Participatory Art and Craft

The activity project embedded in this research, belongs to the field of participatory art & craft (Harding, 2005). Throughout its progression, the project alternates between art and craft participatory processes. The division between art and craft can be argued to be artificial (Risatti, 2009), therefore this research uses the terminology of art & craft implying their equal contribution to creativity in education and the research's affiliation with both fields, thus 'transcending' categorisation (Burgess & Schofield, 1998 as in 2000).

Creativity is defined the "capacity to make, do or become something fresh and valuable with respect to others as well as ourselves" (Pope, 2005 as in Steers, 2009). To become 'fresh' compels experimentations through risk-taking, mistakes, playfulness, time-wasting and daydreaming (Chappell, 2011). It is also in-line with definitions of small 'c' creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Craft, 2001)

According to Beuys, in emphasising the healing and social aspects, art can become a vehicle for significant change in society. He states, "everyone is an artist" (Beuys et al., 1997), and the real material of sculpture is invisible, such as thought, speech and discussion. This idea evolved further by recognising social empowerment as an objective of art & craft. Artwork, enacting social change, is process-based and the outcome is often delayed in time. Artists may want to make a social/economic difference, adopting the role of the facilitator. In this scenario, ethical values such as balanced group dynamics, enhanced collaborative energy, raised consciousness and community enrichment are often prioritised (Bishop, 2012).

The main differences between the various terminologies of art & craft that is concerned with the social are due to the degree and the modes of sharing and where the emphasis of the main interaction is placed (Finkelpearl, 2013; Bourriaud, 2002; Kester, 2013; Thompson, 2012; Matarasso, 1997; Lacy, 1995; Kelly, 1984; Helgura, 2011). Socially created craft as a self-determining cultural phenomenon is still under revision, due to it being less well defined because of the inherent boundaries in the field of crafts (Burgess & Schofield, 2000; Wilkinson-Weber, 2016; Anderson, 2013; Risatti, 2009; Schwarz & Yair, 2010).

This research uses the term 'participatory art & craft' that highlights the notion of participation whilst considering the role of agency (Finkelpearl, 2013). Participatory craft projects, compared to art, generally have more socially motivated goals (Shercliff & Twigger-Holroyd, 2016) as opposed to political goals, with some notable exceptions, such as the makers-movement (Hatch, 2014) and craftivism (von Busch, 2010; Gauntlet, 2018). The main motivation of craft is existential, creating an extension of the humane during encounters with the resistance of material and the environment (Risatti, 2009). This may nurture the feeling of reliance on each other, fostering interpersonal skills and thus become a platform for social processes.

Participatory craft as a shared experience of 'intelligent making' (Johnson, 1998) is based on an orderly process. The facilitator is the gatekeeper of this process, controlling the domain of skills and tools. The participants have to waive large parts of their own control of the making process and trust the facilitator.