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Creative Together: Fostering and Displaying Creativity in Digital Education

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In the frame of Higher Education, creativity can be a learning objective that presupposes students' engagement with informal, messy, unpredictable or backstage type of learning environments (studios, workshops, media labs, etc). But it can also be a vehicle of engagement, a desirable outcome in the formal presentation of students' work, an additional achievement shared with a wider audience in frontstage-type of spaces (exhibitions, galleries, conferences etc).

This past year, engagement with physical Frontstage and Backstage spaces of creative learning was significantly constrained due to Covid-19 health and safety protocols and remote-studying policies. How can we foster and display creativity in Digital Education and while using online learning environments?

With this question in mind, colleagues, and students from Welsh School of Architecture and from the School of Journalism Media and Culture met to discuss how creativity as a learning objective or vehicle of engagement was supported in Digital Education over the past year. The two teams met during an online workshop, the proscenium of these backstage and frontstage spaces, to discuss and reflect on last year's creative experience as supported by MIRO and ARTSTEPS two online platforms. Here are some of the things we came to realise:

Students of architecture take both an analytical and a synthetic approach to design and as such they prefer to work on more neutral or abstract digital environments where attention falls on the designed space-content and less on the 'space'-container. In contrast students of Journalism, Media and Culture work on the visual and discursive, personal and collective narratives, and seem to prefer immersive environments, platforms that allow them to instigate to their audience an exhibition mood and which provide a gallery type of experience.

In this sense, MIRO as a backstage environment tends to better support group work, brainstorming and informal learning interactions, while ARTSTEPS stages excellently the scene for the presentation of a final learning output.

Both platforms allowed our students to come together, to practice Teamwork and collaboration, and to exercise critical reflection and argumentation. They also allowed them to practice their observational, analytical, interpretative and appraisal skills by displaying and reviewing each other's work. They also allowed them to curate and present their draft or final work in front of a live audience. Last but not least, they supported the strong engagement of our occasionally divided learning communities (of remote and on campus),

offered additional motivation, and allowed them to share their work while in quarantine, lockdown or remote learning conditions.

In these debates, we all agreed that either or both platforms cannot work as a final learning destination, or exclusive environment. They need additional learning processes and tangible extensions to work with and draw inspiration from.