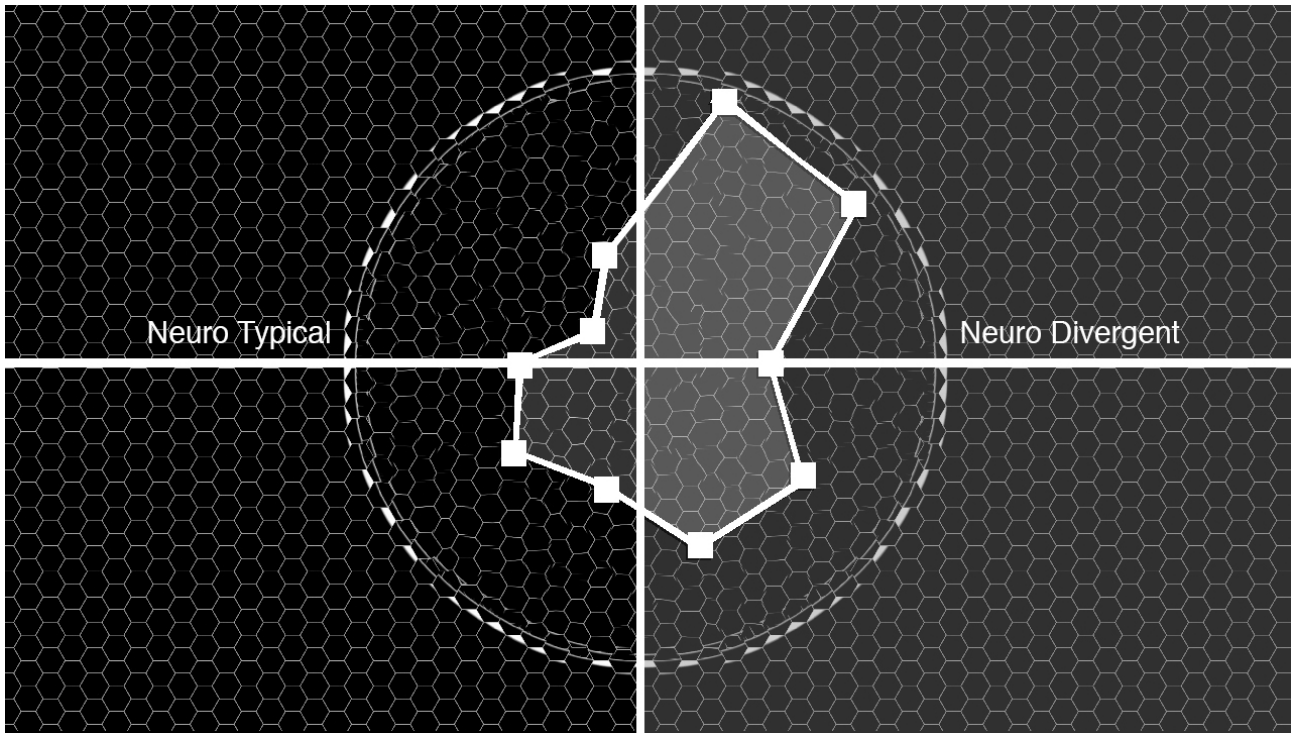


Category of contribution: **Media Submission?**

Full title: **In the Spectrum within Art & Design Academic Practice**

Key words: **Neurodiversity; Asperger Syndrome; Autism Spectrum; Art; Design; Mix-Media.**

