Documents of Socially Engaged Art

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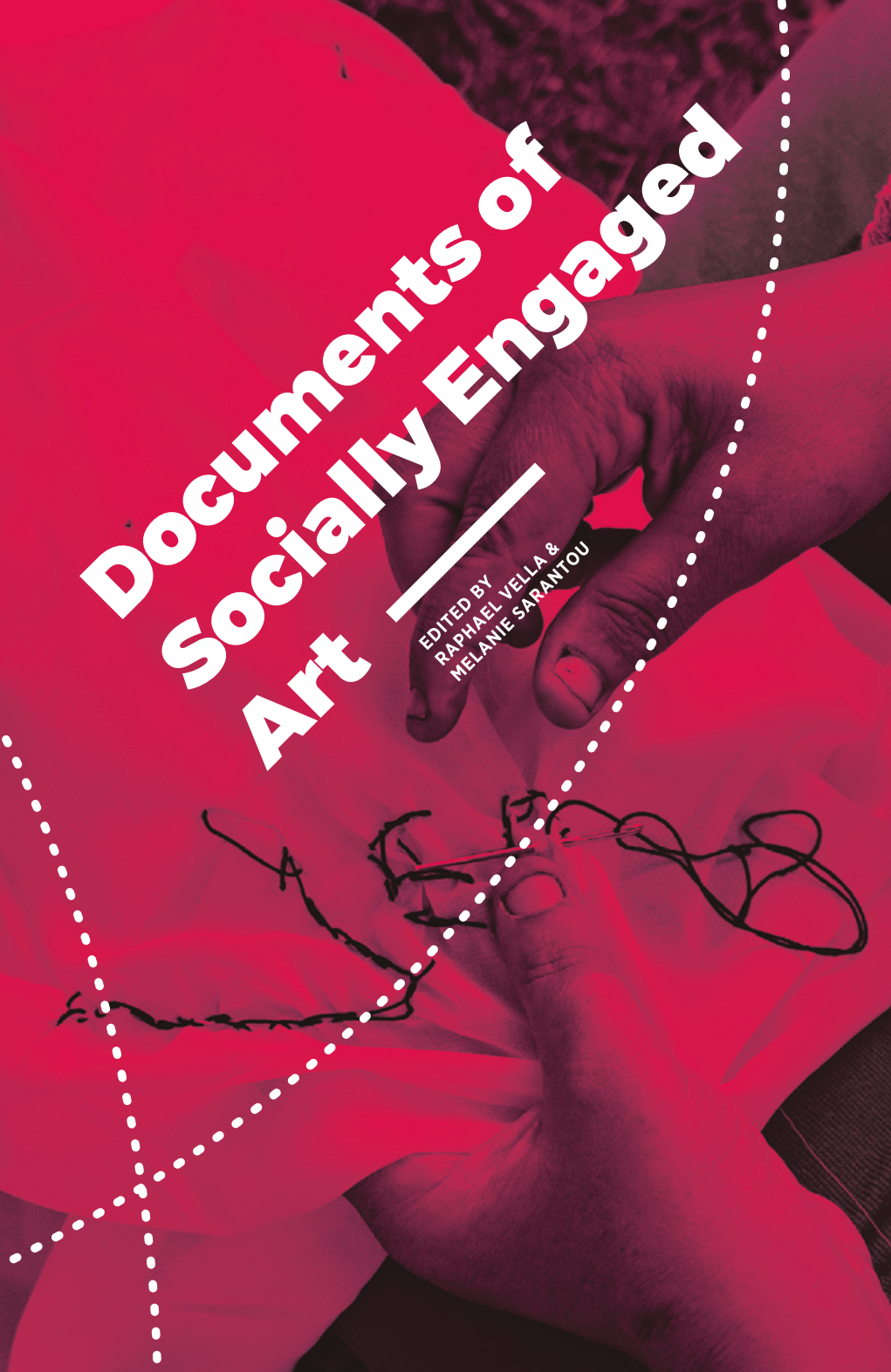
RAPHAEL VELLA &
MELANIE SARANTOU



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Raquel Balsa

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Introduction

Raphael Vella and Melanie Sarantou

The central role that photography has played in the development of art history in the twentieth century should not be underestimated. Two well-known examples stand out. Initiated in 1927, the *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne* by German art historian Aby Warburg (Warburg, 2020) is a series of hundreds of photographs, postcards, maps and other printed material on black panels designed to showcase an intellectual process of metaphorical recollections and migrations that visually compared the art of antiquity, the Italian Renaissance and the Middle East with cosmological images and symbols of recent visual culture. The second example was published twenty years later in 1947. André Malraux's *Le Musée Imaginaire* (typically translated as *Museum without Walls*, 1967) uses photography to create an imaginary collection of artworks, best represented by Maurice Jarnoux's iconic photograph of Malraux standing with scores of reproductions printed on book pages that lay at his feet.

Neither of these examples treats the documentation of artworks as a straightforward mirroring of fact. Warburg's unfinished project is not only a work of great scholarship, but it also remaps a field by contextualising it in themes that often emanate from other fields such as religion, paganism, philosophy and astrology. His *Bilderatlas* creatively documents iconological relationships rather than artworks per se. On the other hand, Malraux's imaginary museum shows the virtual 'movement' of artworks as they traverse museum walls to grace the pages of a book. Documentation is a comparative medium, lifting artworks from different centuries and cultural contexts to create new and more accessible arrangements and collections.

It is quite easy to recognise the artistic potential of photographic rearrangements like these. Many artists have similarly explored collections of images and archives in their work. Regarding artists who make use of historical information and archives of mass culture, art historian Hal Foster famously identified 'an archival impulse at work internationally in contemporary art' (2004, p. 3). The possibilities of documentation are expanded even further as we begin to consider the processes of social engagement with the arts:

- What modes of documentation can or should be employed with collaborative and other cocreative artistic or design processes?

- Can we make use of documentation strategies that are not restricted to photography and video?

- Whose imaginary worlds or alternative forms of knowledge can images and videos of socially engaged art trace?

Questions like these do not simply help us understand the significance of documentation in socially engaged arts, but they also expand the parameters of scholarship. From the perspective of art historians, for instance, the gathering of information, knowledge and visual data directly from stakeholders could bring into play the notions of 'public scholarship' and 'shared authority' (Holzman, 2021, p. 37). If meaning-making in the social sciences and museum practices is increasingly democratised by involving members of the public in the interpretation and selection of content, the documentation of arts projects by persons who are actually participating in them also broadens collaborative possibilities and intellectual horizons. The history of socially engaged art can itself become more 'engaged' in

this way, weaving different persons' perspectives into both the content of arts projects and the documentation of these projects. The overlapping of different forms of 'scholarship' can help nurture innovative, productive partnerships between art historians, artists and the members of other communities.

Helguera (2011) noted that it would be 'incongruous' not to record the responses of participants in socially engaged art when 'the experience of a group of participants lies at the core of the work' (p. 73). Often, the documentation of artworks is the prerogative of artists and is further protected by copyright. If the participants are involved in the processes of documentation, this does not mean that the artist loses authorship of the work, nor does it substitute the actual experience of a work or performance. The artist is inevitably part of the artwork, just as the participants form an intrinsic part of it. The shared documentation simply tells the story of a collision and intersection of ideas and perspectives that may or may not be fully cohesive.

Helguera also wrote that socially engaged art can help us 'to understand the existing structures of education and to learn how to innovate with them' (p. 80). One way of innovating in the field of education is by thinking of art education as a collective process that should be rooted in the belief that one's 'knowledge of art does not end in knowing the artwork but is a tool for understanding the world' (Helguera, 2011, p. 80). Documentation is also one such tool. It does not only record chronological events in performances and pedagogical activities in art workshops, and it does not only tell us what the artwork is *about*. By transcending the artwork itself and moving beyond self-referentiality, documentation can bring us closer to understanding (and possibly mitigating) societal challenges.

Outside the relatively restricted context of mainstream schooling, an expanded understanding of documentation can help us imagine new representations of social groupings, in which the inhabitants in towns and cities voice their own ideas, identities and representative frameworks (Olsen, 2019). Active citizenship relies on the inhabitants' abilities to mobilise themselves and record their own views. This can be problematic because some marginalised groups do not have the resources (or may not be given the space or airtime) to tell their own versions of events. Socially engaged arts and the multiple possibilities afforded by their documentation can help address and rectify such situations by creating a climate based on listening instead of one in which participants' positions and interests are appropriated and assumed by others.

Documents of Socially Engaged Art deals with these and other issues related to documentation in three sections that study the role of artists, of learning and of community participants in documenting socially engaged art. The titles of the sections indicate that our understanding of documentation needs to take account of—and draw attention to—multiple perspectives.

The first section, **Redefining Creative Documentation**, explores the planning and implementation of socially engaged arts mainly from the perspectives of artists and designers. Marija Griniuk and Tue Brisson Mosich's chapter pushes the limits of documentation by making use of biometric (EEG) data to analyse the movements of a performance artist's body. Not only is this innovative form of documentation seen as a tool for artists to analyse their own movements, but the authors also consider the possibility of using these data as a form of communication between a performer and the audience. Apart from documenting the performer's mental conditions

via the application of this new technology, video and photography were also utilised and analysed as qualitative arts-based research data. The EEG documentation shows the physicality of the performance and presents a new aesthetic, holistic experience that binds together technology, performance and the audience in the process.

Satu Miettinen and Melanie Sarantou's chapter on artivist ephemeral art in Finnish Lapland also makes use of textiles, but the process uses actual materials rather than a digital recreation of historical designs. In this case, the main goal of the professional documentation of the action was to raise awareness about the commercial exploitation of the Kemi River. The absence of salmon in the river led the artist-researchers to cocreate a massive fish 'drawing' made of textiles, which was documented by digital video, drone and still photography. By disseminating the story of the loss of indigenous salmon populations to the rest of the country and beyond, documentation becomes a political tool.

In their chapter, Paul Wilson and Tang Tang conceive of documentation as a publication or model of communication that revolves around the notion of 'dialogical correspondence'. They advocate for graphic design practice research to become a documentation mode by exploring the potential of treating the publication as an extension of dialogue and exchange. Like the other authors in this book, Wilson and Tang consider the artistic possibilities of documentation, focusing on its potential in the context of socially engaged arts and cocuration.

The chapter by Melanie Sarantou, Satu Miettinen and Heidi Pietarinen discusses a performance and photo documentary set within a sauna in Finnish Lapland. Although the sauna is normally enjoyed in the nude by Finnish people, the performance enacted by the authors of this chapter used garments that challenged Finnish tradition, as well

as the dominant role of the male gaze that is associated with the fashion industry. The artist-researchers made use of a collective autoethnographic approach, in which documentation (in video and photography) played an important role to elicit the central themes.

The second section of the book, **Documenting Educational Spaces**, focuses on the role of socially engaged art in innovative pedagogies and the critical engagement of participants. The section begins with a chapter by Raphael Vella that studies the role of documentation in an arts-based workshop with a group of participants from different African countries. The workshop was filmed and photographed by another participant from Eritrea who was trained specifically for his role as a documentarian of the project. Vella's chapter focuses on the ways training, narrative and various fictional devices affect—and even challenge—the notion of objectivity in documentation.

An autoethnographic experiment by Michelle van Wyk reports on her reflections, concerns and personal insights gained throughout her life after experiencing different hybrid educational spaces in post-Apartheid Namibia and South Africa. Her chapter deeply reflects her social engagements with diverse arts practices, including creative writing and art(efact) making at the different stages in her life. Through a decolonising lens, she reflects on her in-between experiences caused by Western education systems that have been imposed on the Global South, impacting several generations in various ways. Her making enables her reflections and processes of sense-making from being a jewellery design student to delivering education to students at a tertiary education institution in South Africa.

In their chapter 'The Case of a Stolen Tomcat', Vendula Fremlová and Marie Fulková present their analysis of an example of appropriation in which a classic Czech work

of Joseph Lada is transformed by a group of Czech and Slovak Romani artists—Romane Kale Panthera—to expose the presence of racism in established works of art. Lada's images are widely used in various Czech education and art education syllabi, yet they are stereotypical representations of Roma as thieves and bearers of malevolence. The authors point out the importance of exposing such works and the preallocated identities that they may reinforce.

Milosh Raykov and Raphael Vella's chapter presents a different outlook on the visualisation of data in mixed methods research as a form of documentation in its own right. By discussing and analysing examples of quantitative results and their integration with qualitative data in a study of socially engaged arts in Malta, the chapter shows how visual representations of research outcomes in charts, tables and so on can be a favourable means of dissemination among decision-makers.

The third section, **Documents of Cocreation**, revolves around the role of participants in socially engaged art. The section begins with a chapter by Nina Luostarinen, who writes about the use of drones and other forms of documentation such as timelapse video in the practice of collaborative land art. Using documentation and art to raise awareness about environmental challenges, Luostarinen also indicates that participatory and playful processes in art can affect people's feelings, creating meaningful experiences among them. She shows how similar workshops in land art and their documentation could be used to publicise specific social issues.

Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa and Silvia Remotti write about the use of analogue photography with youth living in the suburbs of four cities in Italy. Minors living in relative poverty and who are affected by various forms of exclusion and reduced social mobility are shown how to reimagine

their lives through a creative process of photographic documentation. In this project, however, photography does not only train them to observe and document their own lives but to develop critical and reflective thinking and communication skills and to better understand the importance of multiple perspectives. Apart from fostering democratic participation, self-awareness and commitment among the participants, the use of analogue photography exposed the young participants to the 'novelty' of nonimmediacy—a component of traditional photography that has been somewhat 'forgotten' with the advent of digital media.

Kristina Borg writes about an artistic project conducted in Gżira, a seaside town in Malta that has recently been affected by overdevelopment. Her chapter describes and analyses the creative documentation methods used by the artist and community members in a process of social interaction that included the keeping of workshop journals. The documentation of experience and urban transformation employed participatory processes that referred to the sense of sight, the sense of smell and the sense of hearing.

Like Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa and Silvia Remotti, Amna Qureshi makes use of photography with young participants, studying how documentation can become part of a process of reflective visual interpretation. Her research analyses how young people construct meanings out of visual data. Close-up photographs of everyday objects are the basis of a process of interpretation and dialogue that the participants engage in. Their interpretations and reflections help show how discussions and stories created from the images serve educational goals and develop other skills like self-awareness, empathy and critical thinking.

Ângela Saldanha, Célia Ferreira, Raquel Balsa and Teresa Eça's chapter draws attention to the ethical difficulties

involved in the organisation of data and methods like photo-elicitation when working with disadvantaged communities. The artist-researchers' artistic skills help make the participants' stories visible by making use of collaborative workshops and other means like exhibitions and texts. The virtual archive produced during the workshops helps researchers evaluate and reflect further about the work being conducted with the participants.

Finally, Heidi Pietarinen writes about an imaginary textile art collection related to lost artefacts from her grandparents' home—a process of cultural mapping that brings together details from old photographs and a water bagel recipe. Here, social engagement is a shared, multigenerational design process, while documentation does not only preserve the past but reimagines it in the spirit of cocreation.

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Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture

The following chapters form part of the Horizon 2020 research project *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS):

Five Salmon and Two Fish (viisi lohta ja kaksi kalaa), *Satu Miettinen, Melanie Sarantou*

Designing a Different Document: Towards a Social Practice of Materialization, Memorialization within Research Relationships, *Paul Wilson, Tang Tang*

Documenting Sauna Stories: Naked Narratives on Fashion and Culture, *Melanie Sarantou, Satu Miettinen, Heidi Pietarinen*

Refusing to Fade into the Background: Alternative Modes of Documentation in Socially Engaged Art, *Raphael Vella*

Documenting the Outcomes of Participation in Socially Engaged Projects, *Milosh Raykov, Raphael Vella*

Analogue photography as a vehicle for positive impact among marginalised digital natives living in the suburbs of four Italian cities, *Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa, Silvia Remotti*

Cocreation in Documentation Processes: Batman Gżirjan through the Lens of the Artist and the Community, *Kristina Borg*

Documentation of Reflective and Interpretive Representation of Youth: A Study through Rudimentary Photographic Close-ups in the Context of Visual Literacy, *Amna Qureshi*

Impacts of Socially Engaged Art and Design Projects: The Need for Documentation, *Ângela Saldanha, Célia Ferreira, Raquel Balsa, Teresa Eça (APECV)*

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acting on the margins. arts as social sculpture

Redefining Creative Documentation

CHAPTER 1

Recorded Bodily Conditions as Interpreted/ Remediated Documentation and as a Score for Performed Communication

Marija Griniuk, The University of Lapland
and Tue Brisson Mosich, Independent

Abstract

A performance artist and a choreographer cocreated and documented a socially engaged performance utilising electroencephalography (EEG) measurements. A remediated form of these measurements was sent to the choreographer, who reinterpreted these data through movement. EEG and video recordings and interviews were used to analyse possible forms of documentation through abstract remediations of bodily states.

Key words: performance documentation, biometric data, remediation, aestheticisation

This paper explores the documentation of performance as socially engaged art, here based on biometric data collected from the performing body and utilised to track the mental conditions of the performer. The current technology within consumer devices can track biometric data, such as live brain activity, allowing for another layer of documentation to be added beyond the traditionally accepted categories of performance documentation by photography and video and sound recordings. A new method for documenting performance—that is, by recording the inner states of the performing body—could allow artists to self-analyse and develop their performance artworks by exploring their own reactions while communicating with the audience or connecting to the sites and objects present during the performance.

This approach is new and has been slightly touched on from the interaction design side in recent years (Griniuk, 2021). The research problem relates to the lack of discussion around applying new technology to the performance documentation field, going beyond photography and moving images (Woolley, 2014). The aim of the present research is to analyse a case performance to develop a methodology that brings biometric data into the normatives of performance documentation. This research also explores the possibility of extending this type of documentation into an aesthetic form of communication between the performers and the audience during a live performance.

The specific objectives are (i) to uncover the theory underlying the concepts of aesthetics, documentation of performance and data remediation and documentary-aestheticisation of performance as socially engaged art; (ii) to identify the critical points within the case study; (iii) to conduct a case analysis; and (iv) to develop the research results. The research question addressed in is as follows: 'How can documentation of the bodily inner states of the performer be an aesthetic communication channel between the performers during the implementation of socially engaged performance artwork?' The chapter consists of the following: a description of the theoretical framework for the key concepts and methodology, a case description and case analysis, the results and concluding remarks.

Terms

Aesthetics and Aestheticisation

Aesthetics can be defined as the process by which we perceive things for their own sake, as the essence or an end in and of itself (Welsch, 1996; Reckwitz, 2017); this happens in the interconnection between the senses and

affect (Reckwitz, 2017). Here, aestheticisation is the process through which objects are transformed from being useful or necessary to being simply desirable (Welsch, 1996).
In aestheticisation, the earlier unaestheticised, preaesthetic reality takes on an aesthetic glaze—the increasing virtualisation of reality, its progressive dematerialisation, the transfer of substance into form, of reality into the 'aesthetic', the phase in which the barrier between the real and artificial becomes blurred and diffuse (Welsch, 1996).

Performance as Socially Engaged Art

According to art historians and scholars Nato Thompson (2012) and Claire Bishop (2006), the broad spectrum of socially engaged art has destabilised the fundamentals of how art has been understood over the past 40 years; they showed this destabilisation by highlighting interhuman connectedness as a core prerequisite for art to happen. In the current paper, performance with a variable scale of audience participation is aligned with socially engaged art because of the involvement of audience members with the site and kinaesthetic empathy connections (Kim, 2015) between the performer and audience members. This connectedness is mainly found at the core of the movement-based case performance. The social aspect of the performance is vital for the case performance as the audience moves between the two spaces and feels the site and connects with the artist(s).

Performance Documentation

Performance scholar Philip Auslander (2006) addressed performance documentation from two perspectives: as documentary documentation and theatrical documentation. Documentary documentation is concerned with

documenting the event itself by providing a document that can be used to reconstruct the performance in some way, while also providing evidence that the performance took place (Auslander, 2006). Theatrical documentation can be described as the creation of a narrative about the event itself or the construction of a fictionalised account of what happened. In other words, theatrical performance documentation becomes the performance without necessarily being a record of a factual event. Auslander suggested that for both of these documentation types, the framing of performance is essentially what makes it a performance: *'the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such'* (italics in the original) (2006, p. 5).

Remediation

Bolter and Grusin (2000) defined remediation as the transfer of a specific set of signs (e.g., words, sounds or images) from one medium into another. The signs of older media that are transferred to newer media result in similarities between the two. No new medium is exactly like the last, but elements of the old are transferred to the new. Remediation is used to explain why some new media have connections to previous forms. Thus, remediation is a combination of both continuity and breaks.

In the present paper, we use the word *remediation* to denote the change in form of the raw, numeric values extracted by the EEG device into visuals and sounds. Of note, the EEG device also remediates the tiny electrical currents of the brain into what is termed EEG.

Materials and Methods

The method used for the study was arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2017), here falling within the principal investigator's doctoral research under the umbrella of arts-based action research (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018). Arts-based action research builds on arts-based research and action research. Arts-based research was employed because the study was realised as an art project and the interviews were carried out after the coperformer and the audience members had aesthetically experienced the artwork.

Artist-researcher Melanie Sarantou (2020) stressed the improvisational aspect of arts-based research, which is particularly relevant for the present case. Within the arts-based method, as within the present case study, performance artwork is at the core of data gathering, both as the trigger for the experience and as the documented content, which can unveil the performer's bodily conditions, which are experienced live while performing.

Arts-based research calls for data analysis and science communication by aesthetic means. This was done by working towards an exhibition at Supermarket Art Fair in October 2021 in Stockholm, Sweden. This exhibition extended this paper in a visual way. The science communication occurred via visual and auditory means within performative interventions in the exhibition both towards an aesthetic empathy connection and experience of liveness (Reason & Lindelof, 2016) within the remediation of the documentation for the audience. Here, *liveness* means the encounter with the performative action, which triggers an empathic connectedness between the performer and the audience—thus, both experience a change within them while immersed in performance (Reason & Lindelof, 2016).

The materials from the case project *'The Monument for the Present Moment'* constitute qualitative data containing questionnaires completed by five audience members, two interviews with audience members and an interview with collaborator and coperformer Kaspar Aus. The performance was documented by photo, video and recordings of Griniuk's mental conditions via EEG measurements of her brain activity. The data have been analysed as qualitative arts-based research data (Leavy, 2017) in the process of extended preparation for the exhibition and as science communication at Supermarket Art Fair.

Case

The performance *'The Monument for the Present Moment'*, which was realised during Pärnu Art Week 2021 in Estonia at the gallery Tex Mex, was used for the case described within the current study. This case builds on six years of self-analysis experiments based on performances involving the recording of mental states with EEG during performative actions, along with photo and video documentation. All of these experiments have been small-scale pilot projects for Griniuk in different Nordic and Baltic venues.

'The Monument for the Present Moment' is an experiment of embodied action that was made possible by EEG, which reads, records, remediates and transmits the live brain activity of the performer. The case performance involved this remediated transmission as a script for part of the performance—here as the signals from the live brain activity of artist Marija Griniuk, who performed in an isolated area of the gallery—becoming the score, or call for choreographic actions, for the movement-based performance by Kaspar Aus, who performed in the main part of the gallery.

Audience members could move between the rooms and watch or interact with both performers. The artists did not see each other, and the vocal narrative of one part was not accessible to the other individual. The brain activity data, purely remediated into sounds, moving graphs and a moving digital painting, Griniuk's brain activity became the trigger, either directly or indirectly, for Aus's movement and vocals (see Figures 1–8).

Figures 1-8. Marija Griniuk, The Monument for the Present Moment in collaboration with Kaspar Aus. Numbers in the lineal order. Photo 2 by Tue Brisson Mosich. Photos 1, 3–8 by Pärnu Art Week.

Technological Aspect of the Case

NeuroSky Mindwave Mobile 2, a consumer-level device, was used to read data via EEG. The device offers a wireless Bluetooth connection to, in our case, a laptop running a prototype application that has been in development since

2015 (Griniuk, 2020). The prototype records and remediates the EEG data into abstract sounds and visuals. It is possible to use the prototype to record and store the EEG data and later play back the same remediated output.

The remediation into sounds and visuals are arbitrarily chosen for the current prototype. Other kinds of remediation can be imagined, including more physical ones, such as a spinning wheel, a dancing robot, simulated facial expressions and so forth.

As an aside, it should be mentioned that this form of biometric data cannot currently be used to identify a unique person. Research has explored the use of EEG measurements as a form of authentication (e.g., Curran et al., 2016), but this requires the baseline measurement of a specific task that is then used for comparison when the same task is repeated and measured. Because no such task-specific baseline measurements were performed in this case and only the raw numeric values of the EEG measurements are stored along with a relative timecode (i.e., video documentation or similar would be needed to identify the said task and its timecode in the data), identification based on these data alone is assumed to be close to impossible.

Analysis

The technology, which was initially available in labs and but later became available to consumers, makes it possible to monitor the bodily states of a human (Griniuk, 2021). In the case of performance art, this means it is possible to add layers to the conventional documentation of live art. There has been a widespread discussion about the involvement of biometric data into art production and interaction design, but the literature is lacking regarding the possibilities of applying this technology to document, reconstruct or preserve the

performance artwork (Griniuk, 2020). Because EEG can be applied in any location where the use of an EEG device and a computer is possible, indoor or outdoor performances could use this new layer of documentation, which we suggest could serve several purposes.

First, it could be developed to extend communication (e.g., score construction and nonverbal communication) between performers and audiences based on recorded bodily states, here remediated as an aesthetic experience. In turn, this can become the trigger for an improvisational sequence within a performance. Second, it could be used for self-analysis by the performer after the performance, where one could track the variables of the mental conditions on stage, along with the recorded video material, to observe the range from a relaxed to a concentrated mental condition, for example, during the physical effort required to perform certain movements. Finally, it can be an additional layer, along with video recordings of the performance, thus enhancing the aesthetic experience of the viewer as they engage with the documentation as a new artwork.

The case analysis presented in the current paper will investigate the connectedness of the documentation of the bodily conditions combined with the experience given aesthetically to the viewer to create liveness (Reason & Lindelof, 2016) of the remediated documentation into a new artwork. Liveness might or might not happen. Regardless, when the remediated documentation becomes an aesthetic space of the live action, both the performer and audience could encounter liveness.

Performance Documentation and Documentary Aestheticisation

Viewing documentary and theatrical documentation (Auslander, 2006) through the lens of aesthetics and

aestheticisation, we find that we can view performance documentation along an aesthetic continuum that always revolves around documentation. On the one hand, the documentation is deaestheticised of performativity in itself, that is factual. On the other hand, the performance is intertwined with and cannot be separated from the documentation. The whole continuum, however, can be considered an aestheticisation of documentation or the documentary act because it always revolves explicitly around documentation or the process of documentation itself. If documenting a performance solidifies it as a type of performance, then documentation becomes a linchpin of performance, without which its existence becomes questionable.

The EEG measurements in the case described in the current article can be analysed on several levels; the EEG measurements are documentary in the sense that they document the brain waves of the performer during a specific time. In this way, they function as evidence and a type of recreation of the event when they are played back. The measurements can also be said to be theatrical because the measurements themselves can be considered meaningless without interpretation or, in this case, remediation. The remediation of the EEG data in the form of visuals and audio can be said to constitute a performance in and of itself that does not necessarily rely on an earlier performative event.

Finally, the remediated visualisations and sounds are used live in the original performance event as a part of the event. Therefore, these remediated data are subject to documentary practices, such as audio-visual recordings, for example, to provide evidence that these data were actually recorded at this event.

Thus, the remediated EEG data can be said to fall on both ends of the continuum described earlier. These data can be factual and evidentiary in that the data are based on measured, physical facts about brain states. The abstract way these data are presented could further be argued as being de-aestheticised from the performance because such presentation does not create anything new that did not exist at the time of the performance. However, this abstract nature of the presentation also means that the factual characteristics of it can recede into obscurity, leaving behind a highly aestheticised form of documentation that is no longer connected to the original performance but that instead carries its own performativity.

Analysis of the Interview with Collaborator Kaspar Aus

An interview was conducted with Kaspar Aus, one of the artists who was part of the performance, about his experience with the remediated EEG and his general views on documentation and performance. Aus did not document his performances, but the visitors did. The answers are analysed using the following themes: technology, performance and aesthetics[1].

Technology

For Aus, technology (i.e., the remediated EEG data) was not the main focus of the performance: 'For me, technology is a tool, a channel to use to connect performers. It's not the meaning of the performance'. Further, he stated, 'Meaning is something you convey when you observe the whole thing – technology is only part of it'. This could mean that although technology can play a part in binding elements of a performance together, it does not by itself communicate (much) meaning.

[1]The analysis of the interview was approved by Aus.

Given that a new or a new or unknown technology might carry meaning that requires an explanation to decode, is a clarification of the technology and/or the connecting channel it opens important to the viewer? For Aus, the answer was no:

> *If you have a painting in the museum, you don't ask how it is done, you just get a big impulse, and you start to interpret it. [...] You don't know [how the painting came to be]. You don't need to know that actually, as the audience.*

This relates to performance as a holistic, subjective experience, where the immediate subjective impression of the performance is the only impression necessary. Performance, then, can be considered an aestheticised experience—it can be *aesthetically* about technology, but any communication carried by the technology becomes secondary or unimportant.

The performance

Aus described his use of the sounds and visuals derived from the EEG remediation in a similar way, as he would 'avoid [using them as a] score' (i.e., refrain from trying to extract meaning from them). Instead, he connected and reacted to the more physical aspects of the sound: 'If you use the body, you react to sound first, [before] visual information. Sound was the first thing I connected to'. This more immediate connection with the physicality of the soundwaves can again be described as being aesthetically about the sound, not the meaning of the sound.

The visuals were projected at a large scale on the wall behind Aus. This allowed him to engage in some physical

interaction with the visuals: 'As the person who moves his body, it is more real to interpret if it is more physical—like the sound first of all [and] that the picture was big, so you could go into it'. Thus, the changing visuals become aesthetic cues as opposed to documentary or communicative cues.

Aus further stressed connecting to the audience as the starting point for his choreography. Here, the social aspect of the performance played a crucial role because the performance would not happen without this connectedness. This can be interpreted as a kinaesthetic connection to the audience because of the way Aus approached the space, which contained the audience members, the room and the technology.

