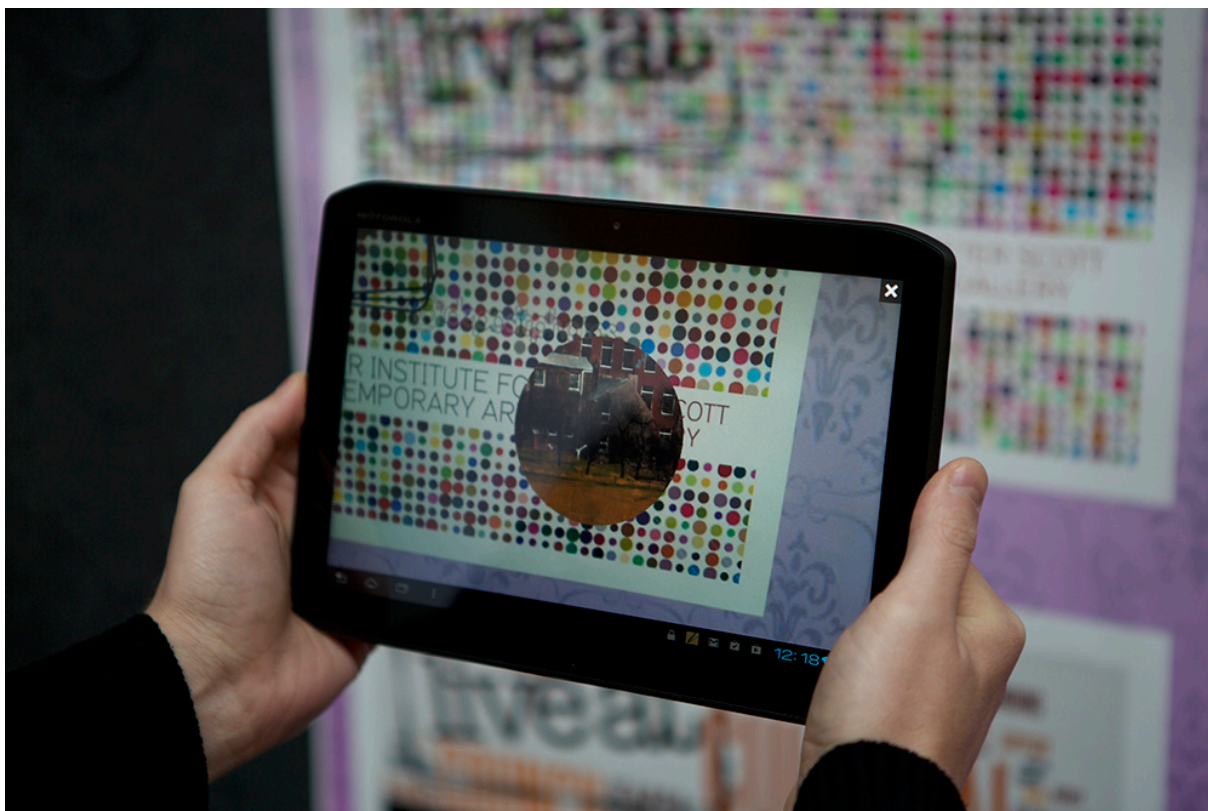


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## Interview Snippet



### Dr Emma Murphy - ImaginationLancaster

*The design lecturer talks about Taking the Artwork Home*



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WORDS: SAMUEL FRY DATE: SATURDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2013

*Dr Emma Murphy is a lecturer and researcher in Design Management at Lancaster University. Emma now finds herself involved in a project which brings exhibitions into the home. Samuel Fry asks her about Taking the Artwork Home.*

**You are currently running an augmented reality project called *Taking the Artwork Home*. How would you describe it?**

*Taking the Artwork Home* is all about facilitating access to, and engagement with, the arts. We believe that technology has a role to play in this – not as a replacement to going to a gallery, but as a different experience; an alternative way of accessing the collection.

It raises an interesting question about digital and physical experiences as we are giving people the opportunity to interact with gallery collections from their own home, in the hope that this may encourage them to then consider going to a gallery in the future.