### **Introductory Statement**



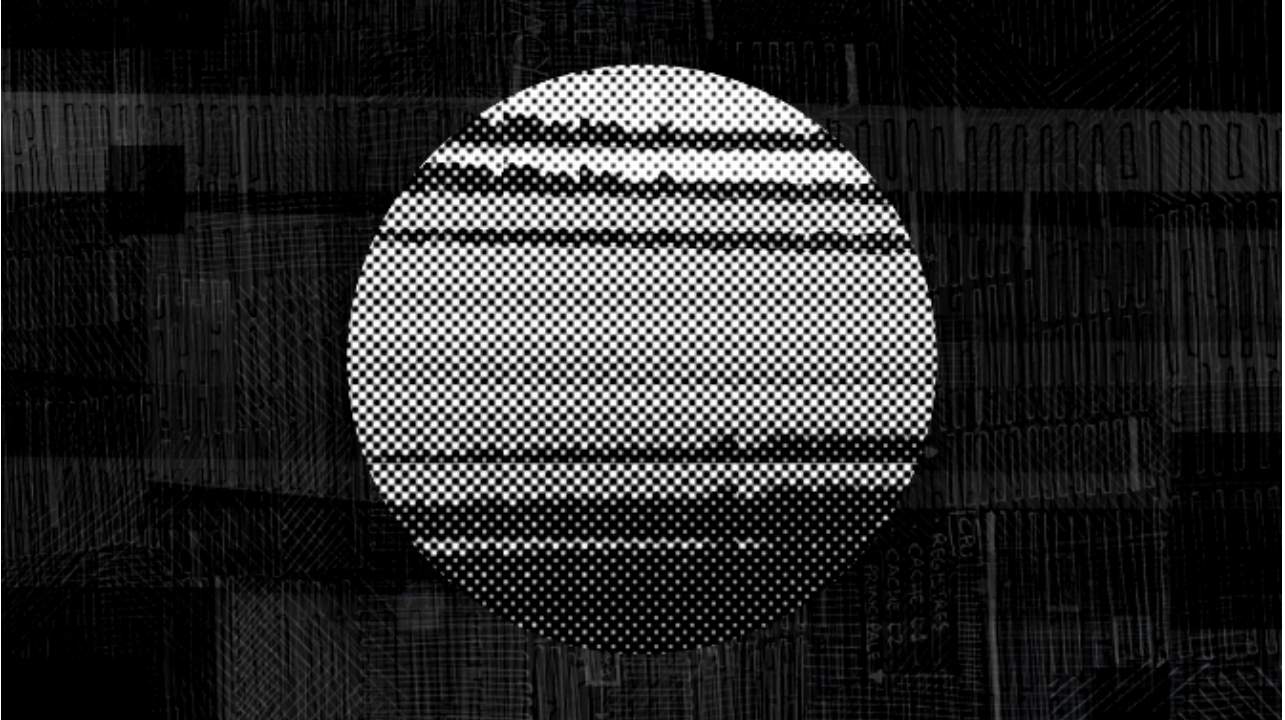
Luca M Damiani - Neurological Interconnections, Remix of some neuroscience test-study diagrams - 2017

I started structuring this media submission for Spark Journal during an open lab making session at the V&A Digital Design weekend in September 2017. I was invited at the V&A to make an installation about the relation between neurodiversity and design ([Link 1](#)), looking at opening some questions and sharing some reflections around my neurodivergent practice and the primary phase of my on-going research ([Link 2](#)).

I am neurodivergent (diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, ASC), I am a practicing artist and a UAL Lecturer, and I am interested in investigating art and design as expanded artistic voices around neurological diversity.

I am in the so called “high functioning” area of the autism spectrum, and I have a variety of aspects that affect me in how perceive, see, react, interact. Whilst at first I thought to write a paper about the topic, I then loved the opportunity to construct a visual media submission in order to share some work that identifies different factors of the syndrome I experience. This piece is mainly thought to be a reflective piece and a way to open a discussion around neurodivergent thinking in academic practice; it is not shaped to sustain an argument or give some specific indications and/or answers on the topic.

## My Aspie Hacks the Brain



Luca M Damiani – My Aspie Hacks the Brain – 2017

In “My Aspie Hacks the Brain” video-art piece (first shown at the Science Gallery Dublin in June 2017 and then at V&A in September 2017) I bring together different aspects of the condition I experience; I underline that these aspects are something I experience but every individual with Asperger Syndrome might actually have different aspects connected to the condition. In this piece I consider a high level and capacity to focus; a necessity of rhythm and repetition; higher perceptions of surrounding sound, smell and surrounding data (also digital data) that can create intense filtering and reaction to my brain; time for rebalancing.

I have tried to depict these moments, structuring and representing my individual aspie-autistic neurological flow, considering the relation with the surrounding but also trying to depict my inner-side processing. In order to create it, I have recorded moments in my daily flow also within my academic teaching-day, research work and artistic practice. And so, the methods used were connected (and how can we disconnect them?) to some areas of my neurodivergent being; I used illustrated patterns (which I create daily as a flow of repetition and relaxation), photography (which I usually hack as a repetitive way of processing the image), 3D (as a concept of construction, deconstruction, reconstruction), and coding (the analytical and mathematical processing of reality).