Aesthetics

Although it is clear that Aus did not think the communicative or documentary aspects of the remediated EEG—or indeed other types of documentation—were very meaningful when it came to performance, they can qualify as theatrical documentation, as argued earlier. In this case, this documentation could be considered aesthetically about not only the inner states of the performer, but also the documentation itself. This is true regardless of whether the documentation carries information or what exactly the aesthetic experience concerns regarding documenting and documentation.

Of note, although Aus had knowledge about how the remediation was produced and what potential information it contained, he perceived it as only a highly aestheticised form of documentation, one devoid of factual clues from the other performer. Thus, he ignored the documentary (as described by Auslander (2006)) aspect of the remediation and focused only on the performative aspects of it.

Results – How Documentation by Biometric Data Can Be Interpreted and Performed

The results extracted from the interview with the audience members and the collaborating performer drew from the immediate experience of the remediated documentation of the bodily states of the performer, who was immersed in the aesthetics of performative action. The results are summarised by the following key points: (i) kinaesthetic empathy with the audience as participation/involvement, (ii) feeling the story by aesthetic means and (iii) connecting with the physicality of the remediation.

Based on these points, documentary-aestheticisation could be a term used to unfold the interconnectedness between the documents of a past performance as socially engaged art and the present encounters with audiences. This could be done by addressing the remediated bodily conditions of the performing body. Also, unveiling the inner states becomes the active component of the performative actions that are narrated to the audience. Furthermore, the social aspect of the performance is central because the performing body is affected and evokes the possibility of encountering liveness during the performative action. This possibility also applies to the audience. This is the reason behind the elaboration of the performance as socially engaged art.

We further argue that the term *documentary-aestheticisation* can be generalised and distanced from the realm of performance. An example is the sometimes apparently paradoxical nature of documentation, for example, of news photos that sometimes appear far-removed from the reality they ostensibly try to depict (e.g., Carlson, 2009).

Conclusion

The aestheticisation of documentation can be generalised away from the performance perspective, and this could be termed documentary-aestheticisation. This could provide a way to analyse documentation on a continuum of the content factual in—and emergent from—it. When the documentation of a previous performance containing bodily conditions (along with sound, photo and video recordings) are remediated into the site of a new performance by documentary-aestheticisation, it can be done with at least two goals or interpretations. The first is as a new artwork containing an aesthetic experience; the second is as documentation of the past performance, thereby making it possible for the audience to encounter liveness within the present site. This choice is made either consciously or subconsciously by the audience members as they encounter the performance. Similarly, within the collaboration between performers, they choose how to interpret the remediated data within their live performance. The findings of the current paper are useful for performance practitioners and performance scholars.

Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER 2

Five Salmon and Two Fish
(viisi lohta ja kaksi kalaa)

Satu Miettinen and Melanie Sarantou
University of Lapland

Abstract

This chapter explores the role of photo and video documentation in an 'artivist' (Penley & Ross, 1991) project. Ephemeral textile art and activist performance art were used to remonstrate against the legal sanctioning of a Finnish environmental graffiti artist who propagates environmental action against the disappearance of salmon from the Kemi river in Finnish Lapland.

Key words: Ephemeral textile, artivism, Kemi river, installation

A textile installation and performance were the media used to help draw attention to human and sustainability issues relevant to the *Kemijoki* (Kemi river) and some local communities in Finnish Lapland living in proximity and harmony with the river. The project explored the use of a place-specific installation on the Kemi river bank as an artivist action titled 'salmon war', or *lohisota*. The installation was planned as part of experimental and collaborative artwork by artist–researcher Satu Miettinen in the project *Acting on the Margin: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS). This European Commission-funded project implemented 35 artistic experiments to explore how the arts can be used to mitigate societal challenges. The research team from the University of Lapland further included artist Taina Kontio, and artist-researchers Mari Mäkiranta and Melanie Sarantou.

The group implemented this project in support of Professor Vesa Puuronen, who was legally sanctioned for the large sum of €20,000 in 2021. The fine was for placing graffiti of

two salmon pictures, the slogans “Free Salmon river” and “Free Kemi river,” in addition to a poem, “Eternal river is grieving the greed of people”, on the private property of the electricity company Kemijoki Oy at Pirttikoski and Seitakorva (Viinikka, 2020). Puuronen used the graffiti to protest against the newly proposed Sierilä power plant, to be built on the banks of the Kemi.

Different companies and governments have exploited the Kemi and its salmon from the time of Swedish rule through overfishing and transporting logs and wood on the river. As a final nail in the coffin, Kemijoki Oy built power plants during the 1950s and changed the way of life for the local communities and natural sceneries. The indigenous salmon became extinct as a result of the power plants (Niemi, 2021).

The artist-researchers implemented the artivist action to raise awareness of the destruction of indigenous salmon populations of the Kemi river and to lobby for environmental action that could facilitate the return of indigenous fish populations in the river by, for example, providing or constructing bypasses for the salmon. In addition, the group aimed to raise awareness of the unprecedented and radical sanctioning of Puuronen for placing graffiti on private property as an artivist action.

Working in close collaboration with journalists and documentary artist Antti Haase and videographer Mikko Leinonen of the production company Illume Oy, who professionally documented the ephemeral artivist action (Figure 1), the intention of creating and documenting this action was to raise national awareness of the Puuronen case. The goal is to raise funds for settling the unprecedented sanctioning of the graffiti artist. Antti Haase has been following Puuronen’s fight to protect the Kemi river for some years, and a documentary film will be one outcome of this process in the future.

Figure 1. Drone aerial photograph of the fish installation taken by videographer Mikko Leinonen from Illume Oy (2021).

Making and documenting a giant fish

Planning and ideation for the installation and performance happened in a collaborative online group where the artists freely generated and shared ideas and shared them.

This took place during the spring months, from March to late April, and included ideation around the installation techniques, the role and meaning of artivism for the group members, and sharing of visual materials. Both the lava stones and fabrics that were ripped into textile strips were recycled materials, and the installations and performance were documented with photographs and video. The materials choice, in other words the selection and use of recycled textiles, was a subconscious choice, perhaps, because the artist-researchers are textile artists by profession. Yet, the playability of the materials due to their bright colours, and the pliability of the materials enabled the artist-researchers to use the strips as a kind of a string drawing. In addition, the width of the strips could be determined by the artists-

researchers who tore the strips from recycled cloth. The width of the strips and the colour of the textiles were important consideration for choosing the materials.

The installation was tested and rehearsed on 21 March 2021, at the Kolpeneenpuisto lean-to-shelter at *Salmijärvi* (Salmi river), a small lake running off from the Kemi. During the rehearsal, the wind was blowing hard enough to lift the fabric strips, so it was fortunate to have calmer, sunnier weather for the main event. Short interviews about the project's aims were recorded at Kolpeneenpuisto after creating the first experiment.

The artist-researchers created an ephemeral giant fish installation on the icy Kemi river bank on 17 April 2021 close to Tervakari, which is located about 35 km east of Rovaniemi along the Kemi. This location is close to the proposed Sierilä power plant and would go underwater if the Sierilä power plant were to be completed. The location is an important recreation spot that has a lean-to shelter and access to fish in the river. The installation was in the shape of a fish, measuring over 15 metres in length, and was created with strips of colourful textile placed on the icy banks of the Kemi. The textile strips were initially secured with lava stones, but soon were kept in place by freezing onto the icy surface. All installation materials were removed after the installation, and the performance was documented.

Figure 2. Colourful textile strips were used to create the textile installation. Lava stones secured the strips in windy conditions during the first experiment on a snowy surface.

Figure 3. Detail of the textile installation: The fishtail. Photography by Satu Miettinen (2021).

Figure 4. Detail of the textile installation: The eye. Photography by Satu Miettinen (2021).

Figure 5. Fishing is a popular recreational activity on the banks of the Kemi. Sadly, no salmon populations are currently present. During the installation and documentation of the fish, fishermen were spotted nearby. Photography by Satu Miettinen (2021).

The concept of making the textile installation was first tested to gauge the effectiveness of the material on ice and snow. After the first experiment, the installation site was changed to a smoother and icier site with less snow, as it enabled better visibility of the textile strips due to the smooth surface. The artist-researchers, journalist-documentary artists met at the site, where the planning of the installation and video documentation commenced.

Figure 6. Artist-researchers Mari Mäkiranta (left) and Melanie Sarantou (right) experimenting with the use of the textile strips on a snowy surface on the Kemi. The deep layer of snow obscured the textile strips, and a new location had to be found for creating the installation. Photography by Satu Miettinen (2021).

The installation was created while being documented by digital video and photo cameras. After that, aerial drone documentation was conducted while the artist-researchers performed the movement of swimming fish; artist Taina Kontio initiated the performance. The drone enabled a different perspective on the rather large installation (see Figure1), and the textile strips placed on the ice resembled a fine line drawing on textured paper. Without the drone images the artists would not have been able

to understand the visual impact the large installation had on the environment, or the relationship of the work to the Kemi. An unstructured focus group interview with the artist-researchers was then documented next to the river. The topics of discussion included how the installation came about and the motivation for creating the installation.

The ethical principles and guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) were considered throughout the course of the research. Ethical issues were taken into consideration at every phase of the research, when the authors engaged in the performance and data collection. The documentation and making by the artist-researchers, journalist and documentary artist only proceeded after informed consent was given.

Discussion

After our artivist action, the *Sierilän soutu*, a rowing event on the Kemi, took place on 6-7 August 2021; its goal was to protect the river and create awareness for its conservation. Local communities and artists have collected a large amount of money for Kemijoki's protection through an art auction called "Environmental Action for Sierilä". The auction of the arts is promoted via social media, specifically Facebook (see https://www.facebook.com/Meklari). Some of the artists used a carved salmon figure on a plywood base that was then individualised in their own artistic style and expression. These plywood salmon and some other individual artworks were auctioned to raise funds to support Vesa Puuronen's legal sanctions; however, he decided to pay the fees himself. Our artivist action was part of a broader movement to protect the Kemi river and prevent a new power plant from being built at Sierilä. The action for the river and against the Sierilä power plant is an ongoing effort. It is an outcome of a historical, long-term battle against governmental and

corporate policies over the local river that have changed lifestyles and local cultures based on salmon fishing and yearly traditions conducted on the river banks. The actions seek to reclaim the river and ensure its wellbeing as a habitat for various aquatic species and other wildlife, and for the river to sustain its natural course.

Conclusion

The artivist action using place, space, and textile strips sought to take a stand and raise awareness of the decline of the Kemi river and its surrounding environment—which has been negatively impacted by power plants and other commercial activities—and the destruction of indigenous salmon populations of the Kemi. Before making the installation, artivism used graffiti and slogans on the private property of a power company to achieve a similar goal. One of the actions was sanctioned, and the other was initiated to raise awareness of such unprecedented sanctioning.

The documentation of the giant fish installation and the interviews with the artists is important for more obvious reasons, such as artivism, as it enables the dissemination of the stories, people, and art practices involved in raising environmental awareness. However, documentation needs care and an ethical awareness towards the people and stories it seeks to capture. Kara and Reestorff (2015) have pointed out the harm that has been done through video documentation in the past, causing misrepresentation of the actors and their stories. In this example, the documentation is expected to raise social awareness about an individual who was fined disproportionately for the misdemeanour of graffitiing two fish and slogans on the power company's property—activism that came at a high cost. In addition, documentation was important as the

giant fish installation was intended to be ephemeral: it was removed a few hours after it was installed so as not to cause further harm to the environment.

The role of documentation in evidencing socially engaged art of this kind is to illustrate the impact of marginalising an individual for speaking up about environmental concerns.

The impact was that a community of artists and creatives engaged in artistic action and stood in solidarity against unsustainable business practices and environmental destruction. In times when many societies live in anxiety about the future, those individuals and businesses with more power need to engage in dialogue with their communities instead of silencing them further. Documents of socially engaged arts, such as *Five Salmon and Two Fish*, can potentially speak louder and more persistently than those who have been silenced.

Acknowledgements

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RATIVES OF
FOR OTHE
OURSELVES
DREAMS,
HOPES,
FUTURE GOALS
OF, OR
FROM TH
WORK
INTO TH
WORLD
CHAPTER 3
i. IDEAS +
ASPIRATIONS:
[FOR SOMETHING
BETTER]
ii. A 'FRAME STORY'
[A STORY THAT'S
TOLD WITHIN ANOTHER

Designing a Different Document: Towards the Social Practice of Materialisation and Memorialisation within Research Relationships

Paul Wilson and Tang Tang
University of Leeds

Abstract

This essay outlines a novel and innovative approach to documentation that sees the process of documentation as having the potential to operate dynamically and reflexively and in ways that contribute meaningfully to the processes of knowledge creation in complex contexts. We discuss how a design-led approach has been used to frame the documentation of collaborative and participatory activities that have been developed to assist a cocuratorial strategy formulated as part of the *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS) research project. Our approach to documentation is situated within an exploration of the potential for documentation-as-publication and the possibilities of a practice research methodology seeking to utilise graphic design as a mode of critical and dialogical enquiry and as a method of writerly transcription that works to both document and develop. From this, we suggest that documentation might operate across multiple dimensions, serving as a form of materialisation to evidence activity, which is a site for responsive expansion or development, and as a method of urgent feedback within the timeline of a multifaceted and challenging process where consensus is key.

Keywords: Correspondence, design research, dialogue, documentation, participatory research, practice research, publication

This chapter outlines an approach to documentation that explores how we may consider documentation in relation to a specific practice of publication and, in particular, when responding to needs that are determined by a complex subject comprised of a series of interlinked socially engaged arts activities. Making use of a theoretical model for communication that situates documentation within the categories of what we have termed *dialogical correspondence*, we look to discuss one application of this novel approach, describing how it has been used to address a specific need and how it can perform a particular set of functions: from the documentation of a process of participatory research to the role of writerly visualisation in collating research results and as a means to communicate speculative trajectories for ongoing discussion and further development. The context for what will be discussed here (a case of documentation held within the ideas of—or around—communication) is situated within activities that looked to develop a novel cocuratorial exhibition strategy whose aim was a presentation of work undertaken by a range of institutional partners and a demonstration of how this work contributed to an international arts-based research project. The research activities of the *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS) project have been designed to explore the potential of the arts to respond to contemporary social challenges. By working across and within a broad disciplinary and geographical context in eight European countries, the project looks to identify, collate and disseminate best practices across a range of socially engaged arts experiments, here with the aim of making a concrete contribution to policy. Making use of this, we further hope to demonstrate how such an approach might be developed in terms of a practice of 'documentation-as-publication', which also looks to explore the potential for an innovative application for graphic design (as) practice research; this can be used to form a particular set of visual and conceptual strategies to be employed in its

realisation, in particular an idea of transcription that both challenges and resists common understanding through acts of imaginative writing. There are three key questions we are looking to explore in this essay, as follows:

- What is the potential for developing a novel approach to publication-as-documentation within the complicated context of a diverse and complex set of socially engaged art practice(s)?

- How can the *designed* page become the site for a distinct type of documentation that encompasses or embraces ideas of publication?

- In what ways can the use of writing as an *imaginative visual method* allow for an exploration of the potential of graphic and typographic design as a distinct mode of practice research?

In his discussion of the history, contexts and shifting practices of publication, Bhaskar (2013) considered its complexities, suggesting that publication is consistently marked by a capacity to work along and through networks and driven by a sense of momentum that connects institutions to their social and cultural contexts and, subsequently, to an awaiting public. Fundamentally, publication is also an intentional act—an activity that seeks more than anything else to bring something into the world for somebody else. Therefore, as a concept or practice, a process or business, publication is inherently relational and, by necessity, is constituted in terms of how and why connections are made across the many networks that carry information to audiences. Because these intended recipients will also take many forms, we can see that any discussion of publication is clearly more complex than a definition that holds it to be a process of making something ‘public’ (Bhaskar, 2013).

Perhaps less widely acknowledged, publication also plays a role—and serves as a method—for documentation, both in the literal creation or manufacturing of 'documents' and in the materialisation of meaningful milestones as *objects* of knowledge. These outcomes act to memorialise and capture and to preserve, sustain or manage information in whatever form available; this is done through the processes of codification and storage, transcribing thought (via language) onto the surface of an artefact or into a position within a digital array.

Through a discussion of the shifting role of the document (and the practices of documentation) within the context of developments in conceptual and socially engaged arts practices, here with a particular focus on ideas of the 'artists' page' (Ismail-Ebbs, 2016), the present essay outlines a 'correspondence-led' model of communication, suggesting a role for graphic design practice research (GD-PR) to become a novel mode for documentation via a distinct approach to the production and publication of documents. Such documentation (and the form taken by the outcomes produced) attempts to perform a particular function that celebrates the potential for dialogue and meaningful exchange within a particular context for communication while also striving to move '…the concept of function beyond practical functionality… (towards)…design work that functions symbolically, culturally, existentially and discursively' (Malpass, 2015, p. 60).

Differentiating the Document

In his essay 'Thirteen Theses Against Snobs', Walter Benjamin (1928) reflected on the differences, perceptions and expectations between art and documentation, while also making a case for the document (and for the processes

of documentation), in an attempt to differentiate it from an idea of the artwork; as a result, he turns a critical spotlight on the attitudes towards art-making and of the intention of an artist. He introduces an idea seeking to look beyond the object and, instead, towards an everydayness or quotidian quality of the document as a form making no attempt at aspiration or that shows disregard for the value in the production or practice of art-making.

Radical strategies for documentation, including its use as art practice, were first developed during the 1960s and would eventually lead to the idea of a *document* shifting from a position of being adjacent to the work to being more central in the work, often standing in place of it. Through the 1970s, this proposition would grow more complex, further *destabilising* the document's role as its uses deepened and became more critical with the situations and discourse of documentation in the wider world changing, reflecting the political, economic and social operationalisation of documents (recognising their agency); this occurred alongside the broader technological changes taking place that drew a language of the document down into everyday life (Berger & Santone, 2016, p. 205).

Ideas of publication-as-documentation have also been evident in particular forms of artistic practice, including the socially engaged, and perhaps most notably in the disruptive use of the artists' book, which demonstrates a role for publication that is not anchored to the linear or circuital trajectories or narratives established by certain traditional models of communication. Further, Drucker (1998) identified certain conceptual structures of the book as an object (particularly in relation to the artist's book) as being determined by ideas of sequence and space (or 'sequences of spaces'), which are deliberately interrupted by a *metalanguage* of visual and typographic devices she termed 'openings' and 'closures', which can be used

to determine the composition of elements included on the page. Such an immanence of the page as a structural unit encourages dialogue because, once combined into the book form, such combinations of pages act to reinforce a notion of the book as inherently relational and as something fundamentally social. This tendency for the book to seemingly seek connection, alongside its inherent ordinariness as a physical object, can encourage its circulation, which often is extended by virtue of it not requiring special or bespoke instructions for its use.

As suggested by Drucker, this focus on the potential for documents to either supplement or supplant the art object clearly acknowledges their fundamental purpose as media artefacts and their sociocultural function: '… to teach or to show—to be accountable, to keep record, and to make information available' (Ismail-Epps, 2016, p. 247). With such close attention paid to the document as an active participant in the discourses of conceptual art, we can recognise an opportunity for a process of dissection and the disassembly of the object itself so that we might consider the potential of those things that it gathers together and that itself contains—alongside a grammar of the *metalanguage* through which its contents are shaped. Echoing Drucker's earlier categorisation, the page is, for Ismail-Epps (2016), capable of a particular performative function as the constituent unit of any artist's document; as such, it can certainly do '…more than solely present information about artworks' (p. 248), perhaps being utilised in new or uncertain radical ways.

Given its distinct reflexive potential, the characteristic benefits of information presented via the artists' page are immediacy and accessibility, where its unmediated or unfiltered straightforward mode of presentation is not altered or effected as the consequence of any

institutional interference or obstruction. Given this attitude of transparency, there is no requirement for any kind of interpretation or external narrative that would usually be provided by a critic or similar cultural intermediary, so the artists' page seeks to challenge established formal hierarchies for any engagement or interaction with cultural outcomes.

Therefore, the conditions of immanence or emergence, which are perhaps particular to conceptual (or, indeed, socially engaged) art, are best suited to being held or contained on the page. Both rely on modes of dialogical participation and interpretation (and production), within which any work seeks out the other so that their engagement helps complete it. Further, because the concerns of both are not largely directed by a sense or condition of a 'finished' outcome as a formal conclusion to the work or by the requirement to be in the physical presence of an object, the 'artists' page' can instead operate in place of it (Ismail-Ebbs, 2016, p. 249).

Such a close reading of the artists' page serves to magnify and accentuate its potential in terms of what it holds and who it might reach—a capacity for and tendency towards reproduction, which is, as Ismail-Ebbs suggests, perhaps usually more associated with the document as an object:

> *When reproduced, the document is no longer the site of a private thought or correspondence between artist and organizer; it is reproduced with the intention of reaching a far larger, and potentially unknown, audience. The singular and original becomes a repeatable copy that circulates and preserves the ideas it contains...inexpensive, non-precious, portable, repeatable and public - and while the original document may possess some of these qualities, reproduction and presentation as a page confirm and intensify these.* (p. 248)

In her review of a selection of examples of the artists' page from the 1960s, Ismail-Ebbs (2016) demonstrated a sense that such instances of documentation were closely bound to (and often drove) activities that sought their own reproduction and that such a desire for duplication was often undertaken to make them more accessible, open and available. Alongside this, we can gain an awareness from Ismail-Ebbs' (2016) critique that such documentary forms have also appeared to be a willing and enthusiastic exponent of the ambiguous and cryptic, the diaristic or ephemeral—often combining a deliberate lack of finish or professional 'polish' to their presentation and graphic design, hence suggesting a deliberate turn towards the lowbrow or a type of ruggedness that also works to resist any formal sense of ever needing the appearance of being complete.

Anticipation and Response: Correspondence as a Communicative Act

The word *correspondence* conjures up images of those materialities of meaningful human communication and of the potential for connection and intimacy that can exist between individuals, even over great distances. The handwritten letter, whose composition and careful consideration were framed by the time taken to prepare, send and receive it, encapsulates a notion of correspondence as a particular type of communication. The letter illustrates an activity that aspires to be both spontaneous *and* deliberative, where our words would hope to bridge whatever distance separates the sender and receiver, hoping to conjure the presence of the other within their writing.

As Tim Ingold (2021) has argued, within contemporary communication, the potential for affect is often missing or lost: 'Words have been reduced to mere tokens

of exchange…language has been distilled from the conversations of life' (p. 4). As such, according to Ingold, however much we might be distanced from another's presence, an idea of correspondence can work to shape an approach towards communication (or documentation) where our words aim to take on the spontaneous qualities of conversation while retaining the concrete qualities of being written. Thinking in more detail about the form that they might take (which, again, is another of Ingold's concerns), the shapes and lines of letters created by the hand also suggest the potential for a typographically informed and inflected meaning to be introduced to the communication, where the lines that materialise words work to reinforce their linguistic intentions and meaning alongside their visual qualities of immediacy and directness, which communicate another human's actions in bringing them about.

For Ingold, therefore, correspondences sit between the ideas of 'speaking' and 'writing'. Such actions and experiences embrace the *intimacies of intention* (for whom and how communication should occur) and are characterised by the qualities of both *anticipation* (when we might listen as much as speak, the silence as we await a message) and response (how we consider the ways in which it can be performed with care and careful deliberation). Therefore, correspondence is determined by a gap between *ourselves and others*. It acknowledges the potential for some kind of meaningful exchange within these spaces, calling for us to recognise and embrace how our experiences of being human are cocreated within such moments of dialogue and reciprocal communication.

Modelling the Complex Potential of AMASS Communication: A Cocuratorial Case Study

As part of its ongoing dissemination activities and over the first 18 months of its operation, the AMASS project has looked to develop an exhibition that can present a range of arts-based activities reflecting the work carried out with marginalised groups and varied stakeholder organisations. These activities involved a varied range of approaches and media across a number of disciplinary contexts, hence resulting in a rich set of outcomes, each of which addresses the questions of value and impact, exploring the tangible benefits and opportunities that emerge from engagement with socially engaged arts practice.

To reflect on the project's ambitions and spirit, consortium partners have adopted an experimental cocuratorial strategy as part of the exhibition's development. The aim here was for a truly participatory exploration of methods that would identify and reveal the varied attitudes, questions and intentions that could shape the presentation of their participants' work. The research was designed so that it could be carried out over three online workshops, with each one being tasked to address certain themes and challenges that would then be built upon in the next. From this, a vision for an exhibition concept, consensus on the approach to curation and for the physical layout—together with an innovative model for participatory cocuration—could be developed. As we have discussed elsewhere (Wilson & Tang, 2021), such an approach regards the project itself as a site of a distinct type of artistic activity, one that is equivalent to Beuys' vision of art as social sculpture.

The first of the cocuratorial workshops sought to define and map strategies around ideas and themes such as *narrative*, *representation*, *audience* and *meaning*. A variety of tools were developed for the partners' participation and were

designed using the online collaborative platform *Miro*—the exercises in which sought to distil patterns from questions focusing on the intentions for the work, an anticipation of how work would seek or connect to audiences and partners' visions for any response to their work from audiences. These were discussed via a range of participatory exercises, together with a reflection on widely adopted objectives for socially engaged arts, alongside those of the AMASS project itself. The participatory cocuration workshops had an institutional ethical agreement reflecting the needs of our research activities within AMASS.

A key aim for this phase of the research was that connections and common understandings would be identified, which could then be used as the basis of the work to be undertaken in the next workshop; this formed the basis of a *communications need*: to integrate feedback of the results and identify key insights which were generated from one set of workshop activities as part of the following workshop. From a thematic analysis of the range of data sets produced over the course of five separate activities in workshop one, it was agreed that an interim publication should be developed that would collect these findings and look to present them in such a way that they could be discussed in the next workshop: functioning as an immanent or *urgent* mode of documentation and feedback—both as an overview and reminder of what had previously been undertaken and as a way to help inspire the next set of activities. This publication, therefore, would set out to capture, document and communicate the project's *internal* processes in the same way that it would for any other type of external-facing communications activity that might be undertaken.

The publication's development was guided by a conceptual framework of 'dialogical correspondence', which had been produced as a consequence of earlier research undertaken

with project partners (Wilson & Tang, 2021), and each theme or pillar of the framework was developed to reflect a set of communication needs, expectations and priorities, as shown below.

Feedback

– To explore the visual and conceptual approaches that might be used for *bringing forth* those things that might previously be unseen or are hidden within the research and research data—those networks of relationships and connections that exist (between ideas, outcomes or even people) but that are either unacknowledged or not recognised and how the flows along, among and between them might be communicated.

Urgency

– To recognise and utilise a necessity for momentum and of moving towards (something or someone) within the work being undertaken, here showing how such motion might more easily reflect the need to respond with speed or when an urgency of response (together with a sense of timeliness and an understanding of relevance) can be harnessed to advance any communication.

Relations

– To reflect how or when things, people and their materialities suggest a need to acknowledge and (re) construct how they are situated or arranged alongside or with each other so that the hierarchies and agency of any object or 'thing' in an assemblage can be considered and communicated.

This framework allows for a range of design, communication or publication activities to be undertaken within the context of, or in response to, any or all of the three themes, reflecting a set of needs that have been acknowledged to be important for the AMASS project's communication. By establishing such a conceptual *apparatus*, we can explore the potential to demonstrate new attitudes and approaches towards research communication, hence illustrating the potential of research *in* and *through* communication/graphic design to address the challenges of such a dynamic and interlinked set of expectations and needs. Alongside an application of this conceptual framework, therefore, was also a desire to develop an experimental model of practice research *for* graphic design (GD-PR), which aims to deliberately work with discipline-specific strategies and methods as both a creative and critical lens.

With this opportunity, we sought to position GD-PR as a speculative (and potentially valuable) mode of practice research, one through which specific knowledge can be generated, documented and disseminated, rather than using GD-PR in its more common form, which is often attributed to such design activities (Wilson, 2020). Three potential principles or intended characteristics for GD-PR have previously been identified that can be applied as a guide or to direct any such endeavour: **(1)** the practice being parafunctional (embracing a poetics of being *both* the bearer of expression and the transmitter of information); **(2)** the potential in not being beholden to the audience's understanding or expectations, foregrounding an expectation *of* the audience that allows any work to fluidly move between being approaches that might seem gently provocative to others and that could be deliberately user-unfriendly; and **(3)** making a deliberate use of methods for visual and typographic *rhetoric*, which encourage ideas of dialogical exchange as a means to challenge or subvert

the expectations of function (for both the audience *and* designer), where openness and speculative or propositional approaches that are founded in the asking of questions to replace problem-oriented approaches, which perhaps have limited value in contexts such as this, are used.

Writerly Design / Designerly Writing

Writing as doing displaces writing as meaning: writing becomes meaningful in the material, dis/continuous act of writing. (Pollock, 1998, p. 75)

A writerly mode of visual and typography enquiry within an exploratory practice of graphic design research can make use of writing as a method and means to open up an approach for documentation to be both functional and imaginative. It creates opportunities for both the form and content of a thing and for a *designerly* practice of writing to explore and enquire critically via a range of intentional techniques or strategies. In her discussion of imaginative ethnographic writing, Elliot (2017) described the use of writing that deliberately embraces the potential of process and discusses the ways in which such writing practices can be both embodied and performative. Attention to the sensorial material experiences that might constitute any act of writing can also allow for 'new forms of documentation and writing' (Cvetkovich, 2021, p. 11). It becomes possible, therefore, for certain modes or concepts to underpin any intention for writing, where they can be applied to the act of writing itself and develop these as activities of typographic practice, here given the role typography plays in giving shape to text within graphic design.

