

**Relational Thinking: On Memory, Activism, Care and Nature
-A Hyphen Collective Exhibition and Public Engagement Programme**

Research Team:

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Section 1. Abstract (300-400 words)

A summary of your project including what you did, why you did it, and what the outcome was (based on your results).

Relational Thinking: On Memory, Activism, Care and Nature took the form of a practice-led collaborative exhibition and public engagement programme developed by Hyphen Collective at London Gallery West. The project explored how collaborative exhibition-making could foster meaningful relationships between doctoral researchers while creating opportunities for public engagement, critical reflection, and interdisciplinary exchange. Working across performance, sculpture, photography, moving image, and interactive media, the three artist-researchers sought to investigate how creative practices concerned with memory, activism, environmental philosophy, and notions of relation might build connections between researchers, artists, scholars, and the broader public.

Rather than presenting individual practices alongside one another, the exhibition adopted a methodology of relational exhibiting, where the relationships between the works are given primacy over the works themselves. Artworks were conceived collaboratively and installed to overlap physically and conceptually, encouraging audiences to move between them and become active participants in an evolving exhibition environment. The accompanying public programme included a ritual performance, an interactive roundtable discussion, workshops, film screenings, and participatory installations that invited visitors to contribute directly to the work through touch, movement, and dialogue. In this way, London Gallery West functioned as both an exhibition space and a live research site, generating dialogue, feedback, and creative imagery throughout the process.

The project demonstrated that collaboration can become a research methodology in itself. Rather than functioning as a one-off exhibition, it established an ongoing collaborative relationship between the researchers, who became actively involved in one another's creative processes through shared production, documentation, facilitation, and public engagement. The exhibition also fostered interdisciplinary exchange between researchers from CREAM and CAMRI, creating informal spaces for discussion that strengthened research networks and generated future collaborative opportunities.

Although the project represents a relatively small-scale case study and relied primarily on qualitative observations rather than formal evaluation methods, it successfully achieved its aims of exploring relational, practice-led approaches to exhibition-making and public engagement. One of its most significant outcomes has been the continuation and expansion of the collaboration through a larger exhibition and experimental symposium planned for 2027. Overall, the project demonstrates that practice-led research can extend beyond the production of artistic outputs to cultivate lasting research

communities, interdisciplinary dialogue, and collaborative methods of knowledge production, illustrating how relatively small-scale funding can catalyse sustained research activity and long-term institutional impact.

Section 2. Background and Aims (200-300 words)

This should include:

Background: Give the rationale to the project (did it build on previous work?), why was there a need for it, and why is it important. Did you make any assumptions before doing the research? What were your original ideas and what information did you have?

Aims: What did you want to achieve?

Objectives: How did you achieve the aims?

How do you think this research will impact YOUR learning and teaching?

Tips:

1. the aim is the 'what' of the research, and the objective is the 'how'. You can list your objectives with bullet points or numbers

This project, which built out of Hyphen Collective's history of experimental arts engagement, as well as a broader interest in the ways that the concept of 'relationality' impacts arts practise, aimed to explore how experimental, practice-led methods can contribute to public engagement, critical reflection and the specific practises of the three artist-researchers undertaking it. In order to achieve this we aimed to develop, test and facilitate a group exhibition and experimental workshop format that explored how to create meaningful collaboration and dialogue. We designed and delivered a public engagement programme as part of the Hyphen Collective Exhibition at London Gallery West, bringing together a workshop, a performance and film screenings. Finally, we aimed to explore how creative practices that are interested in memory, activism, environmental philosophy and notions of relation can build connections between researchers, artists, scholars and the broader public in order to foster meaningful, responsive, and participatory forms of practice. This work moved between disciplines of performance, sculpture, photography, moving-image and interactive media. Each artefact was created and designed for this exhibition, with each artist collaborating with the others in order to explore the concept of 'relational exhibiting', where the relationships between the works are given primacy over the works themselves. Further, as the public participated in the exhibition—by squeezing chalk, interacting with projections, and attending performances, the work changed, allowing for a dual exploration of how mutability can impact the exhibition space (traditionally thought of as concrete and unchanging). In this way 'relationality' was the central theme and exploration of the week-long event, with each artist being guided by those who came into contact (both literal and otherwise) with their work.

Section 3. Methods (150-300 words)

For this section you need to think about exactly what you did it and be able to describe it clearly.

Think about:

What exactly did you do (surveys, interviews, library & archival research etc.)?

How many participants did you use and who were they? Did you take into account any ethical issues?

How did you analyse your data (eg. Software, statistics)?

Tip: If you engaged with research participants, it would be useful to attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and questionnaire you used, as an Appendix at the end of the report.

