



**School: School of Creative Industries**

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**Project Title: Infinity**

**UOA 33: Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies**

## Interviews & User Experiences

**██████████, 16/3/16 (30'), observation/interview:**

- She sees the face of an Indian
- It's like watching the clouds, the moon, or the water
- The visuals seem to have infinite variations, but not the sound
- 'I could sit for a long time'
- The visuals have more energy
- The drone is too much in the foreground, maybe it could come and go
- She likes the color
- What you see depends on your angle
- She looked at it in portrait mode, though I intended it in landscape
- The visual is clean, but the sound is rough in texture
- At times the sound seems to be distorted, although the harmony is nice
- She would like to unfold the sound through interactivity
- Now she sees sunrays, now the Milky Way
- The music is too typically meditative, it has connotations, she would prefer to hear my music
- The sound reminds her of the hum of streetlights

**██████████, 21.3.16 (10'), observation/interview:**

- The drone is no longer in the foreground
- It's sonically more interesting
- She doesn't need the image
- The image should be responsive

- She likes the idea of touching what's under the surface (touching the deepest, which is appropriate for meditation)
- I notice she touches with multiple fingers
- Psychologically, she feels that she is moving the image when she touches it

**██████████, 3.4.16, email feedback:**

- She noted which features she found available: 'touch sensitive up/down for pitch gliss and pitch position and l/r is timbral change. Wasn't sure if there was anything going on with me controlling amplitude'
- She enjoyed the graphics but wants interactivity, especially since the sound is interactive: 'I liked the visuals a lot but would like them to interact and respond to my actions - colour or shape. It's interesting how much you want that if something else is also responding. But they are beautiful - at times almost like seeing close up images of skin.'
- A classically trained musician, she wanted to maintain the traditional orientation of pitch when rotating the device: 'When I turned the screen the pitch orientation doesn't adjust - so for me that was a mild 'annoyance' in that pitch then went from high to low/up down'

**Her text verbatim:**

"Finally got a chance to sit down and spend some time with your app. I realise that it's a basic version - look forward to more developments. Just in case I didn't find some features here's what I thought was available: touch sensitive up/down for pitch gliss and pitch position and l/r is timbral change. Wasn't sure if there was anything going on with me controlling amplitude. I liked the visuals a lot but would like them to interact and respond to my actions - colour or shape. It's interesting how much you want that if something else is also responding. But they are beautiful - at times almost like seeing close up images of skin.

Anyway, I realise it's just the fundamentals - look forward to trying next ones too."

"When I turned the screen the pitch orientation doesn't adjust - so for me that was a mild 'annoyance' in that pitch then went from high to low/up down. You might easily turn the screen/put it down come back without realising you'd reoriented."

**██████████, 5.4.16, 10-15 observation, followed by interview:**

- She begins by shaking and rotating the device; she watches the graphics 'upside down', but I don't say anything.
- She is clearly absorbed by the app and spends a lot of time touching in a variety of ways (swiping, dragging, pinching, tapping, multiple fingers).

- Her touching includes the following curves the graphics
- She describes it as 'hypnotic' and 'ethereal', but wouldn't associate it with her practice of meditation. She feels that she is 'looking for solutions'. In meditation she needs stillness, but with the app she needs concentration. (The apps she uses for meditation involve a guiding voice.)
- I ask how she imagines using it. She says to take a break, similar to taking 'a cigarette break', which she says fits my concept of it being contemplative.
- She describes it as being 'gentle but playful' (like sand) - it is not a game, because it is not about winning at something or racing.
- She loves the sound but feels that it is 'too full', and she would like to be able to modulate it.
- She would like to be able to control the graphics through interaction - the patterns are like water - could she create ripples? She would also like to be able to change the color and also the basic patterns (i.e. not always lines but maybe circles).
  - She wouldn't want to control color with a menu, which would take her back to reality.
  - And wouldn't want it to leave behind its basic simplicity.
- She imagines using it for, say, five minutes (she had actually used it for a longer period than she imagined) - but perhaps longer if she was on the bus, when she might only listen rather than watching.
- She feels that the name is appropriate.

██████, 24.5.16, email feedback:

"First time it successfully launched, I started prodding the screen to see if there were any instructions or settings that I should look at, which was how I discovered that doing so played a note. I then experimented with that functionality for a bit.