In the context of the documentation and publication of the findings from the AMASS project, the fundamental GD-PR mode for writing was *transcription*: the transformation of

one text into another, which is most generally regarded as an act of copying, of transferal or the creation of a useful summary—an activity surely familiar to most researchers working with qualitative data. Although looking to move the results of the first cocuration workshop from their status as data on or within an electronic resource or platform (such as Miro) would always require an activity of copying (whether digital or analogue), here by adopting a processual and transcriptive writing-as-typographic-design, a dialogical form of documentation could emerge, one where our activities of *'writing-up'* (the summary and copying or reflective synthesis of pre-existing data or evidence) also become opportunities for a more expansive reflection through which a *'writing-out'* could occur. Therefore, the results of such an activity are more than a recreation of something that already exists or a facsimile that attempts to reproduce it but with greater efficiency. As can be seen in Figure 1, a relatively linear set of associations was generated in response to the core themes of 'Dreams', 'Hopes' and 'Future Goals'—their arrangement as a sequence of interlinked concepts allows for a broader one ('Utopia') to be identified as a means to situate the research results within a context that could prove useful as a direction for further enquiry. As can also be seen, the first text (the research themes) is primarily a point of departure, here through acts of correspondence (of exchange, of ideas and associations generated in response to one another) and acts of typographic transcription that both document *and* expand upon it.

Establishing a Contextual Terrain for the GD-PR Process

A process of GD-PR was established that would—mirroring a generic model of the design process—consist of a series of discrete but interlocking phases through which the publication of cocuratorial results might be developed

and produced. The first stage was one of ***exploration***, which was determinedly open-ended, open, experimental and associative, that centred on establishing possible methodological approaches and intentions, and that would position the publication's critical context. Inspiration was taken from methods such as collage and bricolage, particularly the communications model of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* developed by art historian Aby Warburg in the 1920s. The *Mnemosyne Atlas* sought to collect and visually communicate interconnected histories and their immediate associations as a series of panels consisting of images arranged to both visualise new connections and prompt dialogue. The second was a process of ***conceptualisation***, which involved an investigation and analysis of the key influences so that it was possible to identify meaningful narratives *of* existing practice as the basis for methods that could be used in the development of the publication and its content. A collection of promotional material produced by the BALTIC Gallery (UK) in the period up to its opening in 2002 provided a useful model—objects of documentation (the building's construction, its histories, the future intended uses, etc.) were woven together into a piece of impactful conceptually led communication design seeking to both inform and stimulate or excite, particularly through a degree of ambiguity that seemed to be unconcerned with a linear or explicit narrative. The chalk drawings of Joseph Beuys, in particular his use of the spaces of the blackboard as a method for giving form to thought, were also significant in shaping a conceptual approach that would be explored through the publication's development. Third, the activities and ideas for a ***visualisation*** of text and of certain writerly methods were explored as a consequence of thematic and conceptual directions that had been previously established. Here, writing and the potential for connectedness or associations to be represented visually, diagrammatically and spatially helped establish a context for the fourth phase of ***materialisation***, which focused on the production of a

set of (nominated or notional) outcomes and an exploration of a distinct visual/typographic approach that was to be used in their production. Finally, these results in the form of our feedback publication were embedded into the second workshop's Miro Board as a method for their ***circulation*** so that they could be reviewed as part of new activities.

AMASS Items and Their Narratives *(excerpt)*

Given the space constraints within this essay, we will discuss just a selection of the four typographic panels that were produced for the publication (which contained 10 panels in total) and describe their situation within the document that was produced to hold or contain them.

The panels, termed *items and narratives* (Figures 1–4), were developed from four key themes that had been identified in the analysis of data produced as part of the first workshop's Miro Board activities. Each was generated through an approach that mirrored Joseph Beuys' use of the blackboard as a tool for annotation and visualisation and his focus on the formal qualities of written texts as marks on a surface that resist notions of permanence. The *items and narrative* panels were each produced in one discrete activity of writing before being photographed and then erased to be replaced by the next activity in the sequence. No edits were carried out as they were produced, and each was only written once.

Joseph Beuys' use of the object of the blackboard as a companion to his public lectures/performative actions relied on their capability for documenting his spontaneity and improvisational thoughts, sketches, or any comments that arose in their processes of development. The blackboard is a site for public communication, having a widely recognised scholarly and academic role, and the

blackboard would become, for Beuys, a sculptural form that both documented and practised his ideas for art to be considered as a type of 'social sculpture'.The use of such a tool was clearly a practical necessity for Beuys given the lack of alternatives that we have access to today, such as using a newer analogue or digital tools for real-time pedagogical reflection. As a tool for the production of typography, both the blackboard and chalk used to write upon its surface allow for a sense of flow or associative spontaneity, which may still offer qualities not always present or apparent in any alternative—the materialisation of earthy chalk marks on a board's rich and distinctly layered or coloured surface and as a resolutely nontechnological type of writing reflect a growing interest in practices of *slow design*.

Typographic Translation as Visualisation

For each of the four panels, a set of exploratory narrative themes was generated during a relatively short period of *typographic transcription*, where workshop insights were complemented by an array of new words in a process of improvisational and responsive text production. This new text asked questions, often making an attempt to define newer subthemes or suggesting new directions that could be further developed. Given the visual and spatial nature of these exercises, the texts were supplemented by attempts to gather or form links as they occurred in the processes of writing—through the use of graphic devices such as lines or arrows and other visual strategies for highlighting, isolating or drawing the viewer's attention, such as underlining, highlighting or circling any key elements within the text. Figures 1 and 3 show how such organisation and marking-up of the text was carried out.

The Page as Site of Materialisation

As has been discussed, the aim for the publication being developed was that it would be shared with the AMASS project partners, who had instigated or inspired the words that had been captured on the panels. These individual visual elements would then be brought together as a series of pages in one document, the format of which meant that each panel would be cropped to run across one double-page spread (see Figure 5). By carrying this out, the detail of each one could more easily be seen and read, and importantly, the form of their presentation and materialisation onto the page would make no attempt to reproduce or simply show a facsimile of the panel as an object. Such an act of partition and abstraction was intended to decouple text from an object, situating it into a new context and mirroring a sense of estrangement or critical distance (between audience and document), which our three principles for GD-PR would aim to encourage. The wooden frame of the object of the panel (the blackboard itself) remains visible in each image but is now acting as a boundary object (one often incomplete or irregular), serving to create a compositional element that both contains and separates.

The space of the page—and the reader's expectations of it—differ from those that might exist if the panels were viewed as objects and in how any words written upon them may be considered. As we have seen, for Ismail-Epps (2016), the *artists*' *page* performs a different function and is utilised to meet different needs than those found elsewhere. Here, the pages in our publication work *upon* the object of the panel and its words, making use of them as devices and tools within a process of enquiry—the designed situation of panel and words on the page intends to prompt questions both of the materials themselves and of the information being displayed and in terms of their own potential as a

space or site and a method for the communication and documentation of research. In the case of our publication, the conceptual potential of the AMASS project exhibition has been spatially inscribed, with the transcribed words acting as labels for concepts, pointing towards other ideas and as the means to identify the existence of one thought or possible conceptual association (however fleeting, partial or unresolved) at one moment, which can be relationally described and visualised as part of a bigger *social* text.

This approach is inherently diagrammatic in its attempts to map relationships through the use of the inferences of spatial proximity—of a comparative scale—and the use of graphic devices (such as arrows or underlining) for guiding a viewer's eye, where necessary. The word or term 'diagram' comes from the Greek, meaning 'to write through'—and it is most commonly used to describe a certain type of image or illustration and, specifically, as a means through which we are shown how things are organised. Diagrams can perform this representational function in a range of ways, using a number of visual approaches in their attempts to portray those items that are in some ways meaningful, most often in an application directly related to certain experiences of living and, hence, that function in a way that affects audiences in particular ways. Alongside this, Dávila (2019) asserts that diagrams work as methods to make us think and impart certain knowledge or information because the relationships being materialised also serve to perform a reflective and critical function—to articulate and highlight relationships and situations that concern hierarchy, agency, and sites of situated power, within which we often work and live.

Documentation as Correspondence and as Container

In her book *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, Ursula K. Le Guin reflects on the cultural significance of the container

in a history of human evolution, outlining a potential for this object both as a means of collecting and transporting other objects or, indeed, any items for any purpose. As Le Guin comments, anything '...useful, edible or beautiful' (2019, p. 32) is worthy and deserving of carriage, an act demonstrating that we value how these items may serve us in the future *and* the connections that we might also establish between them. Such collections of meaningful objects—or, as she terms them, *stories*—are complex and determined by the relationship of the items from which they are constituted, with one story operating as one summary of the items' many latent associations.

For Le Guin, the container—a recipient, the notional *carrier*—was humanity's first (and, perhaps, most potent) invention. Whether we accept or understand such a concept literally or in the potential that it offers as a useful metaphor, it allows us to consider ourselves and the world around us through the lens of the *recipient* (whether human or nonhuman)—an active participant in the production of meaningful connection, of the relationships that can develop as a consequence and (through association) the new knowledge that then is the result. For Le Guin, any book is nothing more than a sack or bag (2019)—it holds things, and those things hold others, and they are all held together in a sense or state of becoming or as a process rather than their being fixed in any one position. There is no easy way to reduce the meaning(s) in, of or between these things to something easily digestible or simple to understand—they are woven together and act upon each other constantly and can be continually transformed by where or how they are situated in the *sack*. Such an idea has a clear connection to Tim Ingold's and Richard Sennett's discussion of *correspondence* and *dialogics*, respectively. Le Guin's carrier bag theory focuses on the context of correspondence, allowing us to understand how an object or scenario or situation within which correspondence or

dialogue takes place can work to shape it—that this context (or *container*) has agency within the situation of meaningful exchange, which should be acknowledged and described.

Much like the carrier bag Le Guin describes, graphic design is also often underacknowledged, not appreciated or regarded as disposable or ephemeral because of the work it is engaged in carrying out for (and upon) us. Graphic design has particular significance because it is situated *between* people and things, between people and people and between things and things: it *wraps* the world and, as a result, contains it—shaping how images are made and understood, how words take on a form that creates new meaning on top of the existing meaning and positions those things in constellations that drive us to respond and engage with them in certain ways. The activities discussed in this essay attempts to make such operations more explicit by bringing their value to the surface. Through a reorientation of the practice of graphic design as research, there may be the opportunity for new models or approaches to emerge, potentially repositioning graphic design in the minds of those who make use of it while also offering an image of how it could be useful for other purposes or in other contexts. In this sense, design becomes capable of offering speculative or potential futures alongside its more traditional role in processes of documentation and/or communication (Malpass, 2015, p. 4), with acts of publication resisting a sense of ever needing to be or appear to be resolved. The potential of design-led approaches to utilise the ideas of dialogical correspondence towards the development of an *anticipatory* or *futures-focused* mode reflects a disciplinary skillset that allows designers to '… occupy a dialectical space between the world that is and the world that could be. Informed by the past and the present, their activity is oriented towards the future' (Margolin, 2007, p. 4).

Documentation as Endless Repetition

The current essay orbits an idea whereby the documentation of socially engaged art can demonstrate a complex and richly unstable potential of one practice of publication that aims to be *evidence* of something (here, a participatory cocuration workshop), an *instance* of novel practice research (typographic transcription and the active analysis developed through a *writing-out*) and an acknowledgement that the recipient or container of knowledge is themself an active participant in how meaning is made as a result of those things being collected.Such a process of collection and containment—and the gathering together of individual panels and pages whose focus is a nominal research feedback publication—complements and, perhaps, celebrates the complex context(s) that are constituted by a project such as AMASS. The publication we have discussed serves a purpose, one that is dictated by the needs of those within our project—what is being documented are ideas *around* socially engaged arts (of how they can or should be communicated to external audiences through an exhibition) and ideas from a set of socially engaged arts activities that have been central to the work of the researchers and artists involved in AMASS. The documentation–publication–communication process we describe makes no attempt to resolve or solve a *problem* of documentation; instead, it explores a gap that has emerged as a result of the complexities that occur and are a feature of any work such as this.

As we have discussed, the writerly activities of *transcription* can perhaps be reconsidered as useful methods for documentation within the processes of publication that are outlined here. An otherwise passive or disciplined activity of 'writing-up' has instead been transformed to become more active as a '*writing-out'*, wherein documentation does not simply record what has

taken place but instead strives to become an extension of it. The method of typographic transcription results in a visual and conceptual writerly impression as the evidence of data collection activities while simultaneously beginning a process of associative reflection and analysis. As such, it allows for the development of a fluid responsive method for utilising graphic design and typography, which reflects Malpass' (2015) thesis that design has the potential of being a lens for critical enquiry, not solely for performing a notionally neutral, passive and predetermined function of presentation and communication.

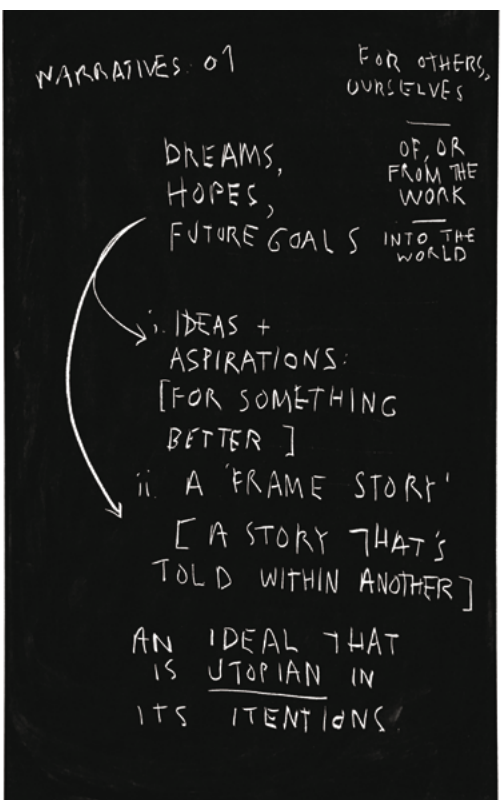

Figure 1. Items and narratives 1: Dreams, hopes, future goals

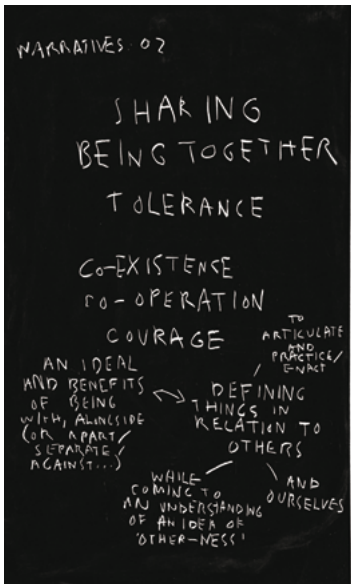

Figure 2. Items and narratives 2: Sharing, being together, tolerance

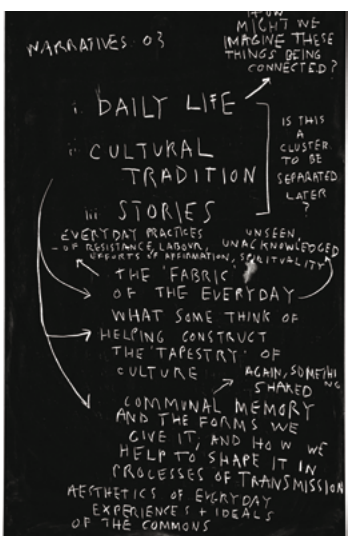

Figure 3. Items and narratives #03: Daily life, cultural tradition, stories

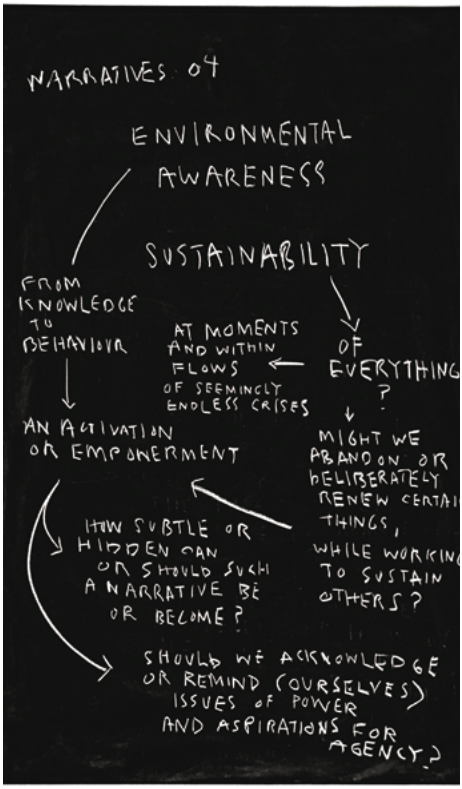

Figure 4. Items and narratives #04: Environmental awareness, sustainability

Figure 5. Example of a panel split over two pages within the AMASS cocuration workshop one publication

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CHAPTER 4

Documenting Sauna Stories: Naked Narratives on Fashion and Culture

Melanie Sarantou, Satu Miettinen and Heidi Pietarinen
University of Lapland

Abstract

This chapter explores the role of embodied sauna practices and performance in the Finnish tradition of using a sauna. The ritual, which is usually enjoyed by Finnish people in the naked, is documented and re-evaluated from the perspective of cross-cultural use by people othern than Finnish and the role of this bodily ritual and fashion as 'surrogate' or second skin (Hamlyn, 2000, p. 42; Hemmings, 2008).

Key words: Sauna, rituals, performance, second skin, documentation.

Finnish sauna traditions for women have been different to those of men, mainly due to the many transitions the lives of women have, which impacts on the diverse activities women would undertake in this space of healing, nursing, cleansing, resting and even dreaming (Aaland, 1978; Pentikäinen, 2005; Tsonis, 2016). The sauna is predominantly a place of cleansing; therefore, it is enjoyed in the nude to bathe the body through soft heat, steam and washing. However, Kailo's (2019) feminist approach to the culture of sauna borrows from the concept of caring; a communal activity and ritual of gift giving. The sauna, for Kailo (2019), is not only a cleansing event, but it is intrinsically about gift giving as a socially significant affair.

This chapter explores a performance and photo documentary activity within the space of a sauna in northern Lapland, specifically a wooden heated sauna in

be considered for the documentary action by Miettinen. The objective of the chapter is to explore how diverse feminist perspectives can be adopted in photo documentation, including fashion photography. It seeks to understand how the elements within unusual spaces, for example a sauna, can contribute to diverse feminist outlooks in fashion and performance documentaiton. The chapter asks: 'How can documentation that draws from feminist perspectives counter erotic and sexual imagery within fashion?'

Sauna Traditions and Rituals

The Finnish sauna is one of many global rituals based on sweat bathing, or in simple terms, the use of heat and water to cleanse body and soul (Mackey, 2010; Murner, 1514, cited in Aaland, 1978; Tsonis, 2016). There are four kinds of sweat baths, and the Finnish sauna is catagorised as a 'water vapor sweat bath' (Tsonis, 2016, p. 45), due to the hot steam that rises from throwing water on hot stones that are heated by the fire. In Finnish, steam is referred to as *Löyly*. The steam and sweat sessions are followed by cold showers, plunging into a cold-water pool or rolling on the ice to cool down (Tsonis, 2016).

The sauna not only served rituals such as cleansing the body after hard labour in the fields (Aaland, 1978; Pentikäinen, 2005), but is closely connected to rituals of birth, child nursing, curing of the ill, death and burial (Pentikäinen, 2005). The belief that hot steam baths cure the ills while cleansing the soul, is shared by many traditions, from Japan to Ireland, Finland and Russia to northern America where sweat lodges are used, a concept borrowed from First Nation Americans and Canadians (Aaland, 1978). According to a Finnish proverb, *if a sick person is not cured by tar, spirits or sauna, then they will die*, sweat, or sauna, is seen quite differently, perhaps more practically, than the more

poetic African Bantu proverb *sweat comes from the outside and falls on men like dew on the grass* (Aaland, 1978).

In Finnish narrative traditions, bathing in the sauna was an occasion for especially women and young girls to be educated and informed about her transitions in life, about her responsibilities to being a girl, growing into adulthood as a young woman, a married wife and mother (Pentikäinen, 2005). It was also the duty of women within a given family to wash and prepare their loved ones for burial, which would be done on a wooden board with a specific kind of soap (Pentikäinen, 2005). Women and men, according to these traditions, also had separate turns to bathe in the sauna (Pentikäinen, 2005), unlike today when most believe that sauna is a mixed gender bathing and social activity.

In addition, the story of the sauna spirit is also one of the narrative traditions that continues to be shared (Pentikäinen, 2005). According to this tradition, the erotic narrative goes that the sauna spirit, usually a masculine male figure, would caress the last woman to be visiting the sauna, usually when she is peacefully falling asleep and alone in the warm steamy room (Pentikäinen, 2005). Needless to mention, the soft heat from the wood fire and steam of the sauna sets the atmosphere for this erotic dream to occur.

The Perfomance

The perfomance occurred on a cold day with outside temparatures dropped to minus 24 degrees. We, the authors, planned to do photo documentation of a performance in the snow and the natural environment of *Pyhä*, but the cold weather kept us inside. For practical reasons, as the space was cosy and worm, artist-researcher Miettinen conducted experimental photography in

the sauna when the idea emerged to use the space for documenting the performance. Miettinen was attracted to the soft light and ambience that enabled her to capture a specific phtographic quality based on contrasts created by the warm light of the fireplace (Figure 1).

The author-researchers Pietarinen and Sarantou executed the performance with specific garments that may (not) be considered fashion or fashionable (see Svendsen, 2004). One garment was created by the author Sarantou, partly from recycled materials, such as silver foil from commercial water bladders and white tulle. The other, worn by Pietarinen, was a classic black re-used formal dress. Wearing fashion was an unusual choice due to Finnish traditions when no clothing, or rather natural fibres, especially linen, cotton and wool, would be worn in a sauna (Veličkienė, 2016). Keeping the skin bare and free from covering by a second skin (Hemmings, 2008), is more comfortable due to the steam and sweat that goes along with the activity. Notably, both garments were uncomfortable as they were created from synthetic fibres, except the lining fo the foil bodice, which was a cotton blend and consequently fairly comfortable to wear in the heated environment. The selection of the garments, especially the elements of colour, was purposefully selected to create contrasts and interest in the photos.

Figure 1. A unique ambience and quality of light reflected in the silver foil of the garment and documented by camera. Photography by Satu Miettinen.

The performance it self was about water and creating löyly (steam) on the hot lava rocks of the sauna. It was simple: the performers were holding a water container and ladling water onto the rocks. The atmosphere of soft light and hazy air were documented by photo, while the same elements, in addition to the rhythmic and elusive sounds of hissing water on the rocks, and the metal clicking sounds of the ladle scraping the water container, were all captured in Miettien's video documentation.

Figures 2 and 3. Sauna stories and improvised rituals. Photography by Satu Miettinen.

Miettinen also captured, and later created a short video from the words by the performers saying 'we are running out of water', a quite intuitive and telling phrase that revealingly connects to the fashion collection Sarantou created. The phrase was spoken as the water container ran empty, yet Miettinen's artistic interpretation of the performance and the almost haunting words of the performance, skillfuly captured in her video documentaiton, will continue to tell these subtle stories of improvised, and perhaps new sauna rituals.

Methodology

The artist-researchers engaged in a collective autoethnographic (CAE) approach after the sauna performance and documentation activities. CAE is an approach to collaboratively conduct and analyse autoethnographic research based on cultural experiences, for example, with the result that more reliable data can be produced as analytical processes are shared and therefore deeper and more critical insights can be elicited (Chang et al., 2016; Cord & Clements, 2010). They captured their thoughts, stories, reflections in personal notes that were guided by a set of questions, for example 'what does it mean as Finnish person to wear smart attire in a sauna?', 'why did you engage in this performance and what was its meaning?' and 'why was it important to document the performance?'.

The self-documented and shared data were analysed according to emerging themes and discussed during a focus group. The six dominant themes that emerged from the CAE notes were 'sauna and family', 'sauna and nudity', 'perceptions and observations about wearing clothing in a sauna', 'the role of *löyly* and water', 'about this specific artistic performance in the sauna', and finally, 'the role of documentation'. The CAE reflections are presented in the following section as recollections and narrative accounts of the experiences of the artist-researchers (Reich, 2000); therefore, to distinguish the recollections the data is denoted as narrator one, two and three. Two artist-researchers, who are Finnish, can be described as 'insiders' of sauna practices, while the first author, who is not Finnish and was only introduced to sauna later in life while being an adult, has an outsider view on sauna practices.

The ethical principles and guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) were

considered throughout the course of the research. Ethical issues were taken into consideration at every phase of the research, when the authors engaged in CAE and data collection through the self-documented and shared data. The authors provided informed consent before the CAE process commenced.

Discussion

The reflections of the artist-researchers and narrators are explanatory according to the themes they are presented under, and so they will be represented as they were documented, with only a few mentions on further interpretation.

Sauna and Family

The following recollections of personal lived expereinces with Finnish family life in and around sauna practices, and even rituals, are documented by narrators one and two. These personal recollections support the findings of the reviewed literature (Aaland, 1978; Pentikäinen, 2005; Tsonis, 2016).

> *For me, sauna is one of the fundamentals of Finnish upbringing and culture. It is a place of cleansing, relaxing and many times talking in confidence with someone. With my adult son we share lots of planning and life philosophies in sauna. In my family, we enjoy family sauna where we bathe together. In my birth family we didn't bathe together but one after another.* (Narrator 1, age 49)

> *Being in the sauna is a communal event with either family members, sisters or women friends. My ancestors were born and died in the sauna. This meant that the new born was caped and the deceased washed and dressed*

> *for the last trip in the sauna. The sauna has been the cleanest, warmest and most peaceful place every day around the year, at least in the countryside. Other family celebrations, such as bridal sauna and weddings, are also associated with a lot of sauna memories, as the celebrations are often held in midsummer.*
> (Narrator 2, age 48)

Sauna and Nudity

Sauna practices, at least from the experiences of Narrator 3, are enjoyed by many in Finland due to respectful behaviour to others and the space in which the practices occur. In other words, it is usually a respectful practice. It remains an open question, by both insiders and outsiders to sauna practices, whether nudity is acceptable to any person using the sauna; hence, it cannot be accepted as a given that all Finnish people sauna in the nude no matter what the occasion. It is not a given that sauna is always done in the nude. In addition, the myth of mixed saunas, where men and women sauna together, is not a common practice, but rather a regional occurrence (Pentikäinen, 2005). However, some families enjoy the sauna as a part of quality time with family as Narrator one explains below. In the narration in the preceding section, Narrator two also referred to the sauna as an intimate space in which families gather, or that is enjoyed with sisters or friends, which mostly are not mixed. The recollections of Narrator two can be interpreted as the notion of embodied perceptions of an uneasy body (see Shinkle et al., 2013) in the case of naked documentation within the sauna.

> *The part that I had to learn is that you use sauna in the nude (for very good reasons), which Finnish people are very used to as they grow up with the tradition and I think they have a different sense of confidence and*

> *even respect for others' bodies, especially in the sauna.* (Narrator 3, age 50)

> *Enjoying sauna together with close family is done naked, an ultimate safe space with people you trust. I wouldn't be comfortable in having sauna with anyone or being naked with someone I don't know. Being naked makes you vulnerable.* (Narrator 1, age 49)

> *Maybe being naked would have been easier to be in the sauna, but taking photographs would have made it uncomfortable again. The sauna is a private and quiet space on a mind and body level.* (Narrator 2, age 48)

Perceptions and Observations About Wearing Clothing in a Sauna

The following recollections are intimate expressions of all the narrators. The use of formal dress in the sauna was perceived differently, with all narrators alluding to the notion of nudity and perhaps eroticism does not escape the perceptions of sauna despite the performers being fully dressed. The perceptions of celebrating life by wearing formal dress in the sauna is explored by Narrator two, while Narrator three explains that her intention was to pay respect to the sauna culture and rituals as 'dressing up' is a sign of showing respect to others from her cultural background.

> *Funny, staged, sauna photos became extremely close, personal, and warm. Naked narratives became fully clothed.* (Narrator 2, age 48)

> *Wearing clothes in sauna, especially festive clothes is contradictory as there is the idea of nakedness present. This feels funny and fresh, maybe even a bit bold and original.* (Narrator 1, age 49)

> *There is the contrast between what is expected in this milieu of sauna, which is nudity, but then there we are all in fancy dress, showing our respect for an age-old ritual in such a way.* (Narrator 3, age 50)

> *Wearing smart attire in a sauna became a metaphor for the celebration of human life from birth to death. The garment was a mould. It dictated how I sat, moved, and gave a finished role - I was a woman in a party dress.* (Narrator 2, age 48)

> *Dressing up for the sauna and looking smart in the sauna to me makes perfect sense, of course from my own cultural background.* (Narrator 3, age 50)

Role of Löyly and Water

The theme of

> *Löyly broke the awkward state of wearing smart attire in a sauna. Löyly is memory of a space, atmosphere, sound, being surrounded by the tactility of löyly and heat.* (Narrator 2, age 48)

> *There was also ongoing work on the theme of water in my artistic work, and environmental awareness about our diminishing water resources on this planet, so this was another element why I wanted to engage in the performance. The Löyly was a connection to the role of water in rituals and practices for wellbeing, such as this.* (Narrator 3, age 50)

About this Specific Artistic Performance in the Sauna

The notion of the documentation, and the care that was invested in making the performance and documentation comfortable and presenting a caring environment for the performers and the documentary artist, is reflected on. Kailo's (2019) notion of the sauna as gift giving and a shared social space of caring, is well-illustrated in the narrations. Mentioning of care, trust, and embodied perceptions (Shinkle et al., 2013) of being in touch with 'internal female worlds' (Narrator 1) was enabled by this intimate performance, whIch was documented in an intimate space.

Importantly, Narrator two referred to the performance in the sauna as 'staged' (see *Perceptions and observations about wearing clothing in a sauna*). The awareness of the performers of the space being changed into a specie or 'stage' for performance brought along a certain amount of tension, in addition to the use of formal wear in the sauna. Whether this tension was personally observed, or whether it is visible in the documented photographs is left to the interpretation of the reader.