The project began in the creation process, whereby each work was created and installed to give primacy to the relation between the works, rather than the works themselves. While this took several months of planning, this methodology also meant that much of the creative, collaborative process happened within the space. Over three days, the CREAM researchers created and installed their work in collaboration with each other and the space. The exhibition was not three segregated areas, but works often overlapped – lighting was designed to spill between artefacts, areas were thought of thematically, or in terms of ‘methods of interaction’, rather than authorship.

The programme itself began with a performance and roundtable in the gallery space. Han Songwan opened the exhibition with a ritual performance of relationship, moving between the artworks and interacting in some way with each she encountered. This both allowed the audience to perceive possible interactions they might undertake themselves, while also ‘opening’ the space through the use of performed movement influenced by traditional Korean ritual. The roundtable, again, was formulated to not be static but relational, through which the audience might not simply witness a discussion happening at a distance, but move between artefacts and around the gallery. Moderated by curator and researcher Soh Kay Min, the audience, made of CREAM and CAMRI researchers as well as the general public were also afforded insight into the process of creation and the ways in which they themselves might further co-create with the artefacts.

Over the course of the week, HC. Krempels offered informal workshops for his ‘microperformance’ piece, which explored the microscope as a potential ‘theatrical’ tool, whereby the human participant was able to perform *with* chalk. As they did, this performance and the micro images it created were projected in large on the wall. As people entered the gallery, they were offered the opportunity to interact with this work, each creating a performance of their own and leaving an image for the next person to begin from. In this way, London Gallery West functioned as both an exhibition space and a live research site – generating dialogue, feedback and creative imagery throughout the process.

Section 4. Results

Present: present your data in an appropriate and analysed format (tables, graphs, narrative etc.).
Describe: Describe your findings.

If appropriate, you may wish to combine the results and discussion (section 5) into once section,

Tip: When writing this section, look at your results, graphs and tables and ask yourself – what does this data mean?

The exhibition fostered sustained collaboration between the three doctoral researchers throughout several months of planning, installation, and public engagement. Rather than functioning as a one-off exhibition, the project established an ongoing collaborative relationship that has continued beyond the funded period.

Throughout the process, each researcher contributed to one another's practice in different ways. Han developed sculptural works in response to the practices of the other two artists, strengthening conceptual dialogue between the projects. Krempels supported Han's opening performance through active participation, while Gomez documented the exhibition through photography and video. During the exhibition, all three researchers jointly welcomed visitors, facilitated conversations, and engaged audiences throughout the opening event.

The exhibition also created opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange between researchers from CREAM and CAMRI. With the support of academic staff, the opening event became a networking space where researchers discussed practice-led research, collaboration, and future possibilities across research communities.

One of the most significant outcomes of the project has been the continuation and expansion of this collaborative relationship. Building on the success of *Relational Thinking*, the research team secured Ambika P3 as the venue for a larger collaborative exhibition in 2027. The next project will involve seven additional doctoral researchers and will be accompanied by an experimental CREAM Symposium, extending the project's impact beyond the original exhibition and contributing to a growing practice-led research community.



Section 5. Discussion (300-600 words)

Discuss: possible limitations and issues (e.g. sample size, data analysis).

Analyse: make comparisons, contextualise your data in light of your aims. What

is the potential impact of your research?

Think about:

What went well?

How did your chosen methods for research help you achieve your outcomes?

Tip: When writing this section think about your aims. Did you achieve your aims? Were your results as expected? Are your findings consistent with other work in the literature?

The primary aim of the project was to explore how collaborative exhibition-making could foster meaningful relationships between doctoral researchers while creating opportunities for public engagement. These aims were successfully achieved through both the exhibition itself and the collaborative process that developed over several months.

One of the project's most significant outcomes was that collaboration extended beyond the production of an exhibition. Rather than presenting individual practices alongside one another, the researchers became actively involved in each other's creative processes. This reciprocal mode of working generated a stronger sense of trust, shared responsibility, and critical dialogue than would typically emerge from a conventional group exhibition.

The exhibition also demonstrated the importance of creating informal spaces for research exchange. By bringing together researchers from CREAM and CAMRI, the opening event encouraged conversations across disciplines that may not otherwise have taken place. These interactions have already resulted in future collaborative plans, including a larger exhibition and symposium scheduled for 2027. In this respect, the project has had an impact beyond its immediate outputs by strengthening research networks and establishing a sustainable model for future collaboration.

A limitation of the project was its relatively small scale. The exhibition involved only three doctoral researchers and therefore represents a limited case study. Furthermore, the evaluation was based primarily on qualitative observations of collaboration and audience engagement rather than formal data collection. Future iterations could incorporate visitor feedback, interviews, or questionnaires to provide a more systematic evaluation of the project's impact.

