I arrived at the unconference and entered a room full of strangers. I was mostly confused, but entirely fascinated by the people around me. Before I knew it, my senses were overwhelmed with a plethora of whimsical stimuli. In one corner of the room, people had formed a chorus of “Pour Some Sugar on Me” at the karaoke machine. As I drew closer, I noticed an open door that had light and color spilling out of it. Inside, people of all disciplines and skill sets were making their own contribution to a giant mural on the wall, and I drew a giant blue circle in the corner. Wandering into the next room, I joined in on a crowded game of Twister, and coincidentally, was asked to put my extremities on every circle except the blue ones.

It was like a cavern, a place filled with sounds sights and smells that at times overwhelmed me. I noticed the 2 Biochem engineers I had met the day before playing a loud and raucous game of twister on a motion capture stage. It was a wild match, illuminated by the continuously shifting color tiles projected on the floor.

As an early riser, one of the first to get up in the morning, the main room – our home for the next three days appeared entirely different than the evening before. with most of my fellow participants asleep upstairs, the vastness of the room struck me. I wandered across the room to a poet and a biologist, who I had met the night before and joined them in making the big breakfast for the group.

We divided up tasks and the biologist taught me a new way to peel garlic. By the time we were finishing up, the room was transformed again filled by my new friends drawn to the smell of eggs and bacon and the promise of stimulating dialogue.

The day was boundless. All around the pairs, trios, quadrangles, and groups convened, schemed, and rejoiced over the infinite palette before them. I ventured forward and threaded myself with a group, our interests aligned. Although at first we stood in ambivalent quiet, we quickly grabbed the deck of directions from the cache of resources. Written in bold block letters on the hand-sized case was Each card is an idea, a way to de-scribe the last time we gave a gift. Who was it for? Why then? Why there? A discussion on people and structures of time lead us deep into our personalities and into each mind. It was not a forced process, since the knowledge was volunteered, but the cards served as a mentor, a map to the new atmosphere.

Their laughter faded as I turned the corner in to a room filled with sun and walls of glass. To my left were bins spilling forth with microprocessors, circuit boards, buttons, and resistors. To my right was a wall of shelves with hand stretched canvases and a colorful collection of paints easels and brushes of every size.

“No…” I muttered “What is that?”

“Oh it’s my latest project - a robotic companion for the homebound. I study Assistive Technology and since we were invited to share our work I thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to bring along Jeeves.”

She shuffled past me and disappeared down a dark hallway.

This conference snapshot was organized by the Unconference Research Initiative, a transdisciplinary group of scholars who build conference infrastructure to support conference content. Our work is reflexive of the content within each event, and we reflect after each event on the results of its time. The Unconference Research Initiative is open to working with organizations who want to host experiential conference environments that facilitate un-forced dialogue and interconnection as a vehicle for amplifying/doing conference content.

Key terms for the event: Integrated, undersigned, playful, trusting, de-familiarizing, curious, internally focused, unbounded

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