Second time I opened the app (still version 3) I concentrated a bit more on the visualisation. I worked out that it responded to touch in some way, but not with much level of control. I also tried rotating the iPad to see if that had an effect on the waves, but it didn't seem to. This was because they were all bunched on one side of the screen and I was trying to manipulate them into more interesting shapes.

Third time I opened the app (version 4), I had in mind your email about the app responding to one and two finger touch, so was a bit more systematic in my exploration. I worked out that one finger triggers the audio feedback and two fingers trigger the visual feedback. I tried to see how much variation is possible with different movements: long swipes, circles, rapid finger taps. I was also interested in the range of tones available."

■■■■, Skype interview (30 minutes), 6.1.2016:

- Used for short periods each time, just checking functionality - trying to figure out how to fit these kinds of activity into her busy life
- Looking for ways to relax - has an activity monitor app (related to breathing etc)
- Only uses iPad at home - 'It's something I should really do before bed, but I keep forgetting'
- Her expectations: she saw my presentation at ■■■■ and remembered the audio - wasn't sure what to expect vis a vis meditation practice
- I noted she was excited to try it and asked why: 'It was to do with trying to take active steps toward improving my well-being, and feeling that this could be kind of the right thing at the right time. And to integrate into general life.'
- Context? Nothing in timing - having things handy and having 'a spare second' to use it - on each occasion was sitting on bed with no one else in the room
- She has a ■ year old daughter - impinges on time
- Difference in quality between 3 times? (3rd time was a different version) 3rd time she 'felt most comfortable kind of experimenting and seeing if I could almost make music with it more and trying to manipulate the visuals in different ways'
- 'I was experimenting to see the range of tones in different parts of the screen and how tapping with different fingers or more rapidly, how that would change the ex- [...] rather than just holding down or so forth. I was doing different movements - I was making circles and things, as well. I can't remember if that affected more the visuals than the sound.'
- Her musical training: played piano and flute and violin when young. She has a 'good foundational knowledge'
  - The app related to this? No, except for a 'basic understanding of tone', and 'the tapping was more like some of the movements you would do on a piano'
- Grid vis a vis pitch orientation: was holding it in portrait, tried reorienting to see if things changed
- 'More interesting shapes' - 'first time I used it everything seemed to be bunched up at one end' [before she touched it] - she couldn't figure out how to manipulate it [hadn't tried 2 fingers]
- Has she used similar apps? 'I don't think so...I'm probably not a huge app user' - only 'where there's some kind of immediate pragmatic use for them' - but not for leisure
- An app she can imagine using? 'Yea, if I could have the self discipline to work out a routine that involved meditation, I think it could be very useful as part of that.'
- She's been attending a pilates class where 'the instructor uses a very similar kind of ambient music without lyrics, kind of slow paced and atmospheric in the same way'
- 'I don't have any experience with meditation myself, so I don't know automatically how to begin'

- OK with the music? Yes, she has a children's app with a similar style of music, so she 'associates the device with that relaxing kind of engagement'
- Suggested improvements? Pointers on how to do basic meditation - 'some way to sync my breathing?'
- Notes meditation is done with eyes closed - how does the app work with this? 'What would I get from looking at the visuals as opposed to not looking at the visuals'
- I explain my reluctance to make a meditation training app and how its role as artwork is inherently linked to contemplation and more explicitly to my own creative practice. I ask her to respond: 'I've always wanted to try...I don't think I even know the proper name of them...it's a kind of instrument that monks use...it's a circular movement, are they called singing bowls? I've always loved the look of it and have always wanted to try...this seems to be in the same kind of mode to me'
- Willing to continue with further versions: 'Yeah, absolutely.'