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*Insert video here.*

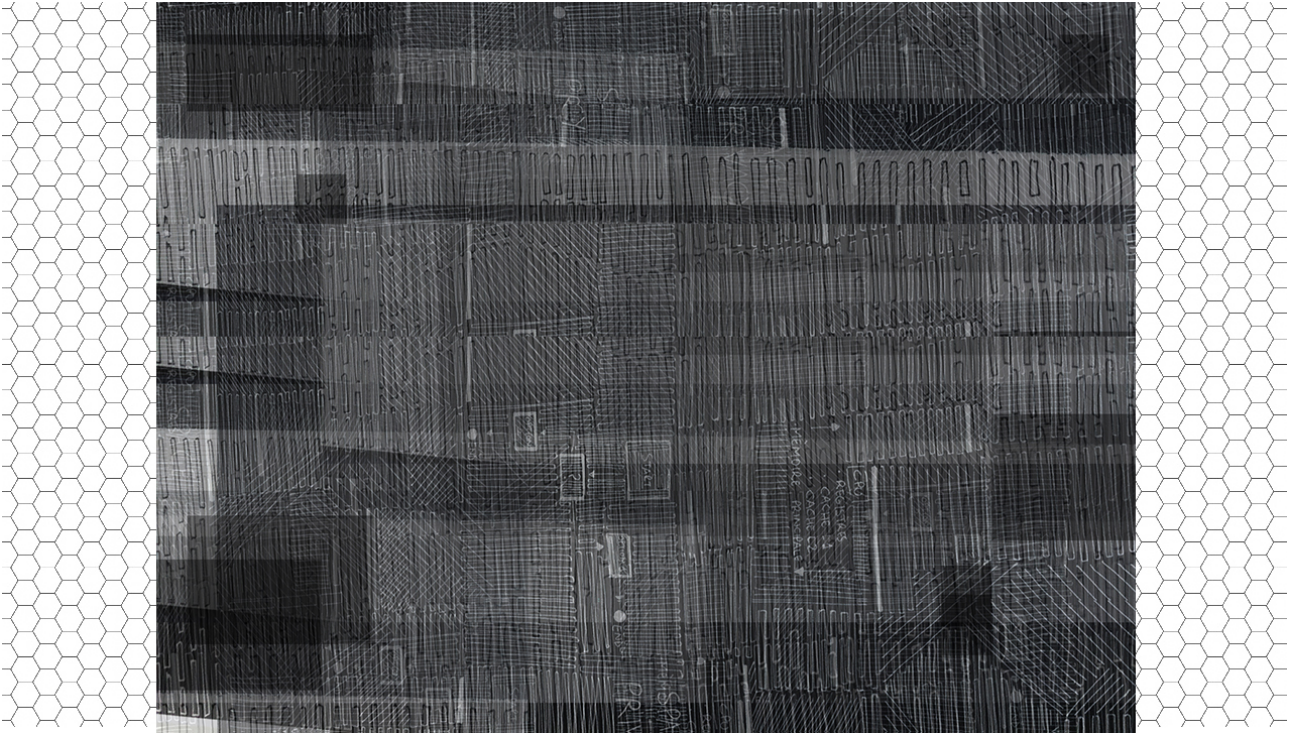
<https://vimeo.com/219220196>

password: hackthebrain

*//if accepted, I can make the video public and/or pass you the video-file directly.*

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## My Repetitive Coping Patterns



