



## NSEADcreate – case study #2

### Professional life under lockdown

**‘It’s all a bit weird’, said my husband last night. And he’s not wrong.**

Where to start? For some reason I’m obsessed with starting this piece with a question and I don’t know why. So I’m just going to go with it. Yes, it’s all a bit weird. My experience of the pandemic has been filled with stress, grief, anxiety, some laughter and lots of love. I’ve reconnected with Tai Chi and my garden is looking amazing. And people have been great. My colleagues and students are incredible and I’m filled with awe at the wonders they perform every day. I have a close friend who is a nurse and she updates me on the awfulness that is her life and I feel so helpless, but also unbelievably grateful for everything I have and for all those working tirelessly and selflessly to keep the world turning. Including you. I have another friend who is working on a COVID-19 vaccine and it’s such a privilege to know people who are part of the solution to this crisis. Including you. I am grateful to be alive. To have had no friends or family taken by the virus. Yet.



Another question: How has this affected my professional life? Michele Gregson, NSEAD general secretary, asked me to write about what I’ve had to learn, unlearn, relearn as a result of the pandemic. Again, where to start! As I’m sure is the same with you, my life has been turned upside down. It feels like nothing will ever be the same again. Actually, I hope this is true. Because working in education hasn’t been that great recently and this feels like an opportunity to do things differently, to do things better. Last night me and my hubby were talking about whether things really will change as a result of the pandemic and my hope is that if we’re under lockdown for long enough, if we have to perform new routines and rituals virtually over several months, then yes, some things will change. I don’t want to go back to a performance driven education system. I feel




angry and frustrated that we have had to put up with such a lousy system for so long. That it has moulded us, our students, our colleagues. That it has changed our practices and marginalised our subject.

And yet we keep moving forwards. One thing that strikes me time and again is how the NSEAD has responded to this crisis with clarity, timeliness, empathy. What an amazing organisation to be a part of. I have learnt so much working alongside the NSEAD team and executive board as a part of our rapid COVID-19 group, shaping strategy to ensure art and design educators – whether they are members or not – have access to resources which support remote working. How do we care for those with the least, with no access to the internet, those who have to provide for others, who self-isolate, who are ill? NSEAD continues to ask and answer these questions, creating our new COVID-19 webpage to address FAQs. We correspond with Ofqual and SQA to bring the most up-to-date information on exams and assessments to you. We are using #NSEADcreate to support online communities. We have made the difficult decision to cancel the national conference in Liverpool, and now that we have moved it online, we are planning alternative provision that supports – no, enhances and extends – debate about our subject during these unprecedented times. It is also essential that we ensure the safety of NSEAD colleagues, making sure they take breaks from work to recover, recoup. To breathe.

Just as you have had to adapt rapidly, instantaneous, to new working conditions, so have I. Working remotely is exhausting; it takes time for weird to become normal. Creating new ways to deliver a practical subject virtually for my MA students, for NQTs with little experience of art and design, for primary, secondary, and undergraduate students, and children learning in a hospital school. For students participating in a virtual conference. I am now acquainted with YouTube in a way I never thought I would be. I have my own channel. I create films of making art and structure opportunities for students, parents, teachers to engage in content asynchronously. I am instructed by my university to


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This year's theme is *Drawn to Life* and we have decided to explore the theme of drawing in alternative ways to support children's wellbeing. Local artist and educator Dionne Freeman has made four videos that demonstrate some very exciting and different approaches to drawing for you to follow. These are designed to inspire you to be creative and experiment with different ways of making artwork.

**We challenge you to follow the videos and have a go yourself!**


**Educators and parents**




**Drawing with objects**




**Drawing with light**



**Charcoal Drawing**



**Musical Ink Drawings**



keep it simple yet I receive exhaustive emails and have to digest significant amounts of new information to achieve this in a way that adheres to uni policy. But, I am grateful for the hard work and care my colleagues put in to ensure that we are still functioning effectively for our students. I'm impressed with the speed, clarity, leadership, and the humanity that my university has demonstrated. I negotiate with colleagues about how to support students who were to be assessed by public exhibition this summer. I shelve a meeting about Ofsted. A highlight has been meeting my MA students virtually. I listen, empathise, relate. We share. We care for each other. They support each other in powerful, humbling ways. I structure my teaching around their needs. I miss them. I struggle with dilemmas not yet resolved: The perennial issue of how to recruit to my MA programme with the added complication of not knowing if we can teach face to face in the autumn. Knowing I need to have a plan b, and c, and d. When will my students attend graduation? When will we be able to meet up for that celebratory meal? I look forward to working with artist teachers at the Pitt Rivers Museum at a future point – teaching on a Saturday has never seemed so good! And, how amazing is my colleague Dionne Freeman (see image above), for all the innovation and eternal optimism about how we can turn this opportunity into something great.

Thank you all for keeping me going.

I'll finish with three questions, one to me and two to you: have I answered Michele's brief? Maybe. But more importantly, what have you learnt about your professional self as a result of the pandemic? And who supports you during this time? Make sure to thank them regularly. In the words of those intrepid time travellers Bill and Ted, be excellent to each other, we truly are stronger together. Stay safe, healthy and positive.

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