**Andrew Hugill, School of Computing and Mathematical Sciences (01.06.22)**

My name’s Andrew Hugill– I’m actually a Professor of Music, but that’s not what I do at the University; at Leicester University I’m a Professor of Creative Computing, and I’m about to become the Deputy Director of the new Digital Culture Institute, and on campus I’m based in the Ken Edwards Building.

The whole idea of Creative Computing itself is a kind of hybrid, interdisciplinary concept, so, the notion that computers can in some way enhance creativity, this, I think, exists at that interface between the human and the technological. So a lot of what I do sits in that kind of zone, really, somewhere between human and technology, with a kind of attempt to reconcile these two, often contradictory elements.

We’re working with a company called NBD Limited, who are a VR company, who work mainly with heritage-based work, and we’re going to create something called ‘The Infinite Museum’, and the idea of this is that you have a virtual building, in effect, with a lift, an elevator, and you travel from floor to floor, and each floor contains the entire contents of the museum, and it can be anything. So in terms of the University disciplines, departments, individuals, groups, centres, whatever, they come in and create themselves a virtual floor of this Infinite Museum, and they can exhibit their work, and indeed develop work.

This kind of builds on a project idea from a few years ago called the Virtual Vauxhall Gardens Project, where we reconstructed Vauxhall Gardens – which was a pleasure gardens in London in the eighteenth century – and we reconstructed it in a virtual environment. And what I found was with that was with that – the project itself obviously had a historically valid, you know, it was historically interesting – but actually, what was more interesting to me in a way was the fact that the VR acted as a kind of interdisciplinary studio, you know, that suddenly we had all these academics, because we had smell in this exhibition, so we had some chemists on board, we had computer scientists, we had designers, we had historians, we had literary people, we had experts on music, we had experts on visual culture, you know, a whole range of people got involved in this – oh, and engineers of course. So you know, it was finding that the VR acted as a kind of environment in which everybody could contribute something and work with each other.

I’m autistic, so I tend to like to go to places around the campus that are outdoors as much as I can; the botanic gardens on the whole they’re just very natural, they feel nice and it’s just natural and sympathetic.