Luca M Damiani – My Repetitive Coping Patterns – 2017

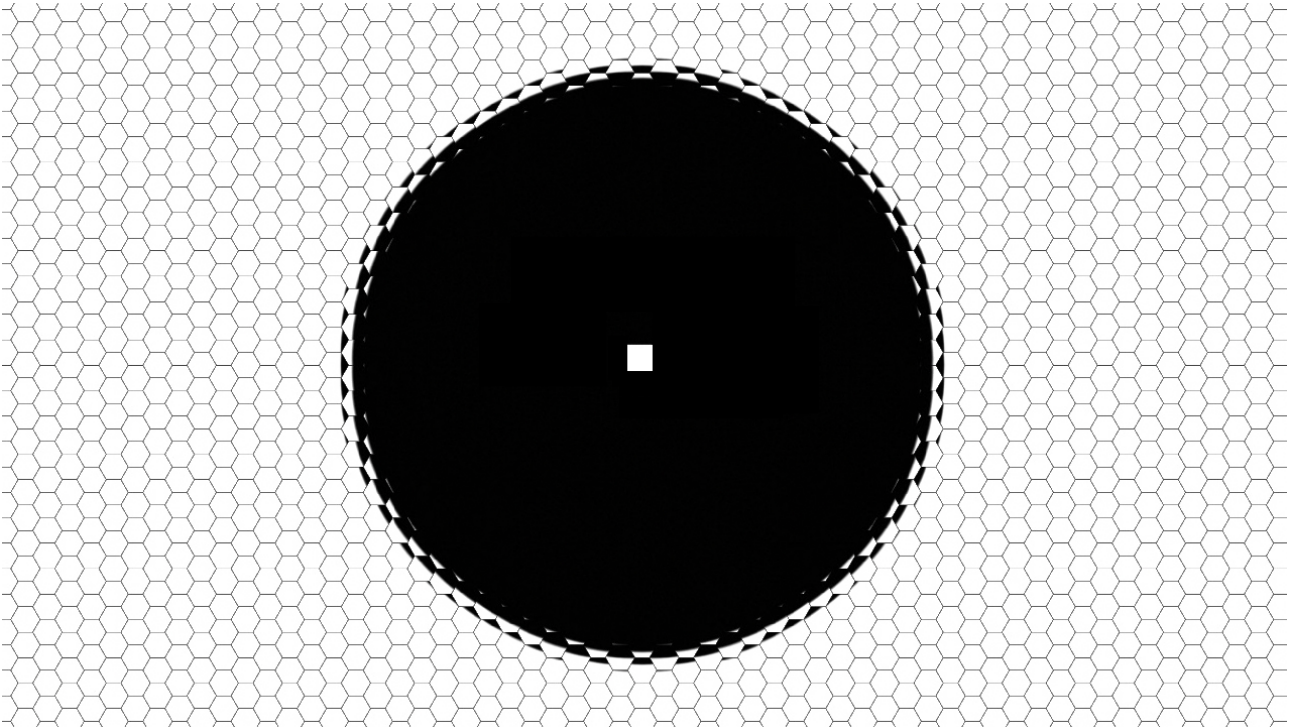
In “My Repetitive Coping Patterns” piece, I look at repetition and structure as my daily key aspects for a smooth and balanced functioning. It is interesting to know that my way of balancing and coping came through art, mathematics and technology in a subconscious way, even before getting diagnosed with the syndrome. Here I show some of my hand-drawn repetitive patterns that I create daily and that I construct as data server and build-up of controlled emotional flow. This also gives me a good and healthy space of mind; if I experience surrounding data (especially sound and smell) overload, then neurological stress rises up and this can bring the passage to the next stage of the spectrum, and so being critical in my way of reacting/filtering the situation and find a re-balance.

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*Insert gif here. Or insert gif in replacement of the image.*

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## My Eye Contact Clock Reminder



Luca M Damiani – My Eye Contact Clock Reminder – 2017

In “My Eye Contact Clock Reminder” piece, I look at reviewing the way I tend to move my eyes away from eye-contact during a conversation. It just comes natural to me; I engage with the topic of discussion, I visualise the flow of data and thoughts, I move my eyes away. I can stay a long time just focusing in the emptiness and actually having a good productive discussion; I usually feel free to do so with people that are very close to me. However, in a professional or public scenario, I know that this is not always read in the right way, and so I have learnt how to cope with this. I know how to recall my eye movement (and yes, it is an extra effort) and I have learnt it when I was a child; I know that every now and then, I have to look into the eyes of the other person I am talking to. It is a sort of eye contact clock reminder.