> *My experience is that they were intuitive and improvisatory performances where one of perform as they felt good. The atmosphere was intimate and trusting, through the performative action we would learn something of ourselves and also of our artistic abilities. For me, these performances shifted from outside surface of naked female body into internal female worlds through the performance and clothing. I feel that these performances shifted the attention from the naked female body into more complex questions. Performing creates tensions, self-doubt and uncertainty of one's body and physical appearance.* (Narrator 1, age 49)

> *I had to move into my own area of discomfort because I didn't know how to act. Maybe being naked would have been easier to be in the sauna, but taking photographs would have made it uncomfortable again. The sauna is a private and quiet space on a mind and body level.* (Narrator 2, age 48)

> *When Satu photographs I feel comfortable as she is really focused on her technique. I was performing in sub-zero* 20 *degrees. Satu had very caringly heated the sauna so that I would warm up afterwards, and it was so cosy and warm. It was a gift really.* (Narrator 3, age 50)

Role of Documentation

Narrator one motivates in detail why the 'fragility of performance' needs care in documentation. This fragility does not only have its place due to the presence of the performers, but it includes the fragility of the moment, space, and the mood that makes the perfomance unique and fragile. It is such a fragile moment, which means that it can so easily be overlooked in documentation if there is not a sense for seeking out certain fragile moments for documentation. By recocnising such moments and acknolwedging their fragility, a certain quality is invested in the documentation – it is a gift given by the documentary artist.

Narrator three alludes to the different mindset needed to document fashion in a manner that is more intimate and subtle, far removed from the glare of fashion or catwalk spotlights. This unexpected subtleness, then, can be interpreted as a feminist view, and it is far removed from being obvious, or boring due to the mentioning of tension that prevails in the documentated outcomes – which may, or not, be considered fashion phtography.

> *I was not trying to document or capture the process as such. I was trying to create some images, shots that would convey something of the beauty, fun, uniqueness, a few rays of Kaamos (polar night) sun light and the fragility of performance. The content of the video and photography is somewhat packed as there are not only the performances but also clothing that has meanings. I wanted to create self-standing artistic images that would transmit something of sauna and its surrounding, the ice-cold winter forest and the women's moments and bodies engaged in the performance creating new contents and meanings.* (Narrator 1, age 49)

> *For me the documentation is important from a fashion perspective. The light, the mood, the ambience is incredible with the glow of the fire and the warm interior as it all can set a quite different scene for interesting photography. Fashion photography of this nature will be obviously more intimate and focussed on details. And it brings tension to the photography in that sense as it is unexpected.* (Narrator 3, age 50)

Conclusion

Borrowing from Kailo (2019), this performance and its documentation were about gift giving and social sharing. Firstly, the artist-researchers were not used to performing, but the improvised performance came about due to the friendships and trust shared within the group. Miettinen gifted her patience and skills as talented photographer by documentting the performances and the garments, capturing unique moments that may be considered a feminist approach to photographing fashion. The subtle light, warm ambience and glow of the space selected by Miettinen was an obvious choice to abandon the harsch

glare of the fashion spotlight, the fashion catwalk and an eroticised body. Her choices of space, light, garments and colleague-friends as perfomers, moves the documentation into a realistic and real-life improvised perfromance with strong traces of feminist values.

As Svendson (2004, p. 17) states, 'fashion is surface through and through', perhaps then this perfomance is not about fashion, nor are the performers wearing an appropriate second skin for the purpose of sauna. However, it is neither a performance that escapes eroticism as the sauna can be, at times at least, an esentially erotic space and practice (Pentikäinen, 2005). However, the elements of eroticicsm are created and documented through a feminist lens, one that is underpinned with values of care. This performance, and more importantly the documentation thereof, is about much more. It is about carefully considered documentation, and the documentation of care.

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Documenting Educational Spaces

CHAPTER 5

Refusing to Fade into the Background: Alternative Modes of Documentation in Socially Engaged Art

Raphael Vella
University of Malta

Abstract

This chapter questions the expectation of the objectivity of documentation in various fields. It discusses the relationship between truth and fiction in documentation, focusing on the documentation of a socially engaged art project organised with a group of participants from different African countries at the University of Malta. It analyses the potential of training nonprofessionals to document projects like these, concluding that documentation is a complex practice that reflects a constant negotiation of meanings rather than a sense of authenticity.

Keywords: Documentation; fiction; epistemology; cognitive justice; objectivity

Documentary: Fake News, Fiction and Photographic Witnessing

The numerous large-scale Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests sparked by George Floyd's death in Minneapolis in May, 2020, were documented internationally by countless photographers and photojournalists. Like many others, Montinique Monroe, a photojournalist based in Austin, Texas, felt it was her duty to record the protesters' outrage against police brutality and history of racial injustice through her camera lens. She knew what police killings felt like. Earlier that month, she was the only journalist who

attended the gravesite ceremony of Michael Ramos, a Black and Hispanic man shot dead by a police officer in Austin. 'As the ceremony began, I faded to the background as I usually do when I'm on a photo assignment, as if I wasn't there. I needed to capture Ramos's family in the purest most authentic way. I attempted to completely remove my emotions and maintain my role solely as a photojournalist. But I couldn't' (Monroe, 2020, para. 7). Monroe's struggle with her emotions is completely understandable. When she was still a baby in 1993, her father, Paul Monroe, was also killed by a police officer in Austin. His death led her to become a journalist and eventually document BLM protests. 'Black journalists and photographers deserve to tell the stories, which many of us have been fighting for so long to tell' (Beltrán Villamizar, 2020, para. 11).

Many questions come to mind as I digest Monroe's experience. Who should document stories like these, and how can they be documented? Whose epistemological framework could lead to the 'purest' results? How do you define authenticity in the documentation of other people's life experiences? How can the person behind the camera fade into the background? We face these and other related questions whenever we come across allegedly 'objective' accounts of cultures in documentaries and journalism or as we analyse the documentation of fieldwork among specific communities for research purposes. Critiques of the notion of journalistic objectivity have a long history and have become more pertinent in an age of 'fake news' and the BLM movement (Schudson, 1978; Wallace, 2019). In practical terms, we know that 'objectivity' often actually means that marginalised and Indigenous communities receive less coverage (Burrows, 2018). Moreover, a belief in the natural connection between journalistic impartiality and journalistic professionalism can work to guarantee the reader's acceptance of specific accounts of events

or, conversely, to discredit the writing of those who, like Monroe, might be considered to be too close to the subjects they are reporting on or shooting.

Various evaluations of possible epistemological shortcomings in the social sciences—particularly critiques of Eurocentrism in postcolonial theory—also have highlighted the politics of knowledge by questioning the idea that knowledge is external to the objects it portrays. Such critiques have underlined the political undercurrents that characterise the apparent neutrality of Western thought (Seth, 2014). Positivistic conceptions of research and knowledge tend to ignore whatever cannot be validated by science, constructing borders around accepted epistemologies and making it difficult, if not impossible, to achieve 'global cognitive justice' (Santos, 2016, p. viii). The notion of cognitive justice gives credence to less established Indigenous knowledges, simultaneously resisting the perceived universality and neutrality of more recognised and recognisable forms of hegemonic knowledge. In the formulation and communication of knowledge, 'objectivity' often revolves around a binary distinction between true and false, fact and fiction or things that are comprehensible and those that are incomprehensible. Santos (2007) refers to this habit of modern thought as 'abyssal thinking' (p. 45), a Western paradigm founded on a line that separates what lies on one side from whatever lies on the other, simultaneously hindering the possibility that the two sides can coexist.

For those who work in the arts, cognitive justice may also imply the opening of a space in which the familiar can be unlearned and written anew. Potentially, it teaches us to trust in the promise of things we do not yet recognise as candidates of artistic 'quality' and to regard the many things that are presented to us as 'fact' with suspicion. The

relationship between factuality and truth in documentary film, in particular, has a contested history harking back at least to the coining of the term *cinéma verité* (truth cinema) by French filmmaker Jean Rouch. Cinéma verité is an approach to documentary filmmaking that aims at capturing real people and actions while diverting attention away from the camera itself. In response to the term, Chris Marker, another French film director, rephrased it as *ciné, ma verité* (cinema, my truth), indicating that his viewpoint could not actually be erased (Lupton, 2005, p. 84).

A more outspoken critic of cinéma verité is German film director Werner Herzog. His 1992 film *Lessons of Darkness* about the burning oil fields in Kuwait after the first Gulf War begins with a quotation attributed to mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal hovering over a black screen: 'The collapse of the stellar universe will occur—like creation—in grandiose splendor'. Only, it turns out, the quotation is not by Pascal at all but was invented by Herzog himself and deliberately mis-attributed. 'Pascal himself could not have said it better', Herzog said later, in a speech about what he called 'ecstatic truth', or 'a kind of truth that is the enemy of the merely factual' (2010, p. 1). By establishing a lofty mood from the start, the director turns a 'lie' into truth, horror into poetry and documentary into fiction. More precisely, his blurring of distinctions between fiction and nonfiction in his films, combined with the camera's movements, music, extraordinary themes and director's narrative voice, illuminates a deeper, Nietzschean truth, namely 'that he seems to feel truth is something found less in the world than in the work of art' (Prager, 2007, p. 8). In particular, the use of the director's voice in several of Herzog's films exerts a subjective force that counters the commonplace strategy of making the director 'disappear' for the sake of authenticity or objectivity. In many documentaries, fictional devices such as camera angles, editing strategies

that transform a sequence's sense of time, construction of character, narrativity and musical accompaniment work together to foreground the film's emotional or 'theatrical' impact, which also implies that the documentary shares various crucial elements with fiction (Renov, 1993).

The question of subjectivity in documentaries (how authors frame the world in their films) is comparable with the issues that characterise the documentation of ephemeral works of art like performances (how works of art are framed in other works like films or photographs). Auslander (2006), for example, argued that the staging of the documentation of performance art combines both documentary and theatrical aspects. Although it is generally assumed that the role of documentation in performance art is to capture, as accurately as possible, an artist's intentions, it is also possible that documentation can become an aesthetic medium in its own right: '"Evidence" and "representation" are rather to be considered as two potentialities that coexist within the same document' (Gusman, 2019, p. 450). Even in the field of information science, the first-person perspective in visual forms of documentation is being considered a crucial component in understanding the lived experiences of those who document things, highlighting the emotional and poetic aspects that are important in arts-informed research but rarely discussed in research on information and documentation (Gorichanaz, 2019).

Without a doubt, the conventional belief in the empirical value of photography cannot be ignored completely. Since the times of Daguerre in the nineteenth century, the photographic medium has been popular for its first-hand ability to preserve and archive records of natural, topographic, ethnographic and architectural sights; in this way, the photograph has become a scientific method of data collection and 'photographic witnessing' (Schwartz, 2007, p. 68). However, this evidential aspect needs to be

counterbalanced by the fact that the documentation of a performance presents a fresh outlook on it. Therefore, documentation does not share a linear relationship with the performance but a cyclical one in which performance itself is transformed via its documentation and the documentation becomes a performance in its own right (Read, 2014). This cyclical nature also serves to highlight the problems associated with thinking of documentation as being essentially an archival or 'scientific' genre, one existing solely to present and preserve a fixed event in the past in its totality.

Major as Filmmaker: Documenting a Socially Engaged Project in Malta

Figure 1. Major Sium (foreground) during the first session of *Suitable Citizens*. Photography by Raphael Vella.

This chapter engages with the challenge of understanding the role of epistemological perspectives in the documentation of an EU-funded, socially engaged artistic research project carried out at the University of Malta in 2021. This research formed part of the *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS) project, a Europe-wide research project that included a testbed in which various communities were involved in arts-based activities and studies. The Maltese project being described in the present chapter studied how the arts can mitigate societal challenges such as the discrimination and exclusion experienced by African asylum-seekers and migrants in Malta, specifically through a collaborative art and fashion workshop. I conceived the research project in 2020 as part of a research team at the University of Malta, and we engaged three artists specialising in photography, screen printing and fashion (Giola Cassar, Sarah Maria Scicluna and Luke Azzopardi) to help out as teachers during the workshop. The workshop lasted a total of 50 hours and revolved around a pedagogical structure incorporating a sequence of activities like photography, screen printing on paper and fabric, the making of face masks and scarves and stencilling. All data collection strategies adopted in the current study were approved by the Faculty of Education's Research Ethics Committee (University of Malta).

The project's title, *Suitable Citizens*, refers to Malta's Citizenship Act, which requires candidates for citizenship by naturalisation to be 'suitable' (among other things) to be considered eligible. Although the study made no attempt to define 'suitability', the mixed methods strategies employed with this group of participants from Eritrea, Nigeria and Cameroon generated a good deal of data that questioned—directly or indirectly—the neutrality of an adjective like 'suitable', advocating for more inclusive forms of civic engagement.

These data, which frequently refer to issues of citizenship, detention, work and, particularly, the participants' aspirations for a more stable life, are not the focus of this chapter; rather, this chapter describes and analyses the project's documentation in still photography and video by another participant in *Suitable Citizens*. A few months before the study was underway, a young, long-term Eritrean resident in Malta—Major Sium—was selected and offered free online training in filmmaking and video editing prior to the commencement of the art workshop with the other participants. He was not given very detailed instructions but was asked to document the workshop and tell its story in a way he deemed adequate, using a combination of still photography and video. Major's teachers were two German filmmakers and curators, Sabine Küper-Büsch and Thomas Büsch, who have offered similar workshops to many participants in the past (including Major himself for around six months). Major spent around 50 hours of online sessions with Sabine and Thomas, developing ideas and preparatory tasks for his input in *Suitable Citizens* and improving his skills in the use of the WeVideo Hub, which permits users to share videos with others and edit them as a group. Information about these sessions was collected during informal discussions, as well as more formal data collected with Major, Sabine and Thomas during the semistructured interviews that were conducted at the end of the video shooting process.

Figure 2. Major during a fashion shoot at the University of Malta in *Suitable Citizens*. Photography by Elisa von Brockdorff.

The selection of a nonprofessional videographer for the workshop was not instigated by the conviction that a migrant's or amateur's vision would be more objective than a professional person's work. It was also not because of a lack of funds (Major and the other participants were all paid for their contribution to the research project). In our view, a person who had arrived by boat from the African continent eight years earlier and worked his way through different situations and employment positions in the country was clearly in a better position to understand many of the issues that would be brought up during focus groups, surveys, informal discussions during coffee breaks and other activities. For example, Major's description of the barriers faced by migrants in Malta correlates with explanations given by the other participants in *Suitable Citizens:* he referred to the legal challenges, a sense of seclusion and language barriers and difficulties in obtaining an employment licence. Like our other participants in the workshop, he also believed that arts workshops like *Suitable*

Citizens were mutually beneficial to migrant communities and locals, who could get to know these communities better. In an interview, he added that he hoped that people would be open to see migration from a different perspective if they watched his video. Data gathered from a visitor survey during an exhibition about the project confirmed that the majority of visitors felt a sense of empowerment after watching Major's film.

Even though Major was not expected to tell his own life story in the footage that he shot on his mobile phone, we believe that his role shared an indirect connection with the many stories of refugees and other visible minorities that have been published in recent years (e.g., Vella, 2020). This was confirmed by Major himself during our interview, in which he stated that he felt connected to the subject of the video he was shooting. Implicitly, Major's input in the project's documentation was also meant to interrogate unwritten descriptions of citizenship and civic engagement that frequently exclude members of visible minorities in public discourse. We hoped that Major's relative lack of experience would raise more pertinent questions about the eyes and hands behind the camera, hence underscoring the various problems associated with documentary objectivity outlined earlier. Documentation is never a neutral practice, and the choice of an Eritrean migrant as the documentarian in this project was not a neutral decision, either.

Finally, Major and all the other participants were very keen to learn new skills that they might find useful in other areas of life, and we felt that making documentation a part of the whole pedagogical process could integrate it more soundly into the workshop structure. Skills development played a central role in *Suitable Citizens*, and the participants' hunger for knowledge exceeded the research team's expectations. Pre- and post-test data collected from the workshop participants

correlate with Major's own experience of considering the workshop as an opportunity to learn different skills or develop those skills he already had even further. Technical problems associated with hand-held shooting and audio hitches caused by noise levels in the workshop show that Major's training was probably insufficient. However, both Major and the workshop participants stated that they would like more workshops like this to be available to expand their knowledge.

Documentation and Reflexivity

One of the outcomes of this learning curve was a degree of reflexivity that permeated Major's work for *Suitable Citizens,* as well as some preparatory work he carried out during his training sessions with Sabine and Thomas. During his training, he was in quarantine for two weeks, and he used this time to create a very intense monologue in which he made reference to a relationship he had while also talking randomly about his family, Eritrea and other challenges in his life. He showed how many things from his past life structure and challenge him in the present, simultaneously helping him process his current life in Malta. The raw quality of the footage and audio required a good deal of editing and editorial advice from Sabine and Thomas but added to the rather individual properties of his work.

In his video for *Suitable Citizens*, Major also became the narrator at times, appearing in front of his own camera as he pointed out what was going on in the workshop. Although Major shot most of the footage that was used in his video for *Suitable Citizens*, these sequences were filmed by another Eritrean participant. Major interrogated his own role in the epistemological framework of his video, explaining the pedagogical process but also stating, at one point, that he should be one of the participants in the

workshop rather than the person documenting everything. This metafictional quality draws attention to the creative mechanisms of the video, self-consciously bringing in the story's teller to reveal his positionality and outlook on the workshop. In place of a disembodied voice of God, the voice in the video has a body that links the real world to its representation in the video.

At other times, he interviewed the other participants and myself as the coordinator, asking us to describe our own experiences of the workshop. He also included an evaluation session, during which different participants discussed their interpretations of the stencilled images they had just produced. This multiple narration helps to foreground his documentation of this socially engaged art workshop as his own formulation of a story about others' workshop experiences within the parameters of an academic project with its own storied goals. The video shows that the workshop does not have an anonymous or single, overarching principle, even though its various participants share many ideas and creative processes.

Figure 3. A still from Major's video showing Major explaining the workshop process.

Conclusion

Needless to say, this analysis of the impossibility of a fly-on-the-wall documentation of reality must also take into account the unavoidable power relationships that exist between a group of invited participants and the academic and artistic team, which had more direct access to project funds and workshop equipment. This does not mean that Major's role would be comparable to that of the 'unreliable narrator' in fiction, film and documentary (Otway, 2015), but this relationship could clearly hold sway over the type of narration recorded in the video or included in the final cut.

We return now to a question we asked earlier: Can or should the author fade into the background? Major certainly did not fade into the background in his work on *Suitable Citizens*, and the results show that there is potential in documenting research projects by training persons like him in filmmaking, editing and/or photography. Other documentation options, such as commissioning a specialist or company to shoot the whole workshop process, would probably lead to more professional (and mainstream) results, but the investigation of alternative modes of representation offers researchers the possibility of studying documentation as a further elaboration (and fabrication) of the testbed. We did bring in a professional photographer on two occasions to take additional photographs, including the images of Major in the process of documenting the workshop. In conjunction with other still photographs taken by the researchers and the participants, these data underline the crucial role that perspective plays in documentation and in being a measure of self-referentiality. The visual data we gathered also provided us with evidence of the potential of filmmaking in qualitative research.

Major's work was neither pure fiction nor a mere reflection of a research study and artistic workshop. Because it

captured some of the participants' experiences and creative processes undertaken, the video clearly showed that it is not simply the unfiltered product of a recording machine but was influenced by a variety of subjectivities, negotiations and logistical factors, including the training that Major received in the weeks preceding the workshop. As such, it has indirectly documented a pedagogical edifice and highlighted the fact that the workshop itself was ultimately a pedagogical construction. Hopefully, it can help us grasp a more expanded view of cognitive justice.

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CHAPTER 6

Freedom in Practice: The Role of Documentation in Decolonising the Learning Space

Michelle Olga van Wyk
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
(Faculty of Informatics and Design) and
the University of Lapland (Faculty of Art and Design).

Figure 1: Creative experiment—Making a new way. Photograph by the author (2021).

Abstract

This autoethnographic experiment is based on the author's own learning experiences in the field of creative making. The investigation examines the possibilities for using decolonising approaches in learning design methods and in addressing the undeniable cry of the marginalised student. This experiment used creative writing as an arts-based method and visual documentation to reflect on the memories of one individual at different stages of learning. The author facilitated a reflective workshop with herself, and several personas of herself at different ages, to better understand how value in making and her own creative practice can be documented and reframed. The workshop consisted of reflecting on the understanding of value within personal practice and documenting these memories through written reflections and making of jewellery artefacts. Previous work has failed to address the role of personal storytelling and documentation as a tool to empower past and current learners who have been traumatised within the structures of an uncolonised design curriculum. The role of documentation as a step towards undoing cultural violence within learning experiences and traditionally marginalised Indigenous communities and persons of colour in Southern Africa under the Apartheid regime forms the core of this creative experiment, here with the intention of nurturing decolonising educational approaches within and outside the classroom.

Keywords: arts-based methods, jewellery, decolonisation, education, autoethnography

This chapter looks at the role that documenting can play in decolonising learning experiences. The thinking behind this creative experiment was anchored in investigating the remembered learning experience of the author, and as a result, it is written as a first-person narrative from here on forward.

This experiment documents the recollections of a group of person(a)s based on experiences at various stages of my (the author's) educational journey between the ages of 6 and 37 years of age. The 'group' experiment examined the brief past and present experiences linked to *remembering my learning* in formal educational contexts. This followed Bochner's (2012) suggestion of 'turning an ethnographic eye' on my own creative experiences and, in turn, choosing autoethnography as my lens (p. 156). Bochner defined autoethnography as texts that are written by the author in the first person, that have a specific case and personal focus over an extended period and that take on 'forms of writing associated with the novel or biography' (Bochner, 2012, p. 158). Furthermore, the last two qualities of autoethnographic texts are that they contain details pertaining to private experiences and emotions embedded herein and that they highlight relationships and connectedness that take place over time. (Bochner, 2012). Leavy (2015) explained that arts-based research (ABR) makes use of 'methodological tools' that draw on artistic expressions such as literature, music, performance and many other creative mediums (p. 50). These 'methodological tools' are the arts-based methods (ABMs), which are chosen artistic practices that have been adapted to communicate something specific about a phenomenon being investigated (Coemans & Hannes, 2017; Leavy, 2015). I chose autoethnographic creative writing as the ABM for this experiment because it is a form of creative expression in which I find great joy; and upon reflecting on this at the age of 37 (Figure 8), I have concluded that joy is a medium I wish to incorporate in how I create this chapter. Creative writing also intuitively supports autoethnography, which has formed the core of the methodological approach for this experiment and my doctoral thesis (Wall, 2016 Pace, 2012). By using an autoethnographic approach, I am both exploring my agency to draw on my own experiences and present them as valuable to myself and other audiences through the

lens of research. This itself feels like a revolutionary act in the face of what I have lived to be 'acceptable' within the hallways of education.

Furthermore, a creative writing approach strongly aligns itself with the practices of decolonised learning by intentionally focusing on documenting the experiences of the maker for the reader to better understand how personal experiences and contexts influence learning. This is seen in the method lending itself to the freedom found in self-reflective and memory work (Triantafylli & Bofylatus, 2019; Bochner, 2012). The documentation of this workshop formed the story of this autoethnographic account, and artefacts accompany the narrative (McIlveen, 2008).

Method to Memory

The personas and art(efacts) are based on moments of personal epiphany, described by Triantafylli and Bofylatus (2019) as 'remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life' (p. 2). These specific memories have been embedded in several learning phases of my life, through and in which I critically reflect on learning and making (Pace, 2012). These phases coincide with defined periods of learning in preprimary, primary and secondary (high) school, university and after university as a lecturer and entrepreneurial creator. For each phase, the reflection and piece are named after the age I associate the memories with. This experiment, which was positioned as a group activity, used making as a vehicle to showcase the reflective practice of remembering with myself/myselves through writing with myself. The main guiding questions upon reflecting were as follows: 'What did I find valuable in my experiences?' 'How did this perception of value transform over time?' 'What contributed towards the transformation?'

The significance of this documentative approach is personal to me, both as a lecturer and student at an institution of higher education, as I reflect on how the blade of Western education systematically shaped my multidimensional identity. This blade I too now wield. These experiences have moulded my understanding of what it meant to be a creator and left behind a perpetual interrogation of the relationship between my love and ability to express creatively. In embarking on my doctoral studies, I continue to search for an identity I was (un)consciously encouraged to forget. In my role as an educator, I have come full circle in once again facing the artist I want to be and finding my way back to the freedom I need to succeed in this task.

I see the impact this identity amnesia has on my contribution as a learning facilitator, an identity and educational curriculum forged in the embers of a post-Apartheid educational structure intended to correct the brutal impact of segregation but that is ill-considered for its previously disadvantaged learner who has only barely survived the erosion of the sense of self (Mavunga, 2019; Clarke & Lewis, 2016 p. 183; Luckett, 2016). The structures and content of design educational content that I have been a student and educator in are colonial in nature because they are founded on foreign content (i.e., not local) and based on the histories and knowledge systems emerging from Western colonial nations (Hendricks, 2018). Consequently, learners must conform their creative approaches, learning experiences and themselves to a predetermined norm to participate in or engage with the content that is taught. Decolonising learning spaces and experiences requires a dismantling of existing structures, perhaps even including physical ones and rebuilding with a conscientious and empathic approach towards a plural inclusive experience that perceives and embraces all worlds of knowledge as equal in importance.

Although arts-based content has been inclusive in the manner in which it incorporates flexibility and experimentation, I have found that my experience of ABM and creativity was often limited to traditional Western approaches to learning within the classroom. This has affected the way these personas, at different ages, have presented their creative self to the world. My creative identity within a marginalised community was also impacted; this further reinforced the sprouting disconnect between what I knew through embodied knowledge and the knowledge I acquired along my formal educational journey. Luckett (2016) eloquently put words to the experiences I am somehow unable to articulate myself:

> *Adopting a 'decolonial gaze' leads me to also explore structural and cultural constraints that inherited curricula are likely to place on pedagogic relations in the postcolonial present. The constraints identified are unequal access to civil society, unequal access to linguistic proficiency in the colonial languages and a lack of recognition of black students' identities, histories and cultures – all of which I suggest serve to block the full emergence of their agentic and creative powers.* (p. 3)

The inability to validate learning through acknowledging cultural context inhibits students from transforming the learning experience fully into their own (Ferreira et al., 2020; Crouch, 2007).

A Cry for Change

Although the need to reconsider the way in which learning is approached has been a growing need among learners for the last two decades (Hendricks, 2018; Giloi, 2017), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only magnified these micro chasms, but also expedited the need to address

what happens within and outside the classroom. The year 2015 saw students across South Africa protest against the structural and cultural discrimination embedded in institutions of higher education (Hendricks, 2018). Each movement was known by its hashtag followed by the particular cause underpinning the student protests. The movements were named by the students as a way to create social trending and nationwide support. These various protests, named and known locally as #rhodesmustfall (#RMF) and #feesmustfall (#FMF), saw student movements in South Africa highlighting the global urgency for change and revision of learning approaches for an inclusive university classroom to better fit the learners who are shaped within it (Morreira et al., 2020; Mavunga, 2019).

The undeniable cry for change is seen not only in these protests, but it is also reflected in the low pass rates seen in previously disadvantaged and marginalised groups (Luckett, 2016). Many curricula provided by schools and universities are built on a historic foundation of European/Western modernity (Chilisa, 2017; Guttrom, 2012). This has created the unspoken assumption that the knowledge system and the way it is presented in the classroom—whether in content or delivery—is the correct or best way to engage with the worlds of knowledge and, in the context of the current paper, art(efact) making (Creary, 2012). Herein lies the catalyst for knowledge hierarchies. Although many knowledge systems exist, those that are formalised through long periods of rule and documentation (especially in written form) are often the knowledge systems that are presented as proven, superior and reliable, consequently side-lining alternative knowledge systems (Chilisa, 2017). This happens despite the value that 'alternative' knowledge systems may hold. Additionally, decisions pertaining to what goes in curricula are developed without a wider inclusion of Indigenous voices, resulting in a Western system remaining at the heart of education. This facilitates cultural violence by enforcing a learning culture

that normalises European/Western knowledge systems in an African context (Galtung, 1990). In this way, students are systematically separated from the knowledge systems that they were raised with. Personally, this caused an internal division as to what I would draw on when solving a (creative) problem. An example of this came to mind when reflecting on story writing exercises in grade five—age 11. I would use my love for reading to draw on and write elaborate stories of a white, snow-filled Christmas, despite living in the southern hemisphere where the month of December would usually see temperature ranges between 33º and 38º Celsius. Ironically, I had never seen snow before. Yet I wrote about it as if it had been my reality all 11 years of my life. Somehow, the lived experiences of camping along the Atlantic coastline with my family had escaped me, as had eating delicious cold slices of watermelon, fish braais and building sandcastles under the African sun and on the Atlantic shores. Instead, I imagined myself among snowmen, with fur boots and sleds. I was a foreigner in my own imagination and, more strikingly, to my own reality, too. These were the stories I had read. The images I had seen in the books that were read to me and those I myself had read. My lived experiences were not echoed in any way in the classroom or in print. The language in which I was taught (English) was also not spoken in my home by my parents—my first source of communication and identity. Thus, to survive, I became a conduit between my first world and the one in which I found myself in the classroom. My parents had made a decision to place me in a private school, one that would present me with the best chance at securing success in a world they had known to be discriminatory, at best. To this day, I realise the complex relationship I have with the English language; it is the tool I most identify with to document my own journey, yet it also acts as a distorting lens through which I am seen. It is not my first language, yet because of my over 12 years of education, a significant part of me identifies myself in and through it.

Mapping a Way Out and Forward

Chilisa (2017) posited that Indigenous local knowledge (ILK) 'represents an underutilised resource that can be the foundation for developing problem-solving strategies for local communities' (p. 815). Furthermore, 'Investigating first what communities know and have can improve the understanding of local conditions and provide a productive context for solution-oriented research activities designed to help local communities' (Chilisa, 2017, p. 815). This is true for the dilemma that schools—and more recently universities—have faced. Tertiary education students, of whom most stem from marginalised communities, have resorted to protests to highlight their unhappiness with the structures they find themselves learning and heavily yoked in. The dilemma most educators (including myself) now find themselves in is that they can empathise with students because they were taught in the same manner and are a product of the same systems. Consequently, there is no clear path before us of how to go about decolonising (design) education. So how does one go about including changes that could benefit the learners and start to make small pivots towards a decolonised gaze? I have reflected on this question as a graduate student (aged 21) and as an educator, now aged 37.

Although there are undoubtedly many ways anything can (and should) be approached, I have chosen to attempt to answer my quest by creating a set of jewellery based on educational memories that I found to be interesting and valuable. I started by reflecting on specific experiences that I have always somehow carried in my body and committed these to a formally written account.

