling Techniques for Ecological Thinking in Spatial Design Pedagogy

• Author(s) Name:
Andy Miller

• University or Company Affiliation:
RMIT Architecture and Urban Design – Interior Design.

• Abstract (300 words):
This paper discusses the significance of storytelling and digital mixed reality environments in design education as tools to destabilise human-centered thinking and design responses. In university design courses, ecological crises is often dealt with by finding solutions to problems through the architectural artifact. The ‘creaturely way’ is a teaching and learning I framework I have developed that foregrounds non-reductive thinking to help locate design students as co-creative forces within an ecological continuum instead of sole protagonists in the growth of their design practices. The approach was developed in a design communications seminar questioning commonly used communication techniques that tend toward the reductive practice of visualising the design artefact as the focused learning outcome. This teaching technique guides students to sense, think and articulate stories as to how their human bodies and desires coalesce (for better or worse) with, alongside, and within the bodies, aspirations and ‘life’ stories of other creatures, including materials. The relationship between storytelling and interspecies connectivity is discussed through four projects that incrementally expose students to open-ended complexity over a 12-week semester. An initial subjective experience acts as a springboard for students to critically recount relational stories through a diverse range of communication techniques including, guided attunement, sensory drawings, scoring, poetry, diagramming, narration, digital modelling, animation and virtual reality environments.
The combination of non-reductive ecological thinking and the creaturely storytelling techniques developed in this research can encourage deeper critical awareness of human/nonhuman entanglements in design students. This awareness can help resituate students within the ecological milieu, foster new ways of being and designing in a more-than-human world and bring about a deeper ecological responsibility in their future design practices.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each)

Andy’s design/research practice is centred upon the idea that all things are alive and interrelated and that our anthropocentric cultural narrative is deadly and untenable. Through this premise, he explores techniques for creating interspecies dialogue to help relocate the human within the ecological continuum. To help reveal these entangled relationships, he experiments with an interchangeable assemblage of design techniques, digital platforms and disciplinary knowledge including multisensory design, critical walking practice, storytelling, coding and virtual and mixed reality environments. Andy’s creative practice explores alternative ways of knowing where the making of creative works is entangled with the co-creation of subjectivity or ways of being. His research proposes that growing awareness of how humans and non-humans are interrelated may bring about a deeper ecological response-ability in design practice. Andy is the coordinator of technologies stream of courses within the Interior Design program at RMIT University, Melbourne. Professionally Andy has worked on a diverse range of design projects in Australia, internationally and has undertaken research fellowship roles at the Spatial Information Architecture Laboratory (SIAL) at RMIT and Urban Futures Lab at the University of Melbourne.