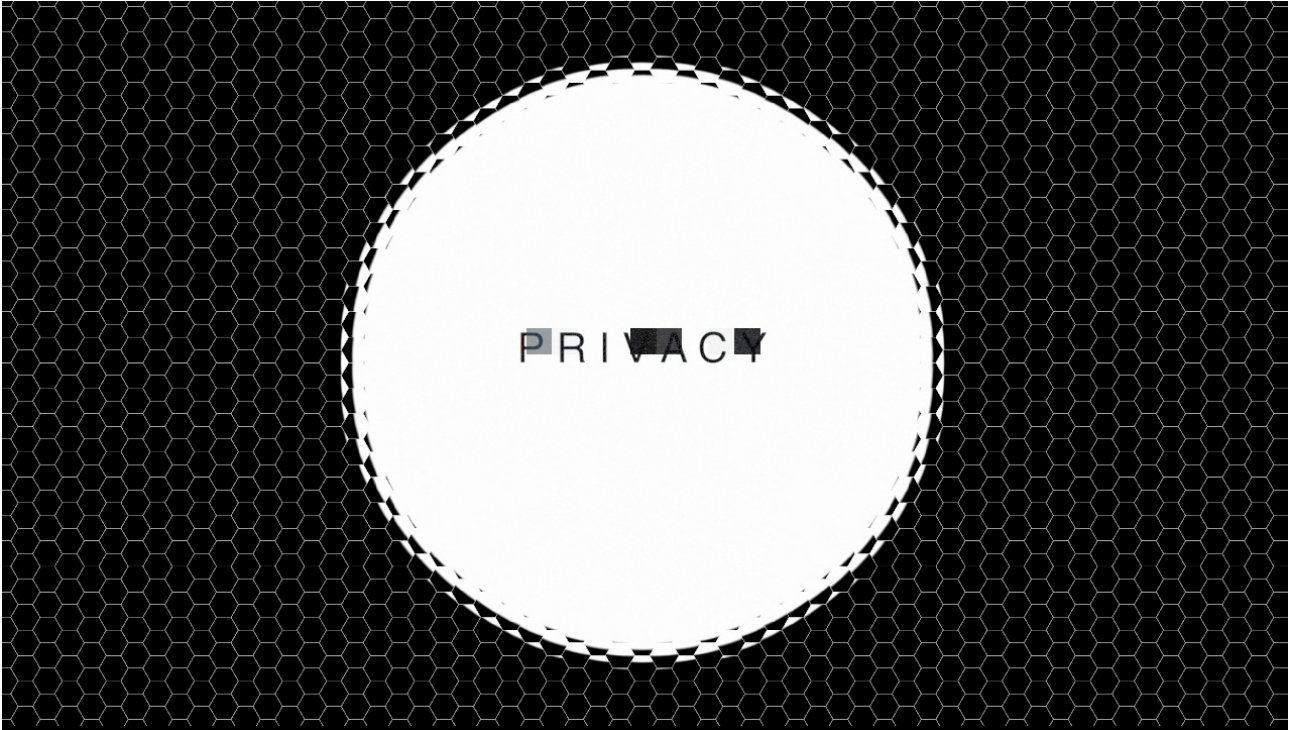
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*Insert gif here. Or insert gif in replacement of the image.*

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## My Privacy and the Social Web

*(I am not sure if this part should be in this submission...it might connect better to another piece I have been offered to write for the Mozilla's Craft Journal, where the focus is specifically on the web. However, for Craft I can develop this section as a full-paper, so perhaps it can work well here too.)*



Luca M Damiani – My Privacy and the Social Web – 2017

In “My Privacy and the Social Web” video-art piece (first shown at the MozFest House event, Royal Society of Arts in October 2017) I wanted to reflect how privacy in the social web is extremely important for me. This connects to some of my aspie-autistic traits too; not only is privacy important to me, it is an obsessive concept in relation to social media. The fact of always being present, connected, updated, performed...I am not able to deal with that. I can surely recognise all the good aspects of the web (not for nothing I am also in the first group of the Millennial generation by the way), including also this very open-access piece I am writing now, and all the shared open knowledge that the web allows. I am actually very interested in the socio-technological interrelations that the internet brings to society, politics and identity, and I work on it also a digital producer and art-tech curator. Yet, for my own mental health, I cannot even start thinking about social media as a good place to exist in. This, like everything else I have discussed in this article, is of course not the same aspect that other individuals with Asperger Syndrome experience – social media and the web (without generalising too much) can actually be a constructive platform for being social, engaged and present, perhaps bringing down the boundaries and difficulties that face-to-face social-communication can bring to an individual with Asperger. So, here, I depict only a relation I experience to the syndrome.