Six brief accounts at different ages, each an A4 page long. I wrote about what I found to be valuable, including what

I loved, what I hated, what I enjoyed and what I found to be difficult. I then made a collection of art(e)facts: six pairs of earrings, each incorporating an element related to the memory that I thought could potentially have offered me a sense of comfort or anchoring of some sort: a token for remembering my own identity outside of the structures of 'school' and to empower my sense of self within a flux of otherness. I chose to make earrings because of my knowledge as a jewellery designer and because of where they are worn on the body—on pierced earlobes—so that the pieces could whisper to me as they jostled and jingled, becoming a beautiful reminder and familiar voice of sorts—always visually audible to the world.

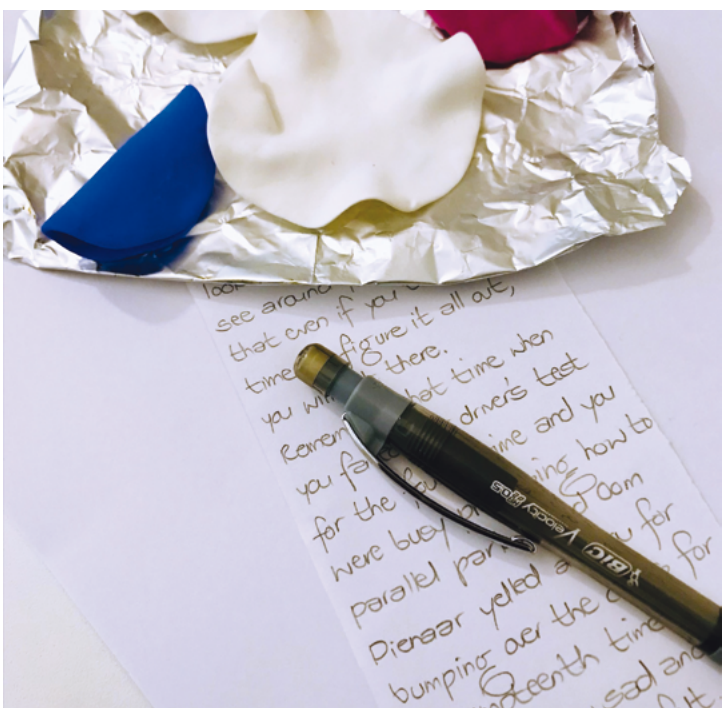

Figure 2. Reflections in university. Photograph by the author (2021)

Figure 3. Concealing elements. Photograph by the author (2021)

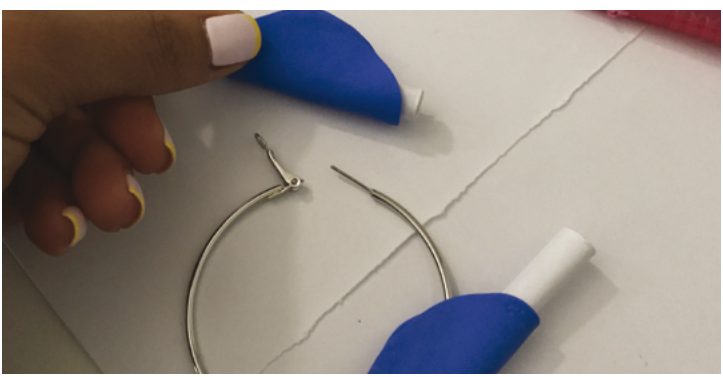

Figure 4. Assembly of Pair 3. Photograph by the author (2021).

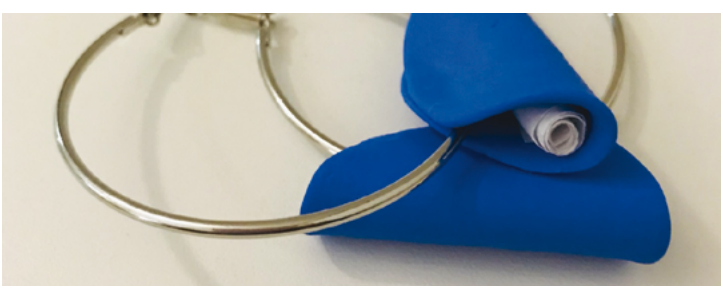

Figure 5. A note to self – remember. Photograph by the author (2021).

My materials included white metal for the hooped earrings, FIMO clay, coloured and graphite pencil and colour crayons. This combination of alternative materials was quite different from those I would use to make 'fine' jewellery (i.e., jewellery made from precious metals and gemstones), but the *otherness* helped my creative process of wanting to transform 'uncommon' materials into something 'precious'. My aim was to create quick prototype pieces that would reflect story and carry memory. The aim was to immerse myself in thinking through making. The standard maximum weight for an earring is 7 g per ear, so FIMO clay worked well because it can be thinned out and be a light material. Having this discipline-specific knowledge added to my hybrid knowledge toolkit that transformed my chosen materials (Ferreira et al., 2020). My experience as a jewellery student aged 19 (Figure 5) at university was framed by the fact that we worked and trained to make jewellery from 'precious' materials using very specific tools. This was the criterion that seemingly set jewellery *design* apart from craft, where craft (jewellery) was traditionally seen (and partially expected) to be less expensive and made from *non*precious materials, including, but not limited to, glass beads, clay, string, wood and so forth; so too were my perceptions framed for what I would identify as jewellery. Kraehe (2019) explained that upon inquiry, her students' understanding of the term *technologies* was narrowly defined by the common assumption that accepts only technological gadgets to be considered relevant when using the term. This constricted, predetermined and exclusive approach to definitions within the classroom demonstrates the manner in which the Western gaze has impacted education. Kraehe (2019) wrote, 'Often technologies are circumscribed by the values of Western capitalism and the desire for newer, better things to the detriment of human–nature relations' (p. 4). In my understanding, these 'human–nature relations' touch directly on the relationship

marginalised groups have with their lived experiences, tacit knowledge and surroundings. By acknowledging other gazes as a legitimate contributor to the pool of knowledge systems, it is necessary to address narrow definitions and the risk of contradicting them altogether. This seems to be the point of conflict—reframing what is and is not of value and to whom (Goili, 2017). Although this process is complex, it is crucial for the minds that find themselves at the receiving end of its outcomes, as well as those who led them in these processes. The global COVID-19 lockdown regulations have disrupted the status quo for face-to-face teaching. Educators have now had to innovate their approach towards teaching and learning, with practical courses facing a nuanced challenge. The need to teach remotely has emphasised the importance to adapt what is expected of students and the resources they have access to. Thus, innovation starts with reassessing what is absolutely necessary to hold onto to successfully navigate students through unchartered territories. In embarking on this reassessment, the conversation around decolonising approaches is unavoidable.

The process of making the pieces that I have documented offered a neutral space within which to unpack my experiences, acting as a support tool for holding onto multiple identities while navigating various gazes in education. The act of documenting my experiences in a threefold manner—writing, making and photography—offered a blended toolkit consisting of analogue and digital components. By using this process, I was better able to evidence my experience of learning. This aided in navigating the experience of better understanding my own voice in the bigger discourse of decolonising education content and learning approaches. Within my lived experiences, I was able to identify many of the voices I had come across on journal pages. Most importantly, though, I found an opportunity to understand the significance of my education

in the context of my being creative. Although the call for a decolonising education is important, it is equally important to empower and equip the voices that have long been muted by the inability to evidence their experiences. I believe that documentation through arts-based methods acts as a powerful melody that can carry many voices without having to shout in discord.

Figure 6. Pair 3—Yellow NINETEEN. Photograph by the author (2021)

Figure 7. Pair 4—Bougainvillea dream. Photograph by the author (2021)

Figure 8. THIRTY-SEVEN—Figuring it out. Photograph by the author (2021)

My small collection of artefacts represents many things to me, including a successful attempt to begin reflecting on my personal experiences of learning. This experiment is one of many small steps towards explicitly documenting my creative journey as I explore value through a personal lens. The process was an emotional one because it evoked a sense of agency, but also a sense of loss. Documentation in a personal capacity creates room for freedom to be uncovered, for grieving to happen. With that freedom came the unexpected prospect of contributing towards a personal, perhaps internal, decolonisation. As Ferreira et al. (2020) put it, 'Understanding teaching and learning as an interactive process of knowledge development: those who teach offer knowledge that must be open to the transformations and creations promoted by those who learn' (p. 442). It is my belief that this documentation method is a transformative tool, one that allows inclusivity and lends itself to the global storytelling and record keeping of the events that change lives.

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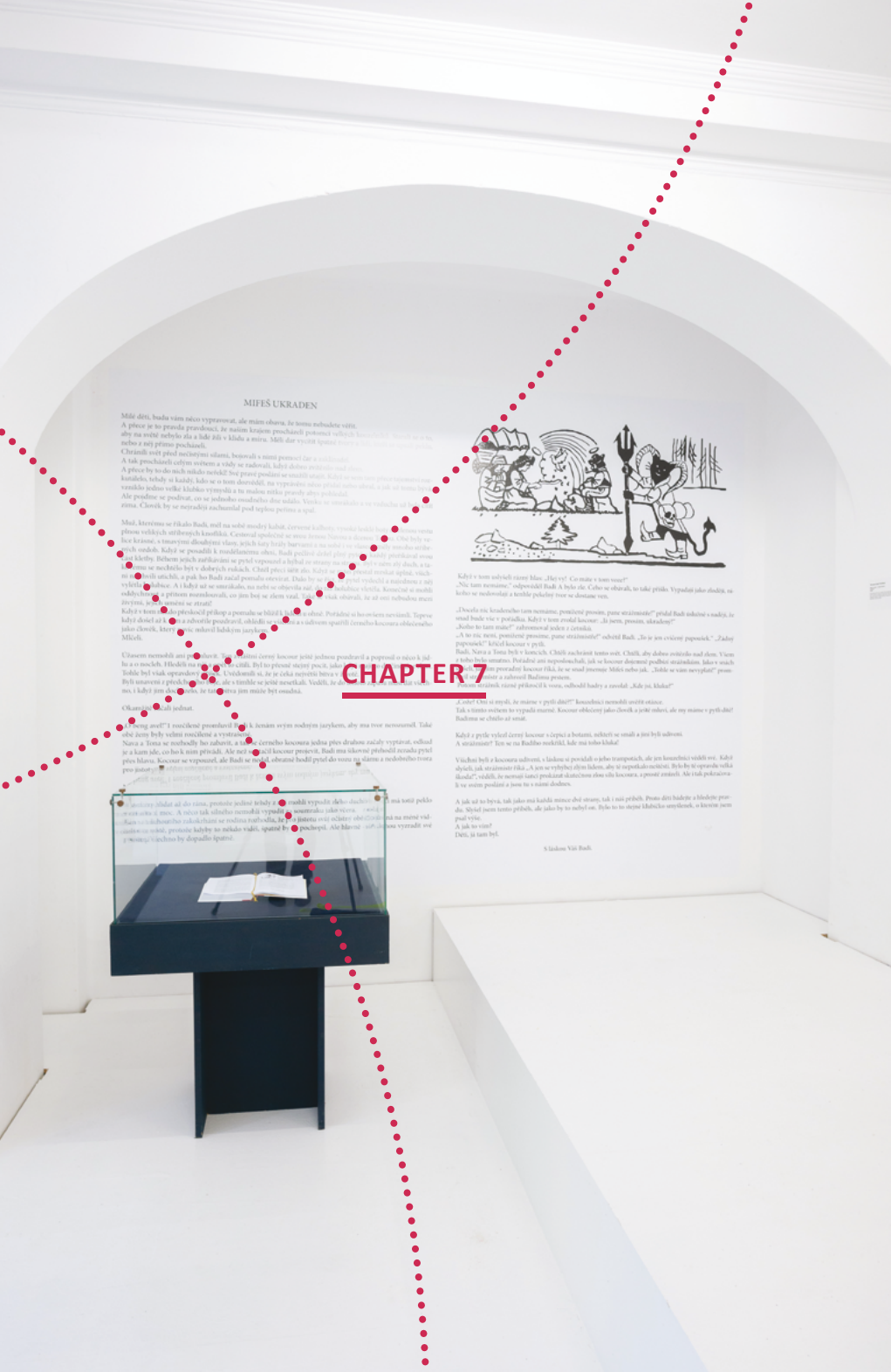
CHAPTER 7



The case of a stolen talking tomcat.

Artistic iconoclasm as a possible way of questioning the authority of image and stereotypes reproduced in culture and education.

Vendula Fremlová, Marie Fulková
Charles University

Abstract

This article presents and analyses the artistic work of a group of Czech and Slovak Romani artists called Romane Kale Panthera. Using an example of appropriating a classic work by famous Czech artist Josef Lada, Romane Kale Panthera show the problematic issue of verbal and visual testimonies and the changeability of their effects in the social environment. The focus of this article is the illustrated story of the talking tomcat, which is considered an icon by many generations of Czech children, the meaning of which, however, is the exact opposite for children from the Romani minority. We explain how, as a result of changes to the original text of the fairy tale and to the visual signs in this classic illustration, the contexts of the work, the position of its user and its performative effects change as well. In conclusion, the text reflects the function of language and the circumstances in which a change in thinking and behaviour occurs in relation to the 'other'.

Key words: Czech visual art and culture; subversion, iconoclasm, identity construction, Romani minority

The need to critically look at the functions of discourse—a field within which communication about art, creativity, education and society takes place—represents a significant dimension of socially engaged art, along with the need to critically look at the function of language in relation to visual

works and current artistic strategies. Certain expressions of socially engaged art and reflections on it invite us to think about our own language and certain alarming automatisms that are disseminated in the common linguistic environment of both majority and minority societies. Oftentimes, we try to correct or *resignify* these linguistic patterns, causing—to a certain extent—predictable behaviour and conduct; but with hindsight, we often end up seeing other clichés that are only newly framed by the rhetoric of inclusive and alternative educative discourses. We believe that it is important to disrupt one's own idea of an unproblematic and instant understanding that is merely a mimicry of a cultural code. To paraphrase Roland Barthes (2004), a cultural code operates as a collective, anonymous and authoritative voice presenting a ready-made, universally accepted truth. There is no harder task than changing one's own beliefs by way of critical thinking in the changing arena of art, culture and education. In the field of art and cultural education, there is still a lack of studies exploring issues such as professional vision and transdidactic approaches within the context of linguistic anthropology (Novotná, 2020). In the below passage, we present an inspirational moment that has made us reflect on the various forms of enculturation and the role of educators, curators or artists in this process. Primarily, though, it has made us reflect on what we do and how we act.

White Spaces/BíLá Místa—A Metaphor for Exclusion

In September 2020, curator and educator Vendula Fremlová, together with Romani curator, artist and writer Věra Duždová Horváthová, put on the exhibition White Spaces/**BíL**á **M**ísta[1] in Hraničář Gallery in Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic, presenting Romani and pro-Romani artists

[1]The capital letters in bold are an acronym that stands for BLM, that is, Black Lives Matter.

and their projects (Fremlová, 2020)[2]. The North Bohemian region, along with its capital, Ústí nad Labem, is infamous because of the majority society's extremely negative attitudes towards Roma. Internationally, notorious causes are just the tip of the iceberg of everyday racism—for example, the wall on Matiční street in Ústí nad Labem, built in 1999 to separate the Romani ghetto, the existence of other excluded localities in other parts of Ústí nad Labem and the whole region, anti-Romani marches or the most recent killing of a Romani man Stanislav Tomáš by police officers in the city of Teplice on 19 June 2021. Anti-Romani sentiments are more or less an everyday part of the lives of both Roma and non-Roma. Moreover, there has been a long-term absence of any positive portrayal of Roma and Romani culture, let alone an image of Roma as successful and self-confident artists who speak to the general public by means of their works of art[3]. This is why the issue of institutional exclusion and racism, the suppression of voices and the invisibility of minorities and certain groups of people—organically interconnected to the legacy of the Black Lives Matter movement—were pivotal topics of the exhibition. An integral part of the exhibition's conception was the (partial) topic of iconoclastic and subversive artistic responses and interventions questioning those works of art that are accepted by the majority society[4]. These two

[2]The article is partially based on curator Vendula Fremlová's text dwelling on the exhibition *White Spaces/BíLá Místa* and its institutional, societal and personal context. For more information on the exhibition, see https://hranicar-usti.cz/en/hranicar-gallery/white-spaces-bila-mista/ (16 August 2021).

[3]As stated by numerous studies investigating the media construction of minorities (Sedláková, 2007; Průchová Hrůzová, 2020) and extensive research by the Czech Agency for Social Inclusion as early as 2013 (Šimáček, 2013), the image of Roma in the media is still monotonous: it reiterates negative traits, stereotypes and half-truths.

[4]Currently, in connection with the global movement Black Lives Matter, we may observe iconoclastic responses to the statues and memorials of politicians and statesmen in public spaces that are or have been associated with or directly embodied racism, segregation and the promotion of slavery systems.

thematic lines of the exhibition merged into the issue of language as a normative and norm-creating tool that forms not only our individual utterances, but also our thinking.

Roland Barthes defines language through Saussure's concept of binary opposition language (langue)/speech (parole) as 'simultaneously a social institution and a system of values' (1968, p. 14). According to Barthes, language, or speech without the act of talking, defies any purpose because 'it resists the modification coming from a single individual (…), it is essentially a collective contract' (1968, p. 14). In opposition to language as a system of values, speech stands as an individual act of choice, as its actualisation. Although each concrete utterance always stems from language as a structure or convention, it may simultaneously reflect an effort to manifest the structure and uncover its rules. At a general level, it entails the topic of institutions as materialised conventions and contracts of the dominant culture, here juxtaposed with an individual act of art that strives to name these conventions and social contracts or to make them visible, often by its own proper means, subversively reduced to an absurdity. An example of such a work of art is the textual and visual intervention *Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History*, which the artistic group Romane Kale Panthera created for the exhibition White Spaces/BíLá Místa.

In relation to the work of Romane Kale Panthera, it is necessary to refer here to other classic theories of the discursive construction of identities (Foucault, 1980), ideological interpellations from the side of state apparatuses (Althusser, 2000) or performative acts and practices (Austin, 1975; Butler, 2006). They represent a social praxis practiced by constituting citations and reiterating norms and conventions in the process of signifying (by means of verbal and visual linguistic systems

and other media of communication). The constitution of identities (e.g., ethnic, gender) takes place in the process of enculturation, creating an illusion of a firmly fixed and corporeal ground, into which it is possible to inscribe the changeable system of the individual attributes of subjectivities. Through her sophisticated argumentation presented in the ground-breaking study Gender Trouble, here in a polemic with Foucault, Judith Butler claims that there is no such thing as a pre-existing corporeal ground:

> *If identity is asserted through a process of signification, if identity is always already signified, and yet continues to signify as it circulates within various interlocking discourses, then the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an 'I' that preexists signification.* (2006, p. 183)

If we take into account the notion of performative signification as a process, it is possible to destabilise the seemingly fixed nature of the biologically determined basis and disrupt it by subversive intervention into the practice of signification. As examples of resignification, Butler (2006) refers to the artistic forms of pastiche, parody and drag:

> *The critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them.* (2006, p. 188)

In the following text, we dwell on the aforementioned artwork *Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History*, which could, in a certain sense, function as a particular scenario, an example of a play with the names and attributes of the main characters. We try to consider the circumstances of its creation, as well as some critical questions and reflections that it induces.

Romane Kale Panthera: Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History

Since 2011, the group Romane Kale Panthera, whose core team are made up of artists Tamara Moyzes, Věra Duždová Horváthová and director, actor and activist David Tišer, has been commenting on the public causes related to individual or institutional racism[5]. By way of artistic activism[6] that this group employs, they have not only visualised but also introduced into the Czech-Slovak artistic milieu topics such as xenophobia, segregation (including segregation in education), violence perpetrated on Roma, the sterilisation of Romani women, the Romani Holocaust (the camps at Lety near Písek and Hodonín near Kunštát in Moravia) and the majority society and its establishment's disrespect towards the Romani Holocaust[7].

The visual and textual intervention *Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History* presents an appropriation of the book of fairy tales about the talking tomcat Mikeš by painter, illustrator and writer Josef Lada (1887–1957) from the mid-1930s. The book is very famous in Czechia. Specifically, the intervention concerns the chapter called Mikeš stolen, in which the main character, tomcat Mikeš, gets put in a bag and stolen by 'Gypsies'. This chapter has become the root of a case from 2010 that is infamously known from the media. At that time, together with chairperson Václav Miko, the association Roma Realia sent a letter to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. In it, it asked for Josef Lada's book to be used in educational processes with an accompanying commentary. The association justified its demand (and its view on Lada's book) for the media as follows:

[5]For more information about the group's activities, see http://www.tamaramoyzes.info/?cat=20 (9 August 2021).
[6]Here, artist and curator Tamara Moyzes promotes the term artivism.
[7]For more information, see https://www.rommuz.cz/en/lety-u-pisku/ https://www.newmemoriallety.com/

> *In our opinion, Josef Lada's book about Mikeš is not racist. However, we wanted to prevent making generalisations in front of school children that all Roma, or 'Gypsies', are bad. The only thing we are asking for is that after reading the passage about Gypsies, teachers provide a commentary to the effect that it is not a negative label for all of present day's Roma.* (Roma Realia, 2010)

Various voices—and it is necessary to point out that they were strongly anti-Romani—including disinformation and lies added fuel to the whole matter. In many respects, it was accompanied by almost hysterical statements by well-known and unknown people, as well as some political entities made on social media and in the media, which were flooded with proclamations such as 'We won't give up on tomcat Mikeš!',[8] Roma Realia declared on a number of occasions that they really appreciated Josef Lada's work. The chairperson resigned, and the matter gradually disappeared.

A decade later, Romane Kale Panthera's artwork revived the case of Mikeš in an effort to point not only to this specific matter evidencing the quality of public debate on the presence of racism in the cultural and educational environment but, above all, to highlight the possible negative contents and impact of some of the works of art that are universally loved and considered a part of Czech national cultural heritage. In the case of the book about Mikeš (and the specific chapter), it represents a canonical literary work for children, combining visual and linguistic elements.

First, let us ask why Roma Realia's demand related to the book provoked such hysterical responses by the public. Or even a more fundamental question that the artwork *Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History* brings about: What would happen if we took the above demand seriously?

[8] We won't give up on Mikeš, Czechs defend tomcat-racist. See https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/mikese-nedame-brani-cesi-kocoura-rasistu/r~i:article:665931/ (9 August 2021)

Figure 1. Josef Lada – Illustration for the chapter Mikeš stolen. Approx. 1934. © Josef Lada. Published with the kind permission of Josef Lada's heir. Talking tomcat Mikeš is approaching the fire, around which the 'Gypsies' are sitting, to ask them for overnight shelter and food. Subsequently, he is captured, put in a bag and beaten. This is a stereotypical portrayal of Roma as oriental travellers with bad intentions.

Figure 2. Romane Kale Panthera: Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History, 2020. Illustration accompanying the rewritten chapter of Josef Lada's fairy tale book. © Romane Kale Panthera. Published with the kind permission of Romane Kale Panthera. Next, we can see the inversion of good and bad. In the artistic intervention, the good tomcat Mikeš turns into Mifeš, an embodiment of evil. Roma are portrayed as good magicians fighting against evil.

Josef Lada and Mikeš

In Czech culture, Josef Lada (1887–1957) and his rich painting, illustration and literary work are a unique phenomenon. Despite attempts to study at an art school, Josef Lada settled for a bookbinder apprenticeship. Around 1908, he started to assert himself more noticeably as an illustrator, author of drawn anecdotes, caricatures and drawn series and later as an editor of humour magazines. His work, which uses a typically conflict-free, simple and kind humour, responded to the everyday life of 'an ordinary Czech person' against the backdrop of historical and political coups in the Central European cultural arena, in whose socially and linguistically diverse multinational society, the political and military decisions made over the course of the two wars manifested themselves fully in their absurd, as well as tragic nature. In the 1920s, Lada started to use his incommutably distinctive style of sharply cut and markedly stylised, almost naïve, drawings that has accompanied the whole body of his work:

> *Lada was a master of typifying simplification of the phenomena displayed and, for example when drawing the human eye, he only drew what one can see the most and he changed the iris into a mere enlarged dot – a dot, in which, however, the soul is mirrored (...). But he did not get stuck only on the simplification of shapes and he proceeded further, towards their transformation. Drawing, then, no longer is just a simplified image of natural reality, firmly tied to their basic traits, but something detached from it, freed and more artistic.* (Zemina, 2020, p. 52)

Besides his own books, Lada also illustrated, for instance, Jaroslav Hašek's world famous *The Good Soldier Švejk*, as well as many other books by prominent Czech authors. In

1934, he started to publish the tales of tomcat Mikeš first in a magazine as a series; a year later, he published the first volume as a book. He pursued independent production, too, put on exhibitions at home and abroad and also produced stage settings for theatre performances (including theatrical adaptations of his fairy tales). In 1947, that is, at the time of a gradual transformation of the political scene, Lada was appointed national artist. The rural topics of the traditional Czech countryside, folklore and, above all, the working class were undoubtedly well suited for the new organisation of Czechoslovak society, which was programmatically oriented towards socialist realism in the sphere of visual arts. As a result of this and, naturally, thanks to the author's considerable fame, the new regime was able to accept not only his visual idiosyncrasy, but also the partial echoes of traditional religious festivals used in his work. In the 1950s (i.e., at the time of severe state socialism), Lada often had exhibitions at home and abroad. It was during this time that several fairy tale films were created, using specific visual qualities for the stage and feature film costumes. It was not until the 1970s that Josef Lada's fairy tale drawings were turned into animated films.

The works of Josef Lada are renowned throughout the Czech Republic. His books for children are still published and recommended as literature in infant and junior school. Children know his illustrations and fairy tales from his books, their parents' tales, from television or other media. Lada's images of the Czech countryside are reproduced on Easter and Christmas cards and calendars and are also often part of commercial strategies used by various companies and their consumer products with a reference to tradition and quality. It is no wonder then that numerous surveys investigating primary school children's awareness and knowledge of essential information regarding Josef Lada's

personality and work show more than 90% success rate[9]. 'Josef Lada is admirable primarily in how his art manages to spread among Czechs almost like a germ. There is literally no one who would not know his images and who would not be able to identify them' (Pospiszyl, 1998). Lada's works are still somehow naturally present within the broad visual discourse. They are associated with the typically Czech tradition and national customs, as well as with childhood nostalgia, a child's perception of the world and times long gone. They are so internalised—we perceive them as part of our own childhood, that is, with a considerable dose of an illusion-like and romanticising way of seeing—that we rarely challenge them critically.

Roma Realia's request related to an explanation concerning the said passage from the book about Mikeš touched a sensitive place, in which various influences are combined and possibly even multiplied. Not only did it question a work of art that is popular and loved on a mass scale, but, by extension, it also touched the 'iconography of Czechness', as pointed out by Tomáš Pospiszyl in relation to Josef Lada's work. Pospiszyl made a comparison between Lada's work and the work of his 20-year-older contemporary, the painter Jakub Schikaneder, stating that both

> *contributed significantly to creating the iconography of Czechness. Jakub Schikaneder (1855–1924), as well as Josef Lada (1887–1957) created an iconographic world, on the basis of which we distinguish – often subconsciously – Czech from non-Czech; by means of*

[9]The dissertation 'The World of Josef Lada's Books for Children' presents the results of a quantitative research investigating primary school children's awareness of Josef Lada and his work. Of a total of 303 respondents, 96.4% stated that they knew Josef Lada; 92.4% knew that he was a painter and writer, 94.1% knew the character of tomcat Mikeš, 14.8% said their parents or grandparents' stories were the source of information about Mikeš, 72.6% referred to books, 53.1% referred to television, and 25.7% referred to school (Horáčková, 2007, pp. 94–97).

> *the scenes they created, a sensitive sensor has emerged within us, which can tell a street corner in Prague or a Czech landscape from thousands of similar ones abroad.* (1998)

What is key for the whole matter within the context of the aforementioned 'iconography of Czechness' is that the demand for revision or the critical voice itself came from representatives of Czech Roma, or Czechs of Romani ethnicity, and it related to Roma who are generally seen through the lens of prejudice in Czechia. Their portrayal is framed in a considerably negative way—they are perceived as strangers and parasites who only exploit—or, more precisely, abuse—social benefits. Why should the majority then have to listen to this 'strange' (and marginal) voice, which, on top of that, throws accusations at something inherently proper and pure, something that has helped to shape and has also partially conditioned the notion of Czechness for many decades? Why should the majority have to admit that there can be anything wrong with Lada's work[10], let alone the idea that racism could be present in his work when, in actual fact, it portrays the ordinary Czech countryside and is so popular?

Extremists quickly exploited the sensitive situation to add fuel to the fire and escalate anti-Romani sentiments. They exaggerated the demand made by the Romani association and made it seem like some form of medieval obscurantism—apparently, Roma wanted to ban the book about Mikeš (and Mikeš himself) from schools altogether. That way, they obscured the real crux of the matter and managed to turn a legitimate demand into absurdity.

There were only a few responses that took the demand seriously: that is, as a starting point for discussion about

[10]Here, we use these terms on purpose as part of binary oppositions.

the presence of racism in established works of art and, by extension, within the Czech cultural and educational space, as well as a starting point for a discussion concerning the hidden curriculum. One of the few responses was by the historian and publicist Tomáš Zahradníček:

> *Should such magazines and books be burnt? Kept secret? Actually, no one ever suggested that. (…) Education has various layers, we cannot skip or swap them. First, children have to learn to read on their own, that is what lists of recommended literature are for. When they are finally able to read, they need to learn to read critically, to become used to not agreeing when reading, to think about books and to talk about what they read. A book with a racist passage is not suited for the former but, by contrast, it is exceptionally well-suited for the latter. The current Mikeš-gate has shown that public debate was powerless vis-à-vis extremist readings of classic authors. ('Poor tomcat Mikeš! For decades, children were able to laugh at the tales of the well-travelled tomcat and now, Mikeš may have to disappear from schools,' wrote Blesk last Thursday.) That is why, in my opinion, Mikeš belongs to children. Even as a priority as a theme for family and civic education, for which it may serve as a nice example of the traces that everyday racism leaves in literature. It would be helpful to better map this whole area and to speak about it more systematically at home and in school (…).* (2010)

The above proposal is a revolutionary demand within the Czech context because it shifts the overall meaning of the uncritically accepted or almost adored book into the position of a starting point for discussion in civic education. Thereby, it would be possible to demonstrate the processes of naturalising and internalising opinions, including creating prejudice. First and foremost, though,

this would effectively mean that we would have to admit that the work is problematic. However, such an 'actualisation' would not necessarily have to constitute the devaluation of the work: on the contrary, it could become a means of its appreciation.