We are using digital technologies (namely [Mobile Augmented Reality](#)) to allow anyone with a smartphone or tablet to effectively curate their own exhibitions using a wonderful collection from the [Peter Scott Gallery](#) in Lancaster. We plan to then select some of these self-curated exhibitions and show these at the gallery itself. It is hoped that our research will inform new curatorial strategies, give an insight into community interests so that future offers can be tailored to these interests, and also to encourage people who wouldn't normally come to a gallery to engage with art.

This research project will demonstrate how this could work, and so we are using practice-based research methods such as prototyping, live workshops and narrative to develop an app which is easy to use and demonstrates proof of concept so that it could be opened up to the arts community as a whole. We've already been asked about the project by other arts organisations and galleries.

#### **Where did the idea come from?**

It came out of lots of conversations and coffee!

We co-developed the idea between the three partners, but the idea for the project was inspired by a 3-year curatorial process "Conversations with the Collection", where Live at LICA and the Peter Scott Gallery opened up its work and collections to local residents - including schools - to co-curate unique exhibitions.

It became apparent that there was an appetite for this, and so the team were looking for an opportunity to extend this beyond the physical gallery - and so using digital technology was the natural next step to allow people to engage with the collection in a personal way. It's been great to be involved as the research partners in this project, alongside the technology partners (m-ventions). Together we have been able to make this project a reality. The Nesta digital R&D call aligned with this perfectly - and it's great that this has provided us with the opportunity to do this research.

#### **The project involves a number of different organisations. How did this come together?**

ImaginationLancaster are always keen to do interdisciplinary projects both on and off campus. Our research projects frequently involve collaboration with the arts. Also, being based within Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Arts means that we have many great opportunities to engage and collaborate right on our doorstep. Live at LICA is also unique in the sense that it relishes the opportunity for academic collaboration and so we started to talk about collaborating around how digital technologies could help engagement with the arts.

m-ventions originated as a spin-out company from Lancaster's International centre for ICT, InfoLab21, and so has an embedded understanding of research. All three partners are committed to conducting and disseminating research to benefit and include the arts community. We see our work as helping to build a community of practice and research to share knowledge, experience and practice around digital technologies and arts.

#### **You have already started building the app with the Peter Scott Gallery Collections. What has been your biggest challenge so far?**

The project is full of interesting challenges - which is always the case with doing research in the wild. That's where you know you are doing worthy research - when you hit obstacles and have to work out creative ways of overcoming them. For example, with this project, we have the challenge of user experience versus rights management. So while it would be a better user experience to have images saved to your smartphone, this has implications for rights management, as there is essentially a copy on the user's phone. However, if you develop a cloud-based version, the experience relies on a network connection being really good which may not always be the case for the user. Highlighting these findings will be invaluable for others considering using their collections in this way.

#### **What is your next step?**

We are at an exciting phase of taking our second prototype and testing it in the wild with live audiences and users. Seeing prototypes coming to life is fantastic - and it will be interesting to see how a generation that's very comfortable with technology uses it.

#### **How do you see this influencing other art galleries?**

We know that that the challenges the PSG are facing aren't unique - they are challenges that small arts organisations and galleries face all over the UK. Already we have had masses of interest from arts organisations galleries and within our networks as to how this could be rolled out, and volunteering to test it. It's an opportunity for us to scope out and really interrogate the potential benefits and challenges of using AR.

Also, arts organisations and networks wouldn't normally have the funds or capacity to work with and develop this kind of technology - and so how ever far we take this, because we are releasing it free - we hope to give access to this technology to numerous organisations - and to extend this development with these networks in the future.

*Taking the Artwork Home is supported by Nesta, Arts and Humanities Research Council and public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Part of the Digital R&D fund for the arts.*

*The team is made up of Richard Smith and Rachel Baynton (Live at LICA/ Peter Scott Gallery), Dr Paul Coulton and Dr Emma Murphy (ImaginationLancaster) and Klen Copic (m-ventions).*

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