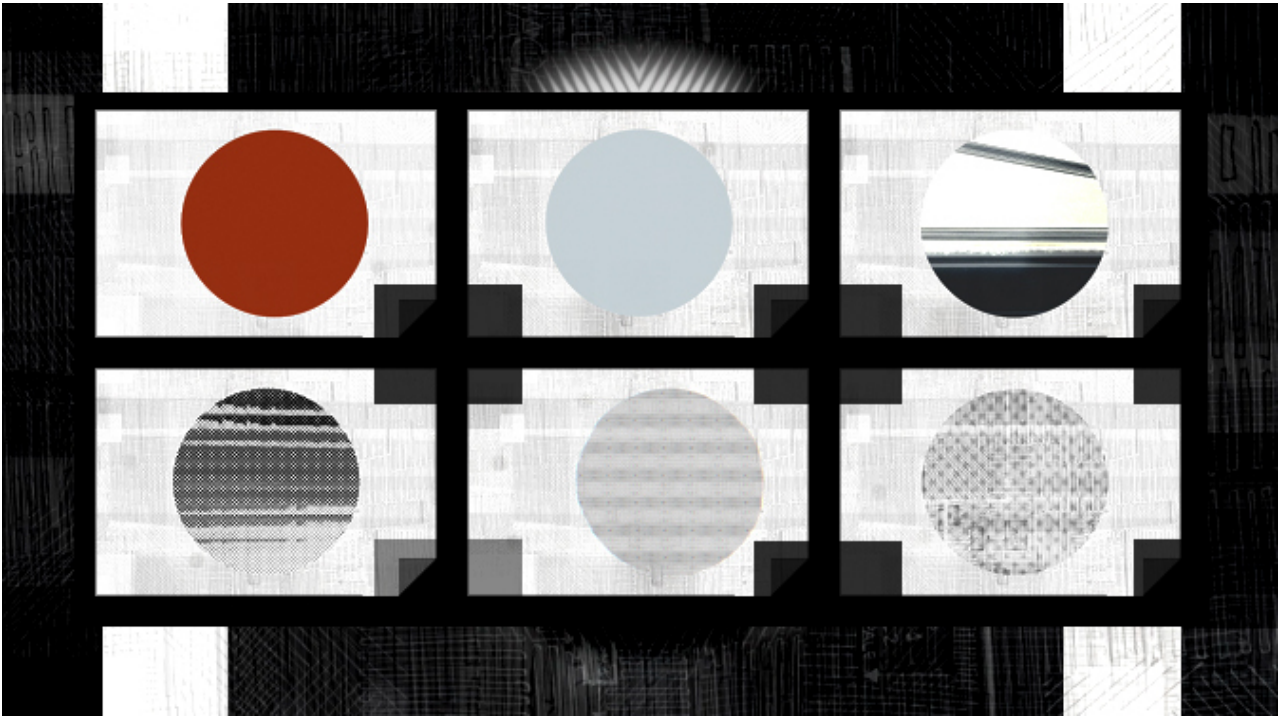
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<https://vimeo.com/235707323>

password: privacy

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## Closing Statement



Luca M Damiani – My Aspie Hacks the Brain / Remix – 2017

In this brief media submission piece I was particularly interested in sharing a few aspects of my neurodivergent being. I could expand the description of various flows, but this piece is thought to only add a little input into expanded artistic voice and practice around neurological diversity within academic learning. I see this also as a practice-based learning, parallel to a practice-based research development on my own self too, reflecting on some of my aspie-autistic traits whilst also wanting to open a discussion with the wider art&design academic community. I believe this is important in order to create an engagement and awareness at all levels of academic practice (from research, teaching, staff and/or students experiences, etc), opening diverse conversations on the topic, looking at the potential of an inclusive thinking and making.

### Links

< Question: maybe we could embed these links directly in the text of the statement? >

Link 1: [https://digitransglasgow.github.io/bridgingopenborders/contributions/24\\_ArtDesignNeurodiversity.html](https://digitransglasgow.github.io/bridgingopenborders/contributions/24_ArtDesignNeurodiversity.html)

(published in “Bridging Open Borders” – by Uniform Communication, September 2017)

Link 2: [http://ewic.bcs.org/upload/pdf/ewic\\_eva17\\_nt\\_paper3.pdf](http://ewic.bcs.org/upload/pdf/ewic_eva17_nt_paper3.pdf)

(published in “Electronic Visualisation and the Arts”, by Computer Arts Society and British Computer Society, July 2017)