The Context of Czech Education – Literature for (all?) Children

So, what is the reality of Czech households and Czech education, in which Josef Lada's images are permanently present? Do discussions concerning the stereotypical and stereotyping portrayal of Roma as thieves and bad elements take place? We fear they do not. Such discussions do not take place either as part of teaching the Czech language and literature or as part of art education, which

> *likes to think of itself as a space for tolerance and free expression, but the discourse in schools is very good at controlling 'speaking' about certain topics, their choice, their visual grasp. It is impossible to speak of some sort of direct prohibition in discourse – it is more the case of an order to 'speak correctly' (…).* (Fulková, 2007, p. 60)

Unfortunately, we find the request to 'speak correctly' is rarely reflected upon critically, not only in the practice of primary school teaching, but also, for instance, in the education of future teachers. This is reflected in dissertations produced at pedagogical faculties where, on the contrary, one would expect a critical approach. These dissertations mostly overlook this problematic passage, as well as Lada's humorous work from the 1910s and 1920s,

in which examples of a stereotypical portrayal of Roma[11] can be found, too. For example, in the bachelor's thesis *The Current Value of Josef Lada's Illustrations for Present-day Child Audiences*, the case of Mikeš is mentioned, but it is described in very uncertain and vague terms, using an almost naïve vocabulary and diction, as if it were a tale with a happy ending:

> *In the end, tomcat Mikeš succeeded in capturing the hearts of all spectators of various creeds and races after, at a certain point in time, the disputes surrounding the tale Scary tomcat Mikeš calmed down. In this episode, someone puts the tomcat in a bag and throws it onto a carriage. In the end, he explains everything; and all ends well.* (Flídrová, 2020, p. 44)[12]

The history and theory of literature for children describe the world of Josef Lada, in which people, animals and fairy tale creatures live side by side, in a similarly harmonious, peaceful and conflict-free manner:

> *Lada's world of books for children is a world of basic values and unfailing support systems, the reliable environment of the home, joy and the life feelings of a*

[11]Tomáš Prokůpek mapped Lada's production for humour papers in a publication called 'Josef Lada. Humours. Drawn Anecdotes from Humour Papers 1911–1916' (Prokůpek, 2014). Among other things, one can find other jokes about itinerant comedians, robbers and thieves who are portrayed as Roma. However, these works by Lada are not known on a mass scale; within the context of his artistic production, they are only known within expert circles.

[12]The title Scary Mikeš is also the title of one of the chapters of Josef Lada's book that precedes the chapter 'Mikeš Stolen'. Both chapters were merged for the purposes of the 1972 animated film Scary Mikeš. It is likely that the author did not read the book but only watched the animated film on YouTube. There, the episode is published under the name 'Scary Tomcat Mikeš' (Gypsies steal Mikeš in a bag), accompanied by a nationalist commentary that equates the demand with an attack on Czech culture or even stealing culture. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V1jtdHi5Uw (16 August 2021).

> *country child; it is a world of the typical Czech countryside from his own childhood, nature, animals, fairy tale creatures and folk saying, and simultaneously a world of distinctive charm, humour and joy.* (Chaloupka & Voráček, 1984, p. 236)

Undoubtedly, the description is fitting in many respects. However, there is an implicit assumption that Lada's approach as an author is a value and support system, that is, a benefit to any child. If we formulated this reflection differently, we would say that a work of art and its value actually exist, irrespective of its concrete reader anchored in a historical, socioeconomic, political, cultural and personal situation. Yet, each artwork is in fact completed by its concrete reader or spectator and vice versa: the artwork cocreates its concrete reader. Critical approaches as part of the theory of children's literature have investigated, for example, who the assumed reader-child (Hník, 2007) is, pointing out that every child is different and reaching the conclusion that the majority of children's literature employs an essentialist idea of childhood and the child. For example, Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (2018) refers to Jacqueline Rose's feminist approach that

> *primarily shows that 'children' differ depending on their social class, race, ethnic heritage, gender and other characteristics, but her conclusion is even more radical: according to her, a 'child' is a construct created because of the needs of the authors and critics of children's literature, not an observable, objective, scientific entity.* (p. 17)

The essentialist idea of childhood and the child is applied in the field of art education and education in general in a similar way: there, the child (pupil) is constructed as a neutral ground for the projection of criteria for assessing a child's artwork (Fulková, 2008, p. 126) or as imaginary 'pedagogized identities of learners and teachers' (Brown et

al., 2006, p. 127). If we consider these critical reflections, we must ask the following question: How can a concrete Romani child in a concrete situation cope with reading and leafing through the chapter *Mikeš Stolen* and, by extension, the whole book *Mikeš*? When Vendula Fremlová spoke to Věra Duždová Horváthová, the coauthor of the artwork *Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History*, she recalled the feelings that she experienced when reading the passage of the book as a child, that is, at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. She spoke of how, in that given moment when 'Gypsies' steal Mikeš, she was so ashamed that she would rather 'bury herself underground and never get out again'. (Naturally, this negative experience became one of the motivations for the subversive take on this canonical work.) We can assume that more Romani children have experienced similar feelings of shame and inferiority and that this experience is just a small piece in the process of constructing their identities.

Since the time of Věra Duždová Horváthová's childhood, that is, over the past 30 years, the situation has not changed. The reading of the chapter *Mikeš Stolen* is still not accompanied by a clarification or an explanation, even though the current didactics of literature (Hník, 2014) state an explicit demand for providing a context and reflection when reading any text used in schools. However, so far, this has not happened in the practice of teaching reading comprehension in schools.

Still, what is even more important is that in primary education in the Czech Republic, there has been a long-term absence of topics related to the Romani minority and its culture, along with positive role models, examples and portrayals of Roma fulfilling their functions for Romani, as

well as non-Romani children[13]. This means that Romani children practically have almost no chance of encountering positive role models in a Czech school; instead, besides the everyday injustices, they also encounter, for example, an image of Roma who steal a likeable talking tomcat, who is the main character of a popular book and a fairy tale film. For non-Romani children, this stereotypical portrayal complements and completes the jigsaw of prejudicial views. In both cases, the categories us–them: Czechs—Roma, Roma—Czechs is affirmed and solidified; in the process, it is the image of Roma that is framed negatively.

Iconoclasms as an Opportunity for a Critical Perspective. Mikeš vs. Mifeš.

Since romanticism, we have associated fine or visual art with freedom, free expression and speech and free thinking. Still, even this common viewpoint is simplistic. Art is not just a sphere of freedom. There are works of art—and not just historical ones, but also more or less contemporary—that consolidate or even cocreate the routine and stereotypical ways of seeing and presenting concrete people and groups of people. It is necessary to realise that the language of artwork is subject to the trends, policies and ideologies of a given period. This language, too, is often a tool and representative of the dominant culture. Language codes, including the language of visual art, are normative—they form our thinking, regulate, shape and predetermine us. In the unique and distinctive work of Josef Lada, or, more precisely, in the part of his work that is still widely known on a massive scale in the former Czechoslovak space, it is

[13]You can find practical tips and advice concerning what an inclusive classroom looks like, including the presentation of the cultures of all pupils, in the practical manual on inclusive education for Czech teachers 'Every Child Matters' (Fremlová, 2020). See https://www.zalezinakazdemditeti.cz/

the 'iconography of Czechness' that sets and determines the sensors of its Czech recipients. This entails reproducing negative portrayals of Roma, though, too. Furthermore, this very ambivalent combination also influences and forms the perceptions by Romani recipients with respect to both Romaniness and Czechness.

Along with the appropriation of certain forms, topics and motives, iconoclastic and subversive reinterpretations of established visual and literary works are one possible critical method of pointing to stereotyping in art. For the artistic group Romane Kale Panthera, subversion and iconoclasm are one of the many shapes of their artistic activism. The textual and visual intervention *Mifeš Stolen—A Rewrite of History*, literally as well as figuratively, rewrites the famous work. The artists have replaced the negative image of 'Gypsies' in Lada's original with an image of Roma as mysterious magicians, travelling through time and appearing in certain places to fight evil and protect humankind. The otherwise good tomcat Mikeš changes into the demonic Mifeš—it is not a coincidence that the distorted name Mifeš is reminiscent of Mephistopheles. The artwork uses the inversion of good and evil, offering the spectator and reader an entirely new image that shows a positive portrayal of Roma. The inversion of good and evil was not enough for Romane Kale Panthera, though. Even though the artists have replaced the negative and stereotypical image of Roma present in Lada's work—itinerant 'Gypsies' steal more or less anything, even a talking tomcat, whom they trick to harm him—they have purposefully used other stereotypes to complement it. Specifically, they use the deep-rooted belief that Roma can do magic: they combine the majority's prejudice with Romani superstitiousness concerning cats. Thus, they have drawn attention not only to superstitions, stereotypes and stigmas, their functionality and deep rootedness in both the majority and Romani society, but they also point to the notion that we can only overcome

them by making an effort to understand one another; we can only achieve this by being open to others. '(O)ur rewritten version of the tale ends with the sentence "every coin has two sides", which invites child readers to not allow stereotypes to influence them and to not be afraid of having their own opinion' (Duždová Horváthová, 2020).

Figures 3 and 4. Romane Kale Panthera: Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History. View of the exhibition, 2020. Photo: Tomáš Lumpe. © Romane Kale Panthera, Tomáš Lumpe. The artwork Mifeš Stolen – A Rewrite of History was produced for the exhibition White Spaces/BíLá Místa put on in 2020 in Ústí nad Labem. As for the formal aspects, the group used current postconceptual artistic trends, employing a critical approach to museal forms of presenting artefacts. The artwork took the form of an installation—the text, accompanied by an illustration, was glued onto the gallery's wall in a monumental format; the book Mikeš with a sticker stuck over the original text of the chapter was placed in a glass display case in front of the wallpaper.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we referred to speech as defined by Barthes as an 'actualisation of language' or concrete speech as an actualisation of the structure, and we explored Judith Butler's concept of 'resignification'. We believe that we can

understand works such as Romane Kale Panthera's *Mifeš Stolen* that intervene in the structure of the original work and transform it in a similar way. Here, iconoclasm does not function literally as the destruction of an image but rather as a way of questioning the authority and power of that image, because of which stereotypical and prejudicial views are further reproduced and solidified in society.

The whole matter surrounding the well-liked Mikeš, which became polarised along strongly nationalist lines and to which—naturally, besides Lada's Mikeš himself—the group drew attention by means of its artwork, shows us how necessary and refreshing an 'actualisation' of thinking could be and, in fact, is. Irrespective of what sphere of human activity we navigate and which society we come from, thinking often remains trapped within limits, structures or social contracts that are internalised, so much so that we are not aware of them and consider them natural. Art enables us to step beyond and over these limits of (implied, enforced) normality, thus allowing us to discover what we have overlooked so far. Only from this perspective can we change personal behaviour, conduct, thinking and, for example, the ways in which art and educational institutions and their curricula operate. To allow another experience to speak to us can only be enriching.

How can a realisation or an 'utterance of another experience' occur? An important dimension of the aforementioned 'actualisation of thinking' is by way of personal experience and singularity—an encounter with difference and otherness, that is, in a concrete situation which often emerges unexpectedly but can contain the potential for change. Here, we reach the area of ethics and politics: the following questions, as determined by one's position(ality) always arise: 'here I am, in what kind of situation and what can I do?' (Fulková & Tipton, 2013, p. 83), to which it is necessary to respond not with sympathy or charity but with an act

of solidarity that expresses 'impossible identifications' (Rancière, 2015, p. 162) and does not need its sufferers to be in an unequal position. The group Romane Kale Panthera's appropriation of the talking tomcat, along with the visual and linguistic games, is cute only at first sight. They demand the spectator's attention and situated activity. They do not want sympathy because they have no interest in the existence of the weak; they demand the solidarity of equals. From the perspective of the ethics and politics of conduct, what emerges here is a new claim, one that is accurately formulated by political scientist Pavel Barša in 'Paths to Emancipation', in which he distinguishes between the terms *solidarity* and *sympathy*:

> *The solidarity of equals opens people of difference within themselves and to others; the sympathy with those who are not equal nails both sides to pre-allocated identities. If some sort of equality is thus achieved, then, it is the equality of people as the same beings subjected to suffering, not as others – as beings capable of transcending themselves in terms of conduct. In post-humanistic emancipation, it is not a matter of attaining sameness, even if it were allocated to everyone in equal measure. This emancipation does not await us at the end of the journey, by which we would be returning from the other to the self but at its turnings – in unpredictable encounters with the other, which, similar to us, is in the process of abandoning itself.* (2015, p. 218)

In keeping with the tradition of the children's visual game 'find five differences', let us go back to the two illustrations of the talking tomcat and look at them carefully. We can determine precisely in how many details the illustrations differ from each other. By the same token, we should be able to discern the different meanings and be able to name them, along with the markedly different readings that they

may evoke in different people and what identities they may lead and fixate to. Perhaps, we could wave off the entire *case of the stolen talking tomcat*. After all, it is just an image! In actual fact, though, it is the image itself that illustrates to us in an exemplary way the power that images have over the whole of society.

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to our colleagues who contributed to our study and to Josef Lada's heir, who allowed us to use Lada's artwork: Věra Duždová Horváthová; Tamara Moyzes; David Tišer; Josef Lada; and Tomáš Lumpe.

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CHAPTER 8

Documenting the Outcomes of Participation in Socially Engaged Projects

Milosh Raykov and Raphael Vella
University of Malta

Abstract

This chapter presents an approach for documenting the outcomes of participation in socially engaged projects through a brief overview of data visualisation in mixed methods research and the provision of examples that illustrate a variety of possible forms for quantitative results; the chapter also specifies some of the possibilities for the integration of these results with qualitative data. Based on the existing evidence in this emerging field of information design, this form of documenting and presenting the outcomes of socially engaged arts can impact the public and decision making about issues affecting marginalised community members; this can occur through cocreative engagement with artists who try to make change by increasing awareness and mobilising support for their causes.

Keywords: Socially engaged arts; outcomes; presentation of results; data visualisation, documentation

Despite the rapid social development and recognition of fundamental human rights over the past few decades in most parts of the world (Beitz, 2011; Streeten, 1981; United Nations General Assembly, 1949), a large body of evidence consistently has demonstrated widespread discrimination towards people with specific personal and sociodemographic characteristics (Arrow et al., 2015). A large number of studies in Europe and other countries have also demonstrated widespread discrimination (EU-MIDIS, 2010, 2017), most frequently based on ethnic or immigrant

origin (Esses, 2021; Kende et al., 2021), gender (Cleveland et al., 2013; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011), sexual orientation (Patacchini et al., 2015; Przybysz et al., 2021), religious beliefs (Evans, 2012) and disability (Hackett et al., 2020).

Many scholars have agreed that despite the strong political commitment to increase social cohesion and provide conditions for the development of all members of society, regardless of their personal and social characteristics, many dimensions of discrimination in Europe, particularly the Roma population (Kende et al., 2021), women (Rogers, 2005; Bader et al., 2018) and LBGTQ people (Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2010; Lee & Ostergard Jr., 2017), are still unexplored, requiring urgent interventions to improve their status. Because prejudices and discrimination represent a significant societal challenge that negatively influences inclusion, individual well-being, health and personal development, social cohesion and overall social and economic development, in addition to being considered a form of intelligent and sustainable growth, inclusion is considered one of the most severe societal challenges. Because of the high incidence of discrimination, the development of inclusive societies is one of the most significant strategic priorities in the EU (European Commission, 2010). However, one of the main obstacles to inclusion is discrimination, which is, to different extents, noticeable in all countries, regardless of their economic and social development.

Many theories have attempted to explain the causes of discrimination (Fibbi et al., 2021) by emphasising the individual level and labour market factors, intergroup relations and organisational and structural factors as causes of discrimination. Research has clearly explained the complexity of the discrimination phenomenon, with prejudices that are based on negative emotional attitudes

towards individuals or groups with specific personal or demographic characteristics. Because such negative emotions are usually developed over a long period, they are highly resistant to change. The most efficient way to influence prejudice and, consequently, discrimination is integrated schooling and multicultural education based on socialisation with intergroup contacts (Aboud & Levy, 2000; Yang, 2021). Socially engaged arts as a collaborative artist-led creative socially engaged activity (Hope, 2017) has increasingly gained popularity as a practice that can confront some of the most pressing issues that prevent inclusion (Belfiore, 2002). However, this domain is still insufficiently examined (Belfiore, 2021); hence, our study aims to contribute to this research domain.

Scarce research on participation in arts and cultural activities in Malta, which have usually been conducted as a part of comprehensive European studies, has shown that this participation is relatively low (European Commission, 2015), with a wide variation among members of different social groups (Briguglio, 2017). There are evident concerns and policy efforts being made to widen participation and include a larger number of Maltese people in various spheres of social life, including education, cultural activities and the arts (MEDE, 2019).

Because socially engaged arts studies have focused on support for the development of personal knowledge and skills (‘Knowing’) through collaborative and cocreative activities (‘Being with’), devoted work (‘Doing for’) to create hope and confidence (‘Enabling’) and to support the development of dispositions for social transformation (‘Maintaining belief’), the current study was conceptualised according to Swanson’s (1991) empirical theory of caring. Maltese experimental testbed studies have also been informed by Tronto’s theory of care (Tronto, 1987, 1993, 2013), which recognises that humans are the receivers

and givers of care, here based on human cooperation and recognition of their mutual interdependence.

Research Problem

The general objective of the research project *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS) was to examine the marginal positioning of some social groups and communities in Europe, including under-represented members of society who experience power imbalances and different forms of marginalisation. The project focused on objective scientific evaluation based on a mixed methods approach combining a variety of qualitative and quantitative data sources to document the impact of socially engaged arts (Leavy, 2017; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). The objectives of the AMASS study were to develop multidisciplinary methods for capturing, assessing and harnessing the impact of socially engaged arts and to use the research findings to evaluate and develop new policy frameworks for using arts as a way to overcome the existing societal challenges (AMASS proposal).

The aim of the testbed studies conducted in Malta, which were part of this large European project, was to collect new evidence about the role of the arts in mitigating societal challenges through involvement in different forms of socially engaged arts. The collaborative studies in Malta included five experimental testbed studies conducted by the national research team members consisting of academic researchers, artists, artist-teachers and members of national NGOs working together with the participants in various testbed studies. In addition to the evaluation of the participation in the testbed studies, these studies also aimed to examine the impact of artistic production on the audience visiting such artistic events as a way to examine the potential of socially engaged arts in influencing public opinions about marginalised social groups.

The qualitative component of the present study is focused on the exploration of the research questions about participants' and visitors' experiences of and attitudes towards participation in the organised collaborative studies. The data preparation for this part of the mixed methods study is still ongoing. This chapter focuses on presenting the quantitative data collected from two finalised testbed studies, here with the specific goal of documenting how socially engaged arts can influence the public beyond the parameters of the conducted workshops.

Research Method

To examine and document the impact of socially engaged arts on various marginalised groups, the current study applied a mixed methods approach combining the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods; doing so goes beyond the limitations of single method approaches and explores the complex issues related to marginalisation and the imbalance of power of marginalised groups. This same mixed methods approach was also used for presenting the results of the current study.

Among the many scholars who emphasised the important role of effective communication and dissemination of research findings, Takahashi (2017) promoted data visualisation, which over the last decade has emerged as an increasingly popular and powerful form of documentary able to depict a large amount of information about the natural and human world 'at a glance'. According to Takahashi (2017), despite being typically silent, data visualisation includes a metaphorical 'voice' of others. Because the ubiquitous data visualisations influence how we perceive the world around us, Takahashi argued that 'we need documentaries across all genres and all media that deconstruct and question the idea of what it means to voice—and to give voice to others' (2017, p. 393).

In the current study, quantitative data collection included pre- and post-assessment surveys collecting data from the participants in testbed studies and visitors to the events organised by each testbed study. Qualitative data collection generally includes individual and focus group interviews, reflective journals and photovoice techniques. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial plans for data collection were impromptu changed. Almost all paper-and-pencil surveys were converted to online surveys or to standardised online interviews. Originally planned face-to-face interviews were also converted to an online form. As indicated, the present paper is based on the results from still ongoing testbed studies, so it includes only quantitative findings because this part of data collection was conducted during the early phases of the testbed studies.

The study included 18-year-old or older participants who provided their informed consent to participate and were members of NGOs wanting to collaborate with the Maltese AMASS team. The participants were recruited with the assistance of the collaborating NGOs, and the study included participants regardless of their gender and ethnicity or other professional activities and regardless of their educational attainment. The NGOs acted as gatekeepers and assisted with the provision of access to the participants. The academics involved in the research design and development of the instruments applied in the current study were involved in consultations with other team members and the collaborating NGOs to refine the instruments and adapt them to the specific research setting.

A quantitative analysis of data available for the present study included a descriptive analysis and visualisation of quantitative data to document the impact of the conducted testbed studies. Visualisation of the data and descriptive analysis were applied to present the main findings. The study also applied parametric and nonparametric inferential

techniques to examine the differences between the participants based on their basic demographic characteristics.

In contemporary culture, visual communication is increasingly present and sometimes replaces classical textual and pictural presentations. In these conditions, visual forms of documentation are increasingly important for efficient communication and support for decision making about improving the conditions for decent life and work of all society members. Damyanov and Tsankov (2018) believed that contemporary culture is visual because data visualisation is an increasingly popular form of communication and argued, as many other scholars (e.g., Polman & Gebre, 2015; Van Hecke et al., 2020), that there is a lack of studies examining the application of infographics in the domains of teaching and learning science.

According to Tufte (2001), the graphical presentation of data is an efficient way to disseminate research findings because it presents the information clearly, precisely and more efficiently than other forms of presentations. The visualisation of research findings also has the potential to induce emotional involvement and improve understanding of the presented information (Wheeldon & Åhlberg, 2012), which is important for solid documentation of the results from socially engaged studies.

The presentation of data in graphical and symbolic form is increasingly used and supported by mixed methods scholars (Cornelio & Roig, 2020; Van Harpen, 2020) because it enriches the existing presentation and documentary forms. New software for data analysis and visualisation supports progress and helps mixed methods research evolve and apply an actual holistic approach through the presentation of the convergence of the quantitative and qualitative perspectives (Verdugo-Castro et al., 2019).

The joint visual display of different types of information, or the 'crossover' visual extensions (Onwuegbuzie & Dickinson, 2008), supports the integration of findings from complex mixed methods studies and aids in the development of new insights from data (Guetterman et al., 2015). Also, because the multidimensional nature of research topics and integration of qualitative and quantitative results of mixed methods studies is usually highly complex, a graphical presentation of the applied procedures and results is highly beneficial for the understanding of the results and the research process (Ivankova et al., 2006).

The applied data visualisation is conceptualised according to the recognition that quantitative methods are a form of art and science of learning from data (Agresti & Franklin, 2007) and that are presented in the form of storytelling with data (Knaflic, 2015). This approach is consistent with the applied mixed methods principles and presentation of results in the form of data visualisation and infographics that consist of integrated data for the dissemination of results and documentation of the specific aspects of socially engaged arts.

The current study was designed as an explanatory sequential mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017) to integrate the variety of qualitative and quantitative data from five testbed studies; the aim was to evaluate and document the impact of socially engaged arts. A complete description of the conceptualisation of the applied methodological approach and data analysis has been described in a separate article (Raykov, 2021).

The present study is based on data collected through testbed studies in Malta during the spring and summer of 2021 as a component of the large international collaborative AMASS project. This chapter draws on quantitative data

from the *Il-Pożittivi* theatre play that was created by the Culture Venture creative enterprise directed by Tony Attard, with data collected from the testbed study Suitable Citizens led by Professor Raphael Vella and a team of artist-teachers in collaboration with an NGO and its members. The study was approved by the institutional ethics review board.

Results and Conclusions

The sample of participants in the *Il-Pożittivi* study (Figure 1) consisted of 63 participants who participated in the first phase of the testbed study and 41 visitors who attended the first theatre performance. The sample consisted of an almost equal number of participants divided into two groups (below the age of 39, 51%, and participants 40 years old or more, 49%). Similarly, half the participants (51.2%) were females, and a slightly smaller proportion were males (46.3%). A tiny number of participants reported some other gender identification (2.4%). Regarding nationality, most participants (95%) were from Malta, while the remaining participants (5%) were from other countries. Regarding membership in the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM), 20% of the participants were members of this organisation. In comparison, the remaining participants (80%) were visitors coming to see a play related to the experiences of people affected with HIV.

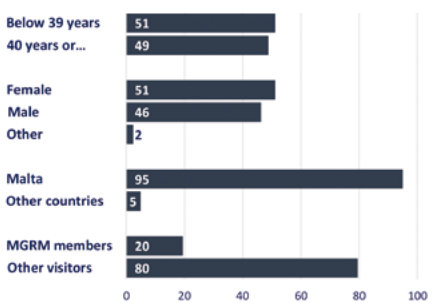

Figure 1. Characteristics of the participants involved in the study

To a significant extent, the analysis of the incidence of the perceived reasons for discrimination was consistent with previous studies conducted in the European Union and in Malta through Eurobarometer and the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Surveys (EU-MIDIS, 2010, 2017). We also found that the participants perceived discrimination based on ethnic origin as the most frequent form of discrimination, with 67% of participants considering this form of discrimination as 'very widespread'. This proposition is much higher because the remaining 33% of the participants indicated that this form of discrimination is a 'fairly widespread' phenomenon (Figure 2). As Figure 2 shows, a large number of the participants believed that discrimination towards people with HIV infection is 'very widespread' (52%). In comparison, discrimination towards people with a different religion or beliefs was 32%.

A smaller but a considerable number of participants believed that discrimination based on gender (23%), disability (21%) and sexual orientation (16%) was also 'very widespread', while the fewest number of participants perceived health status (9%) and age (5%) as a source of discrimination. The results should be cautiously interpreted because much greater numbers believed that the above-listed forms of discrimination exist but that they are less widespread.

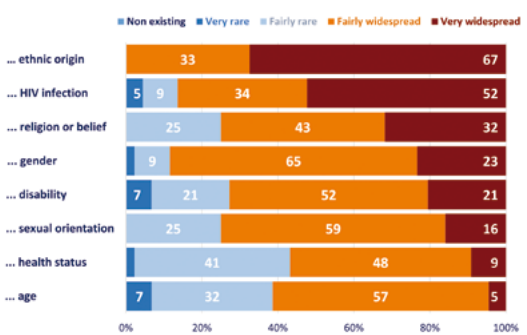

Figure 2. Perceived sources of discrimination

Figure 3 shows the data related to the experiences of participants in socially engaged art activities based on the results from a semantic differential that was used to examine the participants' dispositions towards such activities. The results indicate that the participants' dispositions towards socially engaged arts were highly positive. On a 7-point scale, most of the participants indicated highly positive evaluations close to the maximum positive attitudes. Their average responses were around six, indicating that the participants positively evaluated different aspects of socially engaged arts. According to the results, the participants perceived such activities as powerful, active, valuable, exciting, optimistic, empowering and socially acceptable. The only difference was noticeable regarding the complexity that the participants perceived as a challenging characteristic of the socially engaged art activities. This result is valuable for artists and their preparations of performances for visitors with various levels of education and knowledge about complex social issues. Also, the participants and visitors similarly perceived the value of socially engaged arts. The only statistically significant difference is that the visitors of the theatre performance perceived this play as more optimistic than the visitors of the initial experimental performance. This is probably the result of the refinements of the initial script following the feedback received from MGRM members and other visitors (Gatt et al., 2021). This cocreation approach seems like a promising way to increase the impact on the visitors and their opinions about the content of a performance.

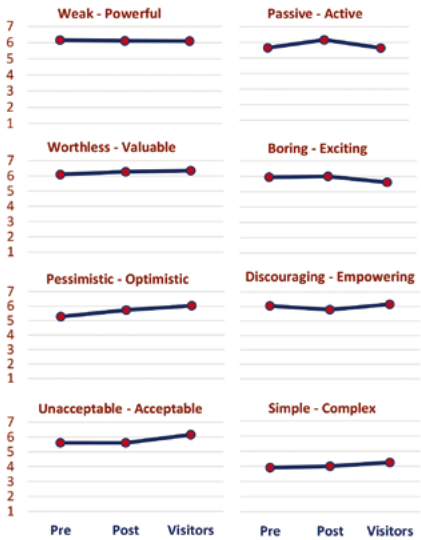

Figure 3. Experience of participation in socially engaged arts activities

One of the AMASS study objectives was to examine the impact of socially engaged art activities on developing participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes towards socially engaged arts. Almost all the visitors agreed or strongly agreed (45% and 53% respectively) that they felt emotional during the performance. Also, a significant majority (91%) of the visitors agreed or strongly agreed (48% and 43%) that the performance increased their knowledge about HIV and improved their understanding of HIV-related issues. Finally, all the participants reported that performances like this could change people's attitudes or public opinions about HIV. Also, almost all the participants agreed that the play was well written. Based on the results, it seems likely that socially engaged arts have a large amount of potential to change the perceptions of marginalised social groups and, in this way, the prejudices and discrimination they experience. This is vital because the main objective of the socially engaged arts is to contribute to progressive social change and contribute to the well-being of people and society.