Nevertheless, the project demonstrates the value of practice-led collaborative research as a methodology for building research communities. The funding enabled not only the production of artworks but also the

development of long-term relationships between researchers. The continuation of the project into a larger collaborative exhibition and symposium demonstrates how relatively small-scale funding can catalyse sustained research activity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and long-term institutional impact.

Section 6. Conclusions and Future Work (200-300 words)

This section should include: key messages/findings as well as suggestions for how your work could be continued in the future.

This project demonstrated the value of collaborative, practice-led exhibition-making as a method for fostering meaningful relationships between doctoral researchers while engaging wider audiences. Through the process of collectively developing artworks, performances, workshops, and public events, the exhibition created opportunities for critical dialogue, interdisciplinary exchange, and shared creative practice. Rather than functioning as a single exhibition, *Relational Thinking* established an ongoing model of relational research that continues beyond the funded project.

A key finding of this project is that collaboration can become a research methodology in itself. By actively participating in one another's creative processes, the researchers developed new perspectives on their own practices while collectively producing a richer exhibition experience. The project also demonstrated how relatively small-scale funding can generate long-term benefits by creating sustainable research networks and encouraging future interdisciplinary collaboration.

Building on these outcomes, the project will continue through a larger collaborative exhibition at Ambika P3 in 2027, involving an additional seven doctoral researchers and an experimental CREAM Symposium. Future iterations will also seek to expand public engagement and develop more systematic methods of evaluating audience participation and collaborative impact.

Overall, this project demonstrates that practice-led research can extend beyond the production of artistic outputs to cultivate lasting research communities, interdisciplinary dialogue, and collaborative methods of knowledge production. The funding has therefore contributed not only to the successful delivery of an exhibition but also to the development of an evolving platform for experimental artistic research and public engagement.

Section 7. Lessons Learned (200-600 words)

What did you learn from working in this partnership? Where there any novel techniques you employed

Tip: Think about how you are going to get your research across to your stakeholders. Be realistic about this and consider whose help you may need in the process.

The whole experience has been a unique process for the three implicated artists. Coming from different disciplines and ways of working, we learnt from each other's methods, ideas and approaches to artistic production and public engagement. This project created a space where different practices allowed us to rethink our approaches while developing a shared exhibition outcome.

In sculpture and performance, Songwon Han, worked closely with the other two artists to develop her pieces, creating a very practical example of how collaboration can become a source of inspiration and be incorporated into an individual artistic practice. She referenced the physical aspects of the other artists, like reproducing their heights in the sculptures or their voices in her performance.

Within photography, Pamela Gomez produced new work inspired by previous collaborations with activists and artist from Latin America and archival research. She introduced the political dimension as an active collaborator in image creation, drawing on the generation of rebellions led by indigenous peoples in the Andes. The resulting collection of images was later incorporated into an accordion book, becoming a 3D object and changing the relationship of the audience with photography.

Henry Krempels' interactive pieces introduced another level of collaboration, not only between the artist and the audience but also through the physical involvement of visitors in the creative process. By inviting participants to interact with chalk and contribute to the evolving, ever-changing work, the audience became active collaborators rather than observers.

Section 8. Group Reflection (200-300 words)

Evaluate: What was good/effective about the collaborative research experience? What problems did you have?

Analyse: What enabled your successes? Why did you have problems?

Plan: What would you do to overcome the problems? What would you do differently next time?

Tip: Think about what lessons you have learned and conclude on your project.

Tasks were divided according to each person's expertise, including artwork production, exhibition texts, publicity, installation planning, preparing the gallery space before installation, and archiving.

One of the main challenges was coordinating different schedules while balancing individual research, teaching, writing, and studio commitments. Many decisions were made gradually through shared documents, online communication, and regular meetings. We also had different expectations about the pace and scale of the exhibition, which meant some decisions took longer than expected and required discussion before reaching a shared agreement.

The project reinforced how important planning and communication are in collaborative exhibition-making. Having clearly defined roles helped the process run smoothly, while regular communication allowed us to adapt when plans changed.

For future projects, we would create a more detailed production timeline with agreed milestones from the outset. We also learned that technical equipment should be tested before the installation period whenever possible, rather than during installation, as this would save time and avoid unnecessary delays. Allowing extra time in the installation schedule would also give more flexibility to adjust the exhibition once the work is in the gallery. These lessons will help us organise future collaborative exhibitions more efficiently.

Submission Instructions:

Please ensure all the project partners are satisfied with the report. The final report should be submitted via email to studentpartnership@westminster.ac.uk

Submission Checklist:

- The project report has a title page with all the names of the student and staff partners, the college(s) and the project title.
- The report begins with an abstract
- The report contains a background section with references to relevant literature
- The report clearly outlines the aims of the project
- The report includes the methods that were undertaken
- The results are presented and explained in the report
- There is a discussion of the outcomes of the project
- There is a conclusion and an indication of future work
- There is a group reflection about the project process