#### **[REDACTED], observation and interview (30 minutes), 4.6.16:**

- She first checks out the info page
- She turns down the volume
- I realise she has an experimental version, with interactive graphics that I don't like, but I let her proceed
- She double taps several times, tries with multiple fingers, and swipes
- She asks about the color and is not sure she likes it as it is
- She would like volume control - the drone is too constant
- 'It's actually nicer with the eyes closed - without seeing it'
  - 'If that could be behind... So my eyes rest'
  - It's very nice, the sonic interaction - 'I don't need the graphics'
- Now I give her the correct version
- 'I like the information - it's clear'
- 'Yeah, definitely, it's better' [the new version]
- She makes long swirling gestures with her fingers
- 'The sound is under the surface'
- She feels she doesn't need to interact with the visuals
- 'If I want to change colours, it becomes too visual', but she wonders if they could change on their own slowly, in keeping with the notion of infinity
- 'The sound is very sophisticated' - she uses the whole screen with her gestures and says it responds to a figure of eight
- She wonders if I could start with gray and then go through the spectrum, but then says 'color creates too much meaning', and wonders if there could be a variation of just one color
- 'The nets are on top of each other'

- She says the curves are like a mandala without being a mandala - it's like a 'veil' or 'skin', 'it has some organic sense'
- She says the waves section is like sand - 'deeper texture', 'this fountain - there is an origin'
- She wonders if double tapping could change the origin and thinks that this would be more like infinity
- If the attention is on the visuals, she says, the drone is 'in the way'
  - 'The drone is like a helicopter that is there all the time... I would like a section just not having it'
- It would be nice if tapping could also change the sound, she says - with the same sounds but also a change
- 'I like the idea that it is a place' [referring to my notes in the info session]

#### ██████ email from 6.6.16:

- I feel you have created a successful app that is simple yet very effective in creating a deep sense of relaxation.
- I rushed into trying it out the first time I used it, I was not prepared mentally to be in a tranquil mind frame. An introduction or opening sequence before the actual app started would have been beneficial for me, in this sense, although I personally would not include instructions (this is explained in my second bullet point).
- I enjoyed having to figure out how to use the app. (Working out how to change the texture of the patterns). I did find certain textures were more aesthetically pleasing than others, so playing around with it really captured my attention.
- The lines come to quite a sudden stop when the swiping action comes to its limit (either from side to side or up and down). Maybe if the lines slowed down as it reached the limit, it would add to the continuity of the movement.
- The single colour of the lines were very effective in focusing my attention on the movement, which is what was acting as the main influence in reaching a meditative frame of mind.
- The contrast in speed between the lines that appear/disappear at the edges of the screen and the movement of the lines as they travel past the screen creates an enjoyable balance.
- I only realised there was music accompanying the app after using it a few times (as I didn't have the volume up) but when I first experienced the visual with the music, it was incredibly relaxing.
- The app feels as I am in a digital beach with a sea of lines, forming waves. Every time I use the app, this idea becomes more defined and my mind expands on the details of that notion.

██████████, email from 13.6.16:

Ron, your choices for colour and visual flow and sound do create an environment in which I am able to easily release thoughts, so to speak, and just focus on the visual and sonic flows.

After a few minutes, i put headphones on (pretty good Sennheiser ones) to experience the sound design more intensely. I feel that, physically, the sound for some reason seems to focus downward and toward my sternum, rather than spreading throughout my body. I'm not sure why this is, but maybe it is due to the use of low-frequency sounds. I'll see if this changes through longer listening. I do miss the higher pitches, every now and then, like with the tingsha bells in Tibetan chanting...

Also, as I was thinking about listening while starting to edit, I feel that that is not the best use for this APP. I like to have more expansive sound reach with my ears when editing, and can only take headphones for short lengths of time. It seems to me that I would turn to this APP in the train or airport or other spaces where I would like to shut myself off for a bit from the outside world and enter a state of calm and relaxation.

So those are my initial reactions, and I notice that somehow it would be nice, if possible, to have a closing button that (even more) gradually transitions the music down and turns the app off, so that there is a fluent transition between the APP listening space and ambient sound, which for me consists of my cat purring next to me, the songs of birds and occasional movement by a neighbour.

██████████, ██████████ exchange, 13.6.16:

Ron Herrema:

One quick question, Sharon: did you double tap to switch between the two modes? And if so, any thoughts about that?

██████████:

yes, i did! i heard minimal differences between the two, but visually it was quite different. was there supposed to be more difference in the audio?

Ron Herrema:

no - no difference in the audio as of yet - that's another project

██████████  
Gotcha. I'm much more an audio person than a visual person, and I will need to spend more time with the visuals before I can give interesting feedback.

What I do notice is that this APP works very well with audio AND visual and that it makes the most sense to experience them together when using.