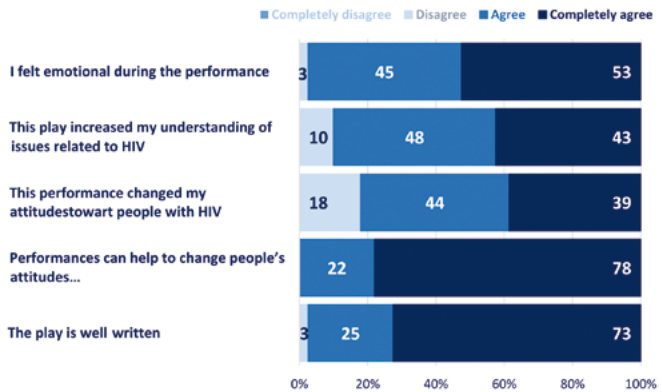

Figure 4. The impact of socially engaged arts on visitors' experiences and opinions

This project was focused on developing the participants' and visitors' knowledge and skills, as well as their interest in socially engaged arts. The results presented in Figure 5 demonstrate that most of the participants felt that their participation to a great extent ('very much') contributed to the development of their interest in theatre (61%), community engagement (56%) and understanding of vulnerable populations (50%), along with more courage to communicate about HIV (50%). A significant number of the participants also reported that their participation had a greater contribution to their motivation to learn (44%) and ability to think critically (33%). The smallest impact was identified regarding the development of leadership skills (11%). Also, a relatively small number of participants indicated that this activity contributed to their research skills (22%), ability to reflect on activities in daily life (22%) and their ability to work and cooperate with others (17%). Many of the participants also indicated that their participation 'contributed quite a bit' to the development of their interests, skills and abilities that, together with the reported strong impact, demonstrates the overall positive outcome.

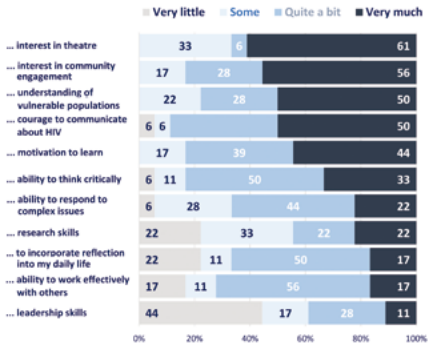

Figure 5. Contribution of participation in socially engaged art activities on visitors' knowledge and skills

In the second project, *Suitable Citizens*, a particularly strong impact of participation in socially engaged art projects was visible regarding the development of skills and knowledge related to some specific techniques for screen printing (Figure 6). Most of the participants also significantly improved their knowledge about the history of printing and their general skills and knowledge about the materials and tools required for screen printing. The participants reported a smaller but significant improvement of skills and knowledge about health and safety, preparation of images, artistic photography, textures and selection of colours for screen printing. Some minor improvements they also reported involved fashion design, the composition of photos, observation of details and sewing skills. The smallest benefits were identified regarding photo editing skills, visualisation and drawing ability. This is understandable because the development of such abilities and skills requires a large amount of training and practice. During the next phase of this study, we plan to conduct an additional analysis of the qualitative data to enrich the findings from this quantitative study that included a small number of workshop participants. Still, the results provide some valuable insights that are relevant for the planning and realisation of similar activities in the future.

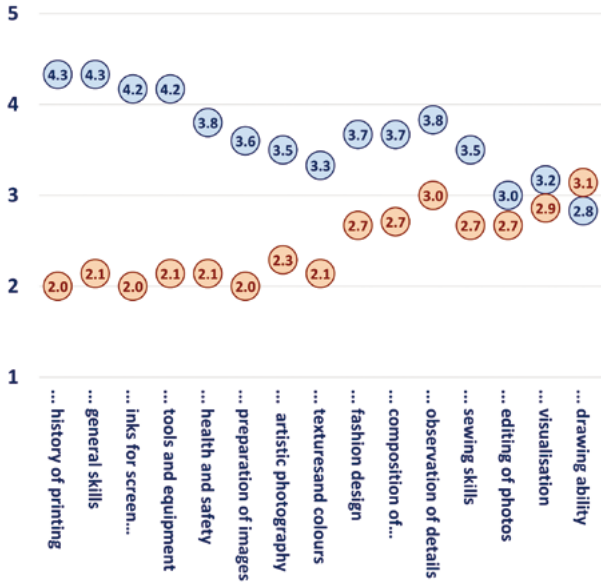

Figure 6. Development of skills and knowledge about socially engaged arts

Figure 7 shows that 71% of the visitors to the experimental online reading session of *Il-Pożittivi* indicated that because of their participation, they developed interests in participation, 91% reported increased knowledge about social engagement, and 84% felt more informed about participatory arts. With some slight but statistically nonsignificant variations, the visitors to the theatre performance reported very similar, highly positive opinions about the benefits of their visits. In sum, this analysis shows that a significant majority of the participants were satisfied with the outcomes of attending this socially engaged art event. The obtained results are consistent with the scarce findings from the literature in this domain and confirm the main objective of this study to create a powerful play with the potential to influence public opinions about people affected with HIV.

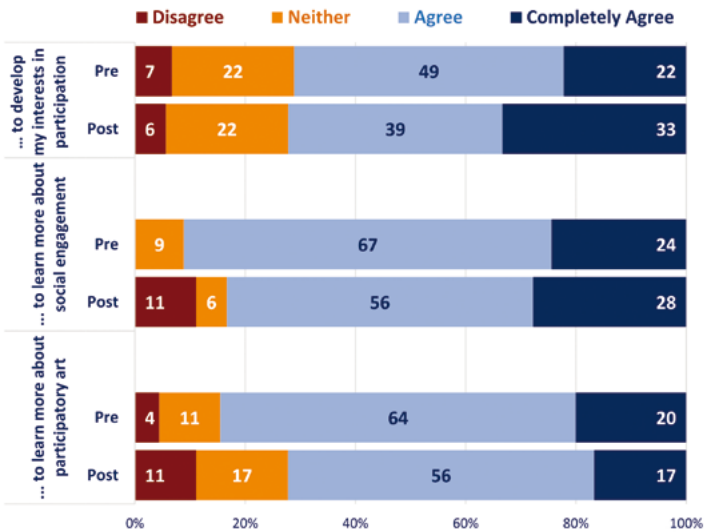

Figure 7. Expectation and evaluation of SEA (MGRM)

The final evaluation (Figure 8) shows that the experience of virtually all visitors of the theatre performance was highly positive. Based on the results, almost all the visitors indicated readiness to attend again or recommend visits to similar events to their friends or relatives. The postevaluation of the experimental script reading indicates a slightly lower likelihood of participants to attend again or recommend similar events to their friends or family members. This result could be explained by the less authentic environment of this experimental reading and the improvement of the script for this performance, which was based on the feedback received following the initial experimental performance. The findings from this part of the study demonstrate the high engagement and interest of visitors in socially engaged arts, justifying the efforts to create similar activities that aim to contribute to positive social change and improve the status and well-being of marginalised groups.

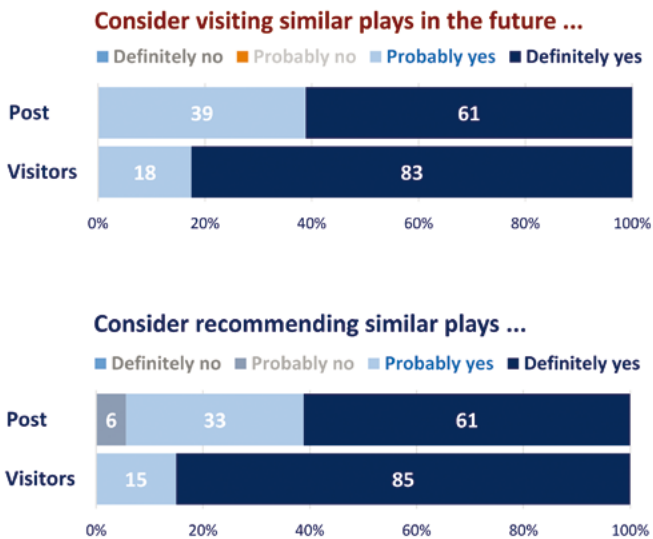

Figure 8. Overall evaluation of the participants' experiences

Concluding Remarks

The current presentation from the still ongoing testbed studies, in addition to the limitations of cross-sectional studies, cannot determine causality; it can only identify associations and assume the background mechanisms that are expected to be enhanced by the inclusion of the qualitative findings and their triangulation. In addition, the limited number of participants decreases the reliability of the findings, preventing broader generalisations. It is expected that the integration of comparable data from the other testbed studies part of this project and the integration of the findings from individual and focus group interviews will contribute to mitigating this limitation.

The selection of the participants probably influenced the results because the engaged participants were self-selected

based on their interests in socially engaged arts and membership in the local NGOs. However, the results provide strong indications appropriate for the migrants and people with learning difficulties but require further exploration and cross-validation through future studies focused on other research settings and differently selected participants.

This chapter has presented a mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative evaluation of participants' and visitors' expectations and experiences, documenting the learning outcomes of their preparation and visits to the socially engaged arts events created by the AMASS team in Malta. This study was designed as a mixed methods evaluation involving an exploratory approach consisting of interviews with the participants and a survey of the participants and visitors (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017) based on a dialogical, critical and participatory approach of researchers with different methodological orientations (Taylor & Raykov, 2020). The study has summarised the quantitative data collected from two phases of one of the mixed methods studies conducted in Malta. The results document the outcomes of socially engaged arts studies and the learning about marginalised groups through the audience's participation. Many scholars identified the contribution of data visualisations to documenting as a metaphorical 'voice' of others (Takahashi, 2017) that also contributes to an easier and faster comprehension of abstracted information (Jason & Glenwick, 2016).

In addition to the traditional application of a graphical presentation of statistical findings, which is now more accessible because of the development of new software (Bazeley, 2003; Friendly, 2008), the visual display can also be used for presenting the results of qualitative studies (Tashakkori et al., 2020). Jason and Glenwick (2016) also considered that technological advances in data collection and analysis contribute to the increased use of the

visual data presentation of abstracted information and development of new forms of visual presentations of qualitative and quantitative data (e.g., sparklines, bubble charts, heat maps, phrase nets and sentiment analysis) in the domain of community-based research.

Infographic and data visualisation that systematically present information and increase the perceptibility of the structure and hidden patterns of research findings are significant because of the rapidly increasing amount of distributed information through popular and academic media (Dur, 2014). Scholars have progressively recognised that including visuals or additional forms of data is beneficial for the presentation of qualitative and quantitative data (Baran et al., 2019). Research also has shown that the inclusion of infographics as a concise and visually appealing form of information in disseminating research findings increases readers' awareness and interest in the literature (Huang, 2018).

Infographics simplify complex ideas by using visual data to present research findings; infographics are also more likely to attract attention and improve memory (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2016; Dur, 2012). Research has shown that visual data increase the recollection of the presented content (Carney & Levin, 2002; Mayer et al., 1996; Velayo & Quick, 2000) by decreasing cognitive load (Paas et al., 2003) and using dual coding, which makes learning more efficient (Paivio & Csapo, 1973; Najjar, 1995). Also, research in the domain of neuroscience has provided additional evidence that the presentation of information in visual form can improve the speed, understanding and memorisation of the presented content because the area of the brain involved in the processing of visual data represent a large part of the cortex (Tory & Moller, 2004; Ware, 2012).

The empirical results of the current study demonstrate that the participants had high expectations from their participation and that, in most cases, their expectations from participatory activities were fulfilled or even exceeded. The study also indicates that the participants in the testbed studies developed various skills and improved knowledge about socially engaged arts. The study also provides evidence of the participants' positive experiences, as demonstrated through their desire to extend participation in testbed studies, participate again and recommend participation in similar activities to their friends or relatives. The results confirm the expectation that the activities designed according to the theory and practice of care that was in the guiding principle for conceptualisation and testbed activities have the potential to provide transformative experiences and contribute to participants' empowerment and the development of their knowledge and confidence to engage in debates and activities that can empower their communities and improve their integration in society.

Regarding the objective to illustrate a way of documenting the results of AMASS studies, the current study has demonstrated that visual representations and the documenting of complex content are increasingly popular forms of dissemination (Otten et al., 2015; Davis & Quinn, 2013), which is important for documentation and wide popularisation of benefits from socially engaged arts. According to Gordon (2021), data visualisation is 'fantastic art', transforming data into a visual context in the form of charts, graphs, text and images that simplify a large amount of data and, in this way, provide better support in the decision-making process. It seems realistic that this way of documenting cocreative socially engaged art activities has the potential to contribute to the public and decision-makers while improving the conditions of marginalized social groups.

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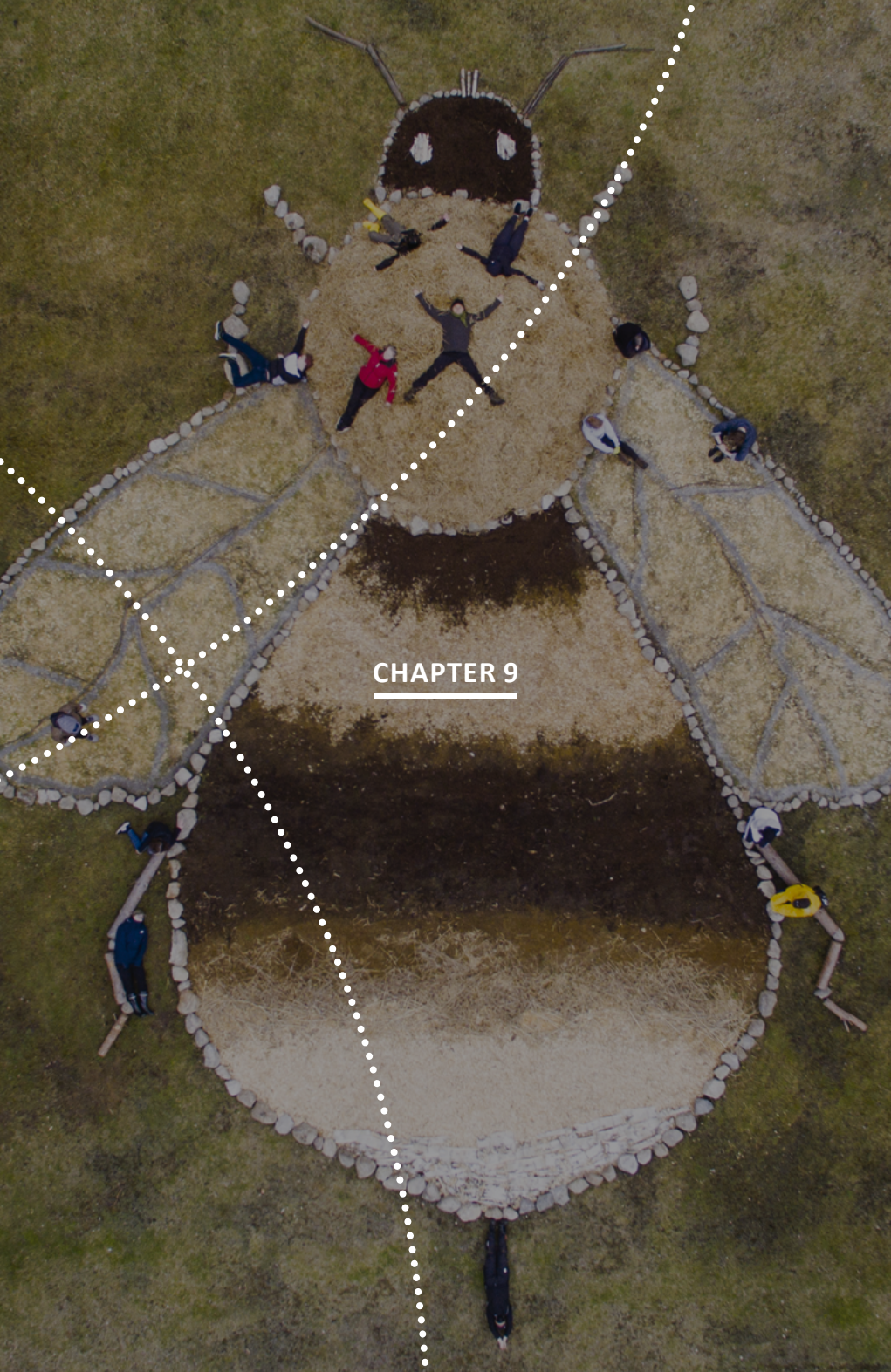

CHAPTER 9

Collective Metamorphoses: Shifting Shapes for Connection

Nina Luostarinen

Doctoral Candidate, University of Lapland,
Faculty of Arts and Design

RDI Specialist, Humak University of Applied Sciences /
Cultural management

Abstract

This artwork is a participatory workshop focusing on the concept of metamorphosis. This playful arts-based activity endeavours to reveal the playful qualities and narrative layers of a place by changing individuals' perspectives and encouraging collaborative action. At the same time, it experiments as an apparatus to deal with eco-anxiety. This artwork aims to nurture place-empathy and sensuous knowledge by creating a heterotopic multisensory experience.

Keywords: Land art; art-based action research; eco-anxiety; metamorphosis

The increasing availability of technology—in particular drones—enhances land art: suddenly, it is effortless and affordable to take aerial images to shift perspectives and view land art in its entirety. We are in need of broader views to find effective solutions for critical environmental problems, such as the collapse of pollinator populations: an 'aerial view' is a suitable metaphor in this case. Perovich (2018) demonstrated that our knowledge and awareness of environmental issues has increased, and this has helped society address issues such as acid rain and the ozone hole. As Perovich suggested, environmental art and activism projects can serve as scattered shards

of optimism, creativity and energy in the environmental movement. According to the Foucaultian (1971) sense of heterotopia, we can use artistic means to reveal the emotional layers of places. It is characteristic of land art to be playful: playing with scales, aesthetics, shapes, dimensions or our understanding of space. I suggest that participatory playfulness could be one of the most efficient means of addressing serious issues and challenging environmental problems. This may involve tactile or visual ways to make something concrete to emotionally cope with environmental concerns, or what Pihkala (2020) called 'eco-anxiety'. Pihkala (2020) outlined that 'emotions live in our bodyminds, and embodied activities are especially useful in encountering emotions. Various methods that use bodily movement, encounters in place, creative expression, and physical closeness to other beings can be very useful in exploring eco-anxiety and ecological emotions' (p. 23). Chin (2013) defined this as living in the *Anthropocene*; art becomes an important *visual platform to convey messages of social awareness* while still appealing to our senses. Land art seeks to do this by *creating a sensory response between person and nature.*

This visual essay discusses the results of a participatory land art workshop that aimed to provide a hands-on experience as a way for participants to deal with the emotions caused by the declining insect populations and to draw public attention to the importance of protecting pollinators. The workshop was a response to Pihkala's (2020) call for embodied, collective and place-based methods for addressing eco-anxiety, as well as furthering participatory action research in this area. At the same time, it is one of my art-based action research (ABAR) cycles in search of playful art-based methods for broadening the experience of place.

Background

I agree with Curtis (2020) that artistic methods provide valuable tools to enhance environmental education, helping people better remember environmental messages and associate the environment with positive thoughts and images. Further, Curtis suggested that artistic methods can be used to improve processes—they can help us find new ways of looking at problems, identify solutions, stimulate creative thinking or improve group cohesiveness. Sommer and Klöckner (2019) found that art can change our feelings when it encompasses a hopeful message. This could guide us towards meliorism: the belief that the world can be made better by human effort.

Play also encourages open-endedness (van Boeckel, 2014), willing the suspension of disbelief and ostensible observations of understanding (Huizinga, 1955). This is underlined when adults engage in play in public spaces (Deterding, 2017; Reed, 2018). Therefore, adult playfulness could be more socially acceptable in natural surroundings. When we set our controlling mind aside and let ourselves be carried away with free play, we can construct new perceptions of a place, and, as Nodding (2012) suggested, 'nature becomes a springboard for reflection and poetic association' (p. iii). Open-endedness is also related to the role of artists as placemakers rather than consultants (Fennell & Tucker, 2020), leaving space for playful artistic intuition and serendipity in the process.

Process

The data sources for this visual essay are the subjective experiences of the pla(y)cemaker (the collective land art facilitator) and photographs taken during the workshop. This land art workshop took place in Punkaharju, Finland,

in May 2021 as a launch for the Nature Concert Hall event in the same place in August 2021. The overall aim of these events was to draw attention to pollinators and the challenges they have been experiencing because of human actions. For this land art workshop, the main objective was to enhance the empathetic emotions towards the tree bumblebee *(bombus hypnorum)* by allowing the participants to experience shapeshifting into a bee. The workshop also aimed to demonstrate the efficiency of collaboration (just like in a beehive): in just a few hours, we created a piece of art that was big enough to be seen from a satellite.

The participants were a group of 16–18-year-old students from Savonlinna Art College. Two weeks prior to the workshop, the 13 participants received information about tree bumblebees and land in general. Included in the information pack I provided them was material about shapeshifting folklore in Finland, as well as background about the metamorphosis idea that inspired this participatory land art. Based on this material, the students created sketches of the piece of land art they wanted to create.

Figure 1: The plan voted on by the participants to be realised as land art. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

I was there, in the role of pla(y)cemaker, to initiate the process, helping with both practical and artistic questions and solving any challenges that came up. I wanted to stay in the role of silent facilitator and sticky listener. According to Benmergui (2019), a silent facilitator is present and uses all the senses, including intuition, and a sticky listener listens with empathy and the intention to understand. I did not want my own ideas to be an obstacle for the participants to develop, shape and create meaningful contexts of significance to them (Seidler, 2020). I wanted them to create a piece of land art that reflected their insights and opinions. I encouraged them to be playful and unrestricted in their work and solutions.

Observing the results

Once the actual land art building started, it seemed to be both a visual and tactile process yet very playful at the same time. I overheard the participants saying that it reminded them of their childhood and playing with sticks, mud and stones; only the scale was larger than when they were young. There was a moment at the beginning when no one knew how to start, and the participants just stood in the field aimlessly, but then, it suddenly all started. The groups formed and started moving stones around.

Figure 2. After some hesitation, the group suddenly started to form the outline from stones. A screenshot from a timelapse video by Ikka Nummela, which is available at the following link: https://bit.ly/video1timelapse

The participants started actively choosing materials that they could use to obtain the desired outcome and began collecting them from the surrounding designated areas.

Figure 3. Filling the head area with soil to achieve the desired tone. Photograph: Saara Lavi

Figure 4. Spreading grey gravel next to branches to obtain the delicate wing structure. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

Figure 5. Piling up the hay, raking yellow sand and chatting with group members. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

Figure 6. Learning to use the tools and the importance of teamwork. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

In the afternoon of the second day, the character of the bumblebee was ready, and it was time to dive in and experience metamorphosis into this bombus character. Each participant could freely choose the position in which they felt the most comfortable. This procedure was linked to Finnish mythology—introduced to the students at the beginning of the process—in which shapeshifting is vividly present. Taking guiding animals or experiencing shapeshifting or metamorphosis into animals infiltrates Finnish folklore (Kaski et al., 2019), including the national epos Kalevala and indigenous Sámi beliefs (Siikala, 1994). The aim here was to reach the narrative dimension of our collective action, from mundane to something mythical.

Later, upon seeing the drone images, the participants were impressed and emotional. The entity was hard to depict from the ground level, but seeing the aerial footage gave a unique perspective. The participants described the tints of the land art as being an aquarelle painted with watercolours instead of earthen materials. They were also pleasantly surprised by its impressive size when seen from a bird's-eye view.

Figure 7. The finished BOMBUS participatory land art where the participants have infiltrated into it, one even as the stinger. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

The overall aim of publicity and attention for pollinators was also achieved. The National Broadcasting Company of Finland YLE made direct radio reportage from the site, and several local newspapers wrote about the workshop, including its rationale. For example, the newspaper *Itä-Savo* had two full pages describing the feelings and meaning of the workshop.

The team documented the process with still photographs, timelapse video and drone images. Afterwards, the participants also responded to a survey, in addition to a focus group discussion during the last coffee break on site. To demonstrate the inevitability of change, a thorough documentation process was essential. Aligned with the overall topic of the workshop—metamorphosis—the documentation supported the aims of it: timelapse videos tackle our 'change blindness' (Simons & Levin 1997), drone images help see the big picture, and still images are the visual souvenirs of emotions experienced during the workshop.

The workshop ended; however, the metamorphosis theme continued with regular documentation. There were three monthly photoshoots to follow up on the metamorphosis of this piece of land art, recording the metamorphosis of the art back into nature.

Figure 8. The metamorphosis process of the land art: after one month, nature started claiming the area back. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

Figure 9. The metamorphosis process of the land art: after two months. The image seems to fade into duotone. Without the stone outline, it would be barely visible. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

Figure 10. The field was needed for other purposes, and the stones were removed. The circle of metamorphosis is complete. Photograph: Saara Lavi.

Discussion

The workshop succeeded beyond all expectations. With such an impressive outcome and positive feedback, even though the participants were only semivolunteers who had to work in the drizzle, it is clear that this method has great potential for future iterations. It could be used for drawing attention to other important topics, as well as for team-building activities.

Participatory land art workshops could be planned on different themes based on local interests. It would be interesting to organise them simultaneously on different sites and demonstrate the power of a collaborative activity: even if I am only moving this one stone, what a great difference it makes when we are many. Just imagine if bumblebees were made concurrently in different locations; these could form a swarm that could be seen from planes and satellites to emphasise the urgent actions needed to stop the decline of pollinators. If we could start a movement and invite the big names of land art like Andy Golsworthy, Robert Smithson, Guillaume Legros, Pierry Duc and Michelle Stuart, as well as any interested amateur teams to join, the number and variety of interpretations would for sure impress us.

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CHAPTER 10

Analogue Photography as a Vehicle for a Positive Impact Among Marginalised Digital Natives Living in the Suburbs of Four Italian Cities

Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa and Silvia Remotti
PACO Design Collaborative

Abstract

This paper analyses how youth living in the marginalised suburbs of four Italian cities respond to a participatory analogue photography laboratory. Following a material process and the nonimmediacy of the results was found to enhance active participation and harnesses several positive changes.

Keywords: *marginalised youth, digital natives, analogue photography, active participation, Italian suburbs.*

There can be multiple causes at the root of a youth's discomfort. From the neighbourhood decline to the fragility of families and from youth crime to school abandonment, these causes are interconnected, and the suburbs are one place all these issues can be found.

Families in difficult conditions in Italy, both Italian and non-Italian, are mostly located in the degraded areas in and around large cities where, on the one hand, it is easier to access housing than in urban centres, which are marked by high rental prices; yet, on the other hand, they find themselves miles away from a productive city nucleus that can provide job opportunities. It is in these marginal territories, which are characterised by the presence of bad living conditions, that the phenomena of discomfort are configured and aggravated. These conditions incisively

compromise the healthy growth of children (housing deficits, scarcity of services, social exclusion and deviance, crime and child labour and, more generally, the lack of access to fundamental rights).

Among the causes that undermine the healthy growth of children, the family's economic condition is noteworthy. This affects children's access to the essential goods and services for a basic standard of living (relative poverty) or lack thereof (absolute poverty). In many cases, economic poverty limits the dreams, abilities and freedoms of many children. In Italy, the number of children in relative poverty has reached 1.876 million, about 120,000 more than in 2009, while 653,000 boys and girls live in absolute poverty, depriving them of the goods and services required to provide a minimum acceptable standard of living (Istat, 2021). Child poverty in Italy is more concentrated in the southern regions; this is where more than half of the children in relative poverty live compared with the 7% in the central regions and the 5.1% in the northern areas (Istat, 2021).

Minors who live in difficult residential, territorial, economic and sociocultural contexts are often subject to social exclusion and encounter problems with school performance. This difficulty is represented by a variety of issues, such as school irregularity, interruption of studies, nonadmission to the next class, delays, abandonment and others (Cies, 2009). In Italy, the percentage of young Italians (18–24 years old) who have acquired only a secondary school diploma—also called early school leavers—has reached 18.8% (Eurostat, 2010).

The phenomenon of reduced social mobility in Italy (surpassed in Europe only by the UK) is intensified in peripheral areas where social and territorial difficulties hinder young people's aspirations, participation and access

to social relations that go beyond their own family and/or neighbourhood boundaries, which can be wider and more advantageous for their future (Fondazione L'Albero della Vita ONLUS, 2012).

Children and adolescents can be the protagonists of their own lives without letting the context that surrounds them extinguish their desire for a brighter future. To do this, however, they need to be called upon to actively participate in the improvement of the reality in which they live.

For children and adolescents to understand the potential of their actions, they need to be given the tools to develop their critical and reflective thinking, preferably in protected environments where they can behave, feel, engage, get involved and make decisions autonomously. By empowering and recognising the value of their contributions in a complex context where multiple perspectives can coexist, we can raise subjects who will believe in themselves and who will trust their thoughts and emotions.

Digital natives are those who have grown up immersed in digital technology and are technologically adept and engaged (Prensky, 2001), which significantly influences their attitudes and approaches towards learning. Participatory cultural activities may encourage them to trust in their thinking, addressing their right to freedom of expression, as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). By becoming active participants, children and adolescents are empowered to perceive themselves as active subject creators and visually competent in explorative meaning-making processes through settings of art-based visual experiences (Häikiö, 2018). The development of communication skills through artistic activities then becomes an opportunity to stimulate the perceptions of their lives-worlds and their learning processes.

During project work, the use of various communicative formats—both analogue and digital—aids in the collective learning process and the creation of meaning through the exploration of social and cultural objects and phenomena. In parallel, children's agency is also enhanced by including them in the use of cultural, visual and multimodal tools (Jewitt, 2011).

In contrast to the world we live in today—where everything is immediate, and we are saturated with information and rapidly produced digital images through electronic devices such as mobile phones or tablets—the return to mechanical or artisanal processes is presented as an invitation to youth to stop and relate more closely to the *making*; in other words, experimenting, expressing, connecting and constructing with different tools and materials for personal or collective purposes—hence having to appreciate the path to reach an expected outcome—is like the creation of a terracotta pot. where one must work from raw materials, form the piece and then bake it to be able to use it. This is how concrete processes and objects have performative agency, and their approach assumes an educational role in its intra-action with young people, which refers to the relationship between all living organisms and the material environment (Lenz Taguchi, 2009). Artistic disciplines, such as painting, photography and drawing, set things in motion through their agentic force and materiality.

Some characteristics of digital natives are that they expect technology to be part of their learning landscape, showing, for instance, almost universal adoption of mobile devices such as smartphones. They possess a short attention span, meaning they have a craving for speed and the inability to tolerate a slow-paced environment; likewise, they expect immediate feedback on their actions (Sarkar et al., 2017). All these attributes would not be met during analogue processes, which transform activities that are far from the

digital world into a new and different kind of challenge in which engaging means making a greater effort. Nevertheless, there are some characteristics of this generation that are in favour of this type of activity, such as their preference for learning in informal and collaborative environments, teamwork and being connected with their peers. They are also inclined to active over passive learning, such as reading or listening (Sarkar et al., 2017). However, technology alone will not replace intuition, good judgement, problem-solving abilities and a clear moral compass (Prensky, 2009).

Maker activities have the transformative potential for social change (Kumpulainen et al., 2020). By affording marginalised digital natives concrete opportunities to actively learn and express themselves, it can help them to take a critical look at their lives and context, which, combined with a safe environment to share their reflections, can increase their self-esteem and self-confidence to take ownership of their reality.

To test the hypothesis that digital natives need a concrete activity to learn and express themselves, we organised a series of participatory art-based laboratories to investigate the impact of using analogue photography with marginalised youth.

Participatory Analogue Photography Laboratories

To explore the potential impact of a maker approach to analogue photography on the lives of digital natives living in various marginalised situations in peripheral neighbourhoods in Italy, four participatory analogue photography laboratories were designed and run by the PACO Design Collaborative association, which is based in

Milan and deals with social innovation projects in direct collaboration with the Albero della Vita Foundation. This foundation operates throughout Italy and in some developing countries, promoting services for the protection of minors in distress, host communities, foster family networks, maternity support services, distance support and awareness campaigns around the issue of children's rights.

The laboratory participants were children and adolescents from families monitored and supported by the 'Varcare la Soglia' (*Crossing the Threshold*, in Italian) national programme, which has been fighting poverty directly in Italy for more than seven years.

Figure 1. Children from Palermo during their first lesson, by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

The laboratories were conducted from May to September 2021 in four suburbs of four cities where the Albero della Vita Foundation has an office: Naples, Catanzaro, Genoa and Palermo. The names and logos of each laboratory were adapted to the name of each district.

1. Ponticelli district, Naples: This is the second most populated district of the city. The district is wide and characterised by many abandoned areas; it is isolated and far from the centre of Naples. The precarious socioeconomic conditions have created an explosion of organised crime. Factors such as organised crime represent an obstacle to the development of the neighbourhood and produce a considerable amount of illegal work (Fondazione L'Albero della Vita ONLUS, 2012). The multiproblematic situation in the neighbourhood is connected to an elevated school dropout rate, which, in the elementary school classes, is at around 35% (Fondazione L'Albero della Vita ONLUS, 2012).

2. Aranceto district, Catanzaro: A considerable percentage of residents are subject to irregular work and irregular housing. The school dropout rate is also very high, especially in secondary schools, and illiteracy is widespread throughout the neighbourhood. In this context, the informal and illegal system guarantees order and sustainability that the state is unable to offer. There are also Roma settlements inside the neighbourhood. Their presence has often created tensions with the local population, also giving rise to episodes of racism (Fondazione L'Albero della Vita ONLUS, 2012).

3. Sampierdarena district, Genoa: This area is characterised by a massive and consolidated presence of immigrants, mainly from South America and Africa. This situation has led to a difficult coexistence between Italians and foreigners that often results in the extreme phenomena of youth aggregation in gangs (Fondazione L'Albero della Vita ONLUS, 2012).

4. ZEN 2 district, Palermo: This district is entirely made up of social housing. It is the paradigm of the isolated and distant periphery; the neighbourhood seems to be a separate world from Palermo and closed in on itself. It is a problematic suburb that still suffers from a lack of essential services. The school dropout rate within the neighbourhood is very high, as is the presence of illegal activities in which minors are often involved (Fondazione L'Albero della Vita ONLUS, 2012). The situation is made worse by the limited alternatives of aggregation for children and adolescents, as well as by the lack of cultural and recreational activities. Most children live without prospects for the future: often marginalised and prejudiced, they struggle to integrate into the city framework.

Figure 2. Photos of Ponticelli, Aranceto, Sampierdarena and ZEN 2 districts, respectively, by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

The Albero della Vita Foundation was in charge of participant recruitment. To follow Acting on the Margins Arts as Social Sculpture's (AMASS) ethical protocols, the procedures for the management of the youth's data and produced materials consisted of communicating about the programme and its objectives to the youth's parents, which was carried out by the foundation's coordinators. Subsequently, enrolment in the laboratories was done by signing two consent forms. The first gave us informed consent for the collection and use

of all types of material generated within the laboratories, whether audio, video and images, in academic publications, social networks, exhibitions and events. The second one was a copyright release for the exclusive use of the material generated within the AMASS project. The four laboratories involved a total of 50 children and adolescents between 7 and 13 years of age.

Figure 3. Portraits of some of the participants by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

For each city, one or two professional local photographers were involved to guide the children and adolescents through the world of photography. They participated in all the sessions, being responsible for a theoretical introductory lesson on photography and for providing technical guidance during practice. The fact that they were local photographers was relevant because of their knowledge of the local culture, dialect and the neighbourhoods they were working in.

Objectives

The first aim of these laboratories was to bring cultural opportunities to marginalised children and adolescents, inviting them to participate in a completely new type of experience and, consequently, to actively involve them in the different types of art-based activities that can lead them to be the protagonists of a public photographic exhibition in their neighbourhood. On the other hand, we sought to understand how an artistic discipline, such as photography, can help to positively sculpt individuals at an early age. To achieve this, it is intended that the relationships of the young participants with the team guiding the laboratories would be strengthened from session to access, always through photography, reflections and the creation of dialogues that could deepen the perspectives and perceptions about the lives of the participants.

Methodology

#DAIMIEIOCCHI Analogue Photography Laboratories

The #daimieiocchi laboratory was made up of four lessons, along with a final meeting where the closing exhibition of the cycle took place. Each lesson was 1.5 to 3 hours long, depending on the conditions because of the pandemic and the specific organisation in each city. Below, we explain in detail how each session of the laboratory was structured.

First lesson—Welcome and introduction to the laboratory

This lesson aimed to engage the children and adolescents in the laboratory. After a brief presentation of the project, the team and the participants, the laboratory began with an

introductory theoretical lesson on analogue photography guided by the local photographer. Afterwards, we gave the youth their participation kit, consisting of a branded cloth bag, with a notebook, a pen, an analogue camera and a 35 mm black and white film with 36 shots, which they were invited to open to load the camera and go out and try taking their first photos in a short practical session, which would help them solve the first technical questions.

For one week, the youth were given an unknown tool to rely on 'with their eyes closed', without being able to see the results instantly, which was against their accustomed nature of receiving things instantly on their mobile phone or tablet. The wait to see their photos produced some nervousness and a lot of excitement and impatience, which served as a good hook to work on commitment to and respect for the process.

The photographer was in charge of collecting the cameras that the children and adolescents had left at the foundation, developing the films and sending us the digitised photos the following week.

Second lesson—Reflection and discussion session

This was the first reflection session of the laboratory that aimed to put the children's reflective thinking into practice to begin to awaken their self-confidence through the selection, description and interpretation of the images they had taken.

During this lesson, we showed the participants the first developed images, which were printed on paper, to spark discussion. 'Through photography, it is possible to learn to see through natives' eyes. Verbally we can interview natives and share the realism of their visual context' (Collier et al., 1986, p. xvii). We started with an individual analysis to

eventually share these ideas with the group by revealing the selection of the five favourite photos in a dialogue guided by asking questions about the motivations behind each shot, leading the participants to give meaning to their work.

The camera was returned to the children and adolescents at the end of the lesson and loaded with a second film, this time in colour so that they could keep shooting for the next two weeks.

Third lesson—Photography session in the neighbourhood

The third lesson was entirely practical, guided by the photographer and followed by the foundation's educators. The cameras were reloaded with the third film, in black and white, with another 36 shots, and the participants were invited to go outside to take photos around the neighbourhood. The purpose was to give the youth more reliance on the discipline of analogue photography, as well as to solve any technical or conceptual doubts that they might have had while being accompanied by the photographer and educators, who would encourage them to take pictures consciously and with intention. The last two films were developed and printed the following week to be delivered during the last lesson.

Fourth lesson—Reflection session and cocreation of the exhibition

This meeting was crucial for the research because it was here that we brought all the photographs printed in small format (100 photos on average per participant) and proposed codesigning the final exhibition, transitioning from a personal reflection and individual selection of photos to a cocreation activity in which we sought to unveil and

understand the motivations behind each image, first, to be able to construct a collective story by connecting the many meanings in a cohesive way that made sense, and second, to be able to unleash the universe that each participant had disclosed. In this session, they were already acquainted with all the project's external players (researchers and photographers), and because this was the second time they had practised visual interpretation, it was possible to access more detailed, complex and deeper narratives.

Figure 4. Photos of the lessons by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

Fifth session—Public photography exhibition

In July and September 2021, to celebrate its closing, four public photographic exhibitions were held in the districts where the laboratories have been located. These events, which were primarily directed at the participants, were intended to mark the conclusion of a cycle and share the results of their labours with their loved ones and the community.

To give greater importance and solemnity to the work, a graphic communication was designed for each exhibition, including a banner for the event's diffusion on social media, a physical poster with an introduction to the project and one with information about the Albero della Vita Foundation and its *'Varcare la Soglia'* programme, as well as a catalogue of each exhibition with all the images presented, their authors and their collaborators.

Every exhibition was inaugurated with a brief introduction to the AMASS project and the #daimieiocchi laboratories, followed by words from the educators and photographers. The visitors were then invited to see the exposition, and drinks and snacks were shared. The photography formats and arrangement for each intervention were adapted to the conditions presented in each reality, as detailed below.

Figure 5. Photos of the four exhibitions in Naples, Catanzaro, Genoa and Palermo, by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

#ponticellidaimieiocchi, Naples—02 July 2021

The photographs of the children from Naples were exhibited in the Communal Garden of Ponticelli, where the foundation already does some activities. For this occasion, we printed a large-scale photo of each child, which was arranged on a stick and then displayed along the wall in the space. The rest of the selection, in 10x15 cm prints, was hung inside a tent set up on-site. Twenty people attended in total.

Figure 6. Photos by Anastasia, Salvatore and Emilia, respectively, Ponticelli, Naples, Italy, 2021. PACO Design Collaborative Archive.

#arancetodaimieiocchi, Catanzaro—06 July 2021

In this city, the exhibition was held outside the foundation's office and took on a more participatory character thanks to the great organisation of the educators. One photograph per participant was printed in a large and rigid format, and the rest of the photographs were printed on 10x15 cm paper and hung on the walls.

The coordinator of this centre, who has been working in the field for more than 20 years, took this opportunity to deepen the educational objectives, actively involving the children and adolescents, with whom they arranged a short opening and participatory activities, such as inviting visitors to enter a circle made by the youth holding the large-format photographs to select one and share their motivations for that choice. This activity created an enriching moment for the participants, giving them a greater sense of the value of their creative efforts. Up to 50 people attended the event.

Figure 7. Photos by Anna, Francesco and Christian respectively, Aranceto, Catanzaro, Italy, 2021. PACO Design Collaborative Archive.

#sampierdarenadaimieiocchi, Genoa—20 July 2021

This exhibition was held on the wall of the communal football field next to the foundation centre. It was a large white wall facing the street, with pedestrian traffic passing in front. Because of the dimensions of the available space, we printed the photos in A4 and A3 formats on laminated

paper, allowing us to hang them on the wall and leave them without any problems in case of rain. This was the only exhibition that could remain on site for more days. Twenty people attended the event.

Figure 8. Photos by Giorgio, Lina and Khady, respectively, Sampierdarena, Genoa, Italy, 2021. PACO Design Collaborative Archive.

#zen2adaimieiocchi, Palermo—03 September 2021
This exhibition took place in the neighbourhood shopping centre, which provided a secure space outside the venue and eight mobile panels on which to mount the photographs. Thanks to coordination with the foundation, they also provided refreshments for the audience and a school kit for each child, helping show that the value of such initiatives with a positive impact on the community is much appreciated. The photographs were printed in three different formats and followed a conceptual flow given by the photographer and curator, who collaborated in this laboratory based on the reflection sessions we had with the children and adolescents. Up to 30 people attended.

Figure 9. Photos by Giuseppe, Luigi and Grazia ZEN 2, respectively, Palermo, Sicily, Italy, 2021. PACO Design Collaborative Archive.

Discussion

The power of an object

The first interesting aspect of the youth's observations in the first lesson of the laboratory happened when we delivered the kit. Some participants understood that we were delivering a camera, while others did not know what a camera was; they did not know that in the world there could exist an object that has only one feature: taking photos. The youth were used to taking photos with their parents' phones, and some of them had never seen a digital camera. Another surprise, this time to all the participants, was the film. The participants were all digital natives, and they had never seen a film before in their lives. Because the film was wrapped in a silver plastic package, some of them thought there was candy inside. The introduction to the analogue camera and the film caught their attention, and they all began to understand how analogue film works. This is one of the great advantages of analogue photography: it is a mechanical, physical and chemical process that is easier to understand compared with a digital one that needs high informatic skills. The first film we delivered was black and white, and at the beginning, it was difficult for them to accept that the photos they would take would be without colour because they were used to digital pictures that used black and white as a filter, not in the original photo.

Because the analogue camera was completely new for most of them, it was important to explain simple gestures such as how to hold the camera, how to watch from the lens and how to shoot the photos. The simplicity of using the object helped the youth in learning quickly. The gesture of watching the scene from a lens became easy and natural in a few minutes of use. For the youth, it was more difficult to understand that an analogue camera cannot fix photos that are overexposed

or underexposed after shooting them. They had to learn how to switch on the flash when they were in a place with low lighting and not take pictures directly at the sun. This required time and many tests. They understood that every shot depends on their decisions and that they had the total responsibility for having good final results.

The power of waiting

Another aspect that was new to the youth was the nonimmediacy of analogue photography. They were given an unfamiliar tool that they had to rely on 'with their eyes closed', without being able to see the results immediately, as is the case with a mobile phone. Before watching the results of their shooting, they had to wait two weeks until we brought the prints to the next lesson. This waiting time taught the youth to be patient and respect the time of the process. In a digital world where you can have all the information in a few seconds, they learned the power of waiting. This waiting time increased the value of the final results. When the participants finally had their photos in hand, they were all proud of their results, even if they could only print 10 out of 36 pictures because of technical problems.

The power of selection

The fixed number of shoots available (36 per film) made them realise the power of selection. The fact that the number of photos available was limited because of the length of a physical film roll made them think about and select what to photograph, as well as considering technical aspects such as focus, framing and the available light, which, in this case, cannot be previewed on a screen. This added greater complexity to the exercise of taking photographs

because it distanced them from what they were used to, but at the same time, it pushed them to be aware of what they did to work on the intention and meaning behind their decisions. With a digital camera, they usually shoot many pictures and then select the best ones. On the contrary, with an analogue camera, you cannot select photographs immediately after shooting, and even more importantly, you cannot delete a picture from the film. These two aspects were crucial for the results of the laboratories: from the analogue pictures, we saw the reality of their lives, without filters or preselections.

The power of reflection

Because of the limited number of pictures and the impossibility of seeing or deleting pictures just after shooting, we realised that analogue photography helped these youth reflect before taking a photo. They had to take time before shooting to decide whether the subject was worthy to be captured. During the reflection sessions, we understood the motivations and stories behind each photo. Sometimes, they explained to us what they wanted to capture, how they wanted to capture that scene or subject and why. We realised that there were two types of photographs: the spontaneous and the intended. Analogue photography became a way to make the children and adolescents reflect on what they wanted to express.

Conclusions

The value of documentation, such as analogue photography, as a tool for social engagement, has been accomplished through the material process that the participants followed during the laboratories, which itself was sequential and

required active participation. This is because analogue photography is not immediate; shooting, developing and printing are interconnected and sequential steps. Unlike digital photography, the curiosity and involvement of children and adolescents (as individuals and as a group) with the process increased their active participation, leveraging different learnings. Among the various learning experiences, we discuss the most relevant below.

Raised self-awareness

The reflection sessions pushed the youth to stop, observe and reflect on their lives with their loved ones and in their neighbourhoods—practices they were not used to doing. Thanks to analogue photography, all the participants were able to see their photos at the same time, creating a trusted sharing moment. In some cases, we could observe how the exercise of selecting, interpreting and making sense of the photographs helped them better articulate their ideas. This put into practice reflective and critical thinking, as well as what it meant to work with intent. This invited them to value the potential of their thoughts, opinions and actions, which were also validated by their peers in shared and collective sessions where a respectful atmosphere and active listening were created. These positive conditions promoted a sense of greater self-awareness, allowing them to awaken the ideas that if they wanted to achieve some kind of change, it would be possible, and that they had the power to do it.


Figure 10. Photos of the laboratories in Genoa and Naples, respectively, by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

Promoted commitment and responsibility

On the one hand, the implementation of participatory art activities was invaluable in engaging the youth throughout the process, as well as encouraging them to see their results in a public exhibition that depended solely on their efforts and commitment. The support of the educators also contributed to enhancing the commitment of the participants and involving the families because family members are a fundamental component to foster discipline. During the exhibitions, we could see the joy and pride in the youth when seeing the result of their work on public display and of showing their photographs to their friends and families. The catalogue also played a fundamental role, giving greater meaning to this experience because it was the first time for all of them that something they had done was printed and could be shared.

On the other hand, working with an analogue camera that they owned from the first day of the laboratory and whose proper functioning throughout the laboratory depended entirely on them also gave them a sense of responsibility.

Figure 11. Photos of the introduction and brochures of the exhibitions in Palermo and Catanzaro, respectively, by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

Fostered democratic participation

Giving the same tool kit to work with to every participant meant that everyone started the laboratories with the same competencies, leading to democratic participation, where no participant had an advantage over the other, which means no one felt excluded. This allowed them to avoid generating differences among each other, facilitating unity in the groups because they faced the same challenges. This would not have been possible if we had asked them to work with their own digital devices, for example, because on the one hand, not everyone has the possibility of owning a device, and on the other hand, the devices might have different features.

Democratic participation promoted a collaborative work environment and teamwork that supported connections between peers and created new friendships.

By becoming active participants in socially engaged analogue photography laboratories, the children and adolescents were able to awaken their sense of responsibility and awareness of the value of their reflections, choices and actions, leading them to understand that being agents of change is also in their power.


Figure 12. Photos of the laboratories in Palermo and Catanzaro, respectively, by Carolina Gutiérrez Novoa.

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CHAPTER 11

Cocreation in Documentation Processes: Batman Gżirjan through the Lens of the Artist and the Community

Kristina Borg
Artist

Abstract

Batman Gżirjan is a socially engaged art-research project that collaborates with a group of locals and fishermen in Gżira—a busy and changing seaside town in central Malta. It examines how the inhabitants are affected by overconstruction and private development that is not in the community's best interests. The chapter discusses the different creative methods simultaneously employed by the artist and the participating community members to document the town's transformation as experienced through one's senses, one's participation in the project and the resulting reactions, here while being restricted by COVID-19 pandemic safety measures. These methods include journal keeping, writing, photovoice and digital interactive means.

Keywords: urban planning, private-public, right to open space, power, well-being, memory

Cocreation in Documentation Processes: Batman Gżirjan through the Lens of the Artist and the Community

Documentation essentially provides proof of what happened, framing a story, a production, an exhibition or an event—thus, an experience—and often supports the narrative of its author and creator (Strandquist, 2015). As Helguera (2011) argued, 'The tendency to use

documentation as proof of a practice and as the relic of a work may be related to the legacy of the action-based art of the 1970s' (p. 74). Generally, such documentation includes photos, film or video, written notes or descriptions, sketches and verbal accounts.

In communication with photographer, video artist, curator and author Chris Johnson, Liu (2020) took this definition of documentation a step further and focused on creative documentation, specifically within the context of community development: 'Creative documentation is the application of artistic and/or cultural practice to the purpose of describing or representing information about a subject in a research context' (p. 4). More than a mere illustration or a report, creative documentation generates an artwork that is a form of knowledge in and of itself. Indeed, Johnson considered creative documentation 'as another form of knowledge generation that has the potential to shift power by offering a better understanding of creative and cultural practice in communities' (as cited in Liu, 2020, p. 4). In this scenario, Liu preferred referring to the role of the creative and cultural practitioner as that of an artist-researcher, or one who conducts creative documentation that contributes to a research goal beyond one's own artistic ventures—the goal that aims to understand the relevance of arts and culture in community development.

Engaging an artist-researcher provides the possibility to elicit meaning in different ways from conventional qualitative and quantitative research instruments such as observations, surveys, questionnaires, interviews or focus groups (Liu, 2020). Employing a varied means of tools and strategies, including the use of photographs and drawings—and while working with the local communities—places socially engaged and participatory art practices in an advantageous position to bring social issues that are significant for the communities to light. Working and

communicating with and about community development is a multilayered, diverse and complex field that often generates itself on what Kester identified as dialogical practice or dialogical art, that is, practices that are organised around and put emphasis on conversational exchange and interaction as a mode of action (Thompson, 2012). Within this context, Kester (2013) distinguished between an artwork that provokes dialogue and conversation among the viewers, here often as a reaction to and about the finished piece as an object, and conversation that becomes an actual and integral part of the artwork itself: 'It is reframed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict' (p. 8). This notion coincides with Helguera's (2011) explanation of what defines socially engaged art: 'The idea that an intangible social interaction between a group of people can constitute the core of an artwork' (p. 73). Hence, research, documentation, archiving and production in such settings can become vast and deep.

This intangible social interaction can simultaneously adopt a wide array of methods, ranging from mapping to reflective tasks, from sociological and ethnographic research to workshops in a variety of media, from community organising to skill building, from mentoring to team building, from group gatherings to private conversations and from improvised to directed dialogical performance. Such methodologies need not necessarily follow a linear progression, and it often becomes unclear when trying to distinguish between or pull apart these varied components (Frieling et al., 2019). Most often, such intangible social interactions are durational, lasting a number of months or years, and they are inclusive of the different parts of the organising process and methodologies, which may become the subjects of photo, film or exhibition productions themselves. Consequently, however, images often fail to do

justice to the diverse, complex and durational experiences that constitute such projects (Bishop, 2012; Helguera, 2011), often reducing these 'into abstracted symbols and visual quotations used to support the artist's own narrative' (Strandquist, 2015, p. 131).

Taking into consideration such limitations—and, to a certain extent, contradictions—more emphasis is put on the specific moment when the participants are engaging in interaction and the public is experiencing the work—a moment where the artist-researcher is not simply acquiring or depositing information but when work is being created collectively (Strandquist, 2015). Within the context of community development, this shared authorial role challenges contemporary art and art history in general, which often miss out on including the voice of the public.

> *… it is the voice of the artists, the curators, and the critics that appears to matter. Yet in projects where the experience of a group of participants lies at the core of the work, it seems incongruous not to record their responses. (Helguera, 2011, p. 73)*

Hence, Helguera proposed that it should be the community participants themselves who describe the collective experience, of which they are the primary beneficiaries and active participants. If such a practice is dialogical with an interactive exchange, it should become natural for the documentation process not to remain a one-sided account of the artist-researcher. Within this context, Helguera argued that the documentation process should not remain an element of postproduction, instead becoming a daily and habitual coproduction process by the participants, the artist-researcher, the curator and other stakeholders alike. This allows for multiple accounts and different modes of and approaches to documentation in real time, presenting

multiple angles and interpretations while also reflecting the multilayered nature of community practice.

The following case study, entitled *'Batman Gżirjan' Through the Lens of the Artist and the Community*, presents this process of documentation as cocreation and coproduction, here with a special focus on the research stage of the project.

Background and Research Context

Where Did It Take Place?

Batman Gżirjan[1] is a socially engaged art-research project that collaborated with a group of locals and fishermen in Gżira. As the project artist-researcher, I developed this project in collaboration with the University of Malta, the NGO *Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar*[2] (FAA) and the community pressure group *Inħobbu l-Gżira*[3], as part of the European project *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS), which was funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme.

Gżira is a town in the central region of Malta, forming part of Marsamxett Harbour. The Maltese name *'Gżira'* means

1The Maltese term 'Gżirjan' refers to someone from Gżira; thus, the project title translates to Batman from Gżira.

[2]*Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar* is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organisation that has been active since 2006; it is committed to protecting, preserving and campaigning for Malta and Gozo's environmental and cultural heritage for a socially inclusive and sustainable quality of life.

[3]*Inħobbu l-Gżira* is a community pressure group that was established towards the end of 2018 to oppose the private development plans for Manoel Island. The community activists stand up for the well-being of the community and for their rights, the environment and heritage of Gżira, namely focusing on the town's sea area, Manoel Island, and the seafront public garden. *Inħobbu l-Gżira*'s mission and campaign are supported by the FAA.

Figure 1. A page from the author's visual journal. Photo by the author

'island', and the town is named after Manoel Island, which lies in the middle of the harbour as part of the town's territory, as illustrated in Figure 1. Originally, Gżira was a working-class suburb of neighbouring Sliema. However, recent regeneration of the town turned it into a business community of hotels, restaurants, online gaming companies, real estate and financial institutions and offices.

The locals of Gżira boast of the town's seafront, which also enjoys views of Fort Manoel on Manoel Island, with the bastions of Malta's capital city—Valletta—in its background. Indeed, as emerged from the research workshops, the locals described the sea, Manoel Island and the seafront public garden as the three key elements that make up the town's soul—all three form a good part of their childhood memories, which are at risk of being forgotten. The locals often talk of the town's changing identity; what was originally a working-class local community now includes a majority of expats. Although the latter group of residents make use of Gżira for practically all their daily needs—be it residential, working, leisure and entertaining needs—not all

adopt a sense of belonging; at times, Gżira merely serves a temporary function. For these reasons, Gżira's identity is a transient one.

Recent private projects have been interfering with the sea views, as well as hindering the accessibility to the sea and foreshore. Gżira's promenade always served the community with an open space and meeting hub, but current infrastructure projects have been appropriating such space for private use. Reference is made to the various private ventures that regularly open up on the town's promenade, such as those that offer catering facilities, the private lido project managed by a group of hotels on the seafront, the redevelopment of Manoel Island run by a private company and further privatisation of the yacht marina, all of which have impacted a good portion of the seafront public garden. Such private companies have gained power[4] and are abusing it to the extent of marginalising the powerless[5].

Why *Batman Gżirjan*?

> *Batman is an everyday person.*
> *It is only his personal drive that allows him to achieve superhero power.*
> *A symbol of hope for Gotham's citizens,*
> *he combats the crime, greed, and corruption of the metropolis.*
> *Batman is an everyday hero using his power for the common good.*
> *Is the Batman of Gżira present in his absence?*[6]

[4] 'Power' is being defined as the ability to have control and authority as gained through economic means, legal means, political influence, nepotism and similar advantages.

[5] 'Powerless' is being defined as a local inhabitant or community groups that lack the necessary resources and equal advantages to stop or control the powerful.

[6] An analogy I wrote as the project artist-researcher and that I presented to the community participants, facilitating the communication of the project's concept.

With this analogy in mind, the project asked the following: Has the abuse of power made Gżira a Gotham City? Does Gżira need everyday persons to achieve superhero powers to combat this? The principal aim of *Batman Gżirjan* was to give back power to the powerless, whose rights, needs, desires and well-being have been disregarded. The project explored how Gżira can celebrate its Batman. Can Batman be a collective being? How can this collective being with superhero power be made present in the public space?

Who Participated?

The project collaborated with two working groups. The first group included 10 locals, seven males and three females, whose ages ranged from 30 to 76 and who had a range of educational backgrounds and skills, from no qualifications to degree level. Three of them no longer live in Gżira but still felt passionate about it. This first group followed a series of eight research workshop sessions held once a fortnight. The second group included five fishermen, all retired, with the eldest in his 80s. All five fishermen still lived in Gżira, except for one. This second group followed a series of six research workshop sessions held once a fortnight. All 15 participants were recruited with the support of the FAA, through an open call that was channelled on social media (namely, Facebook and Instagram), printed and online press, and two radio morning talk shows. Word of mouth was also fundamental for the two groups to take shape.

When Did It Take Place?

The background research and project proposal were originally written in the early months of 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the plan of kicking off the process

around December 2020 and January 2021, for a duration of seven to eight months. Because of a number of delays, namely those emerging from the pandemic, the open call was postponed to March 2021. Moreover, the eventual publication of the open call coincided with an increase in the number of COVID-19 positive cases; this hindered the process because most people were not feeling comfortable joining in-person workshops and instead were asking for a virtual option. Initially, the project team was a bit hesitant to switch to digital means because this meant that not everyone could have the same type of access. Eventually, the health authorities announced a partial lockdown. By this time, the project team felt the need to start the process rather than delay it once more, so virtual workshops became the only way forward. Nonetheless, this brought its own challenges. For instance, some of the elderly participants from the locals group had never used the Zoom software; thus, as the project artist-researcher, I helped them install it over a phone call. One local participant was not comfortable to sit for a two-hour workshop behind a laptop screen, so I held one-to-one in-person sessions once the lockdown was lifted in April 2021.

Similarly, most of the fishermen did not have access to the digital world, and once more, the workshops were postponed until after the lockdown was lifted. Because of this delay, the number of workshops with the fishermen was reduced from eight to six sessions.

The two groups always met separately, except for the last three sessions where most of the locals and all the fishermen merged as one group in person, as shown in Figure 2. Some of the local participants were not able to join in person, for different personal reasons, so the last three workshops were also offered and repeated online.

The series of research workshops were completed by the first week of July 2021, and this was followed by a processing phase that evolved into a cocreative community performance piece in public space in Gżira in September 2021.

Figure 2. The two working groups during one of the final research workshop sessions. Photo by Elisa von Brockdorff

Cocreative Methods in the Research Documentation Process

Conventional Documentation Methods

As an artist-researcher, I believe that documentation is fundamental, and, in the projects prior to *Batman Gżirjan*, this process always adopted a qualitative one-sided account, being documented through my perspective. Through a series of semistructured questions, such documentation mainly included collecting memories, oral history and daily life experiences, which was achieved through focus groups and/or interviews, for which I prefer to use the terms 'encounters' and 'conversations', respectively. When the participants gave consent, these meetings were audio-recorded, leading to detailed transcripts. In such cases, the participants were always given the possibility to stop the recording whenever they felt the need to do so. As illustrated in Figure 3, walking is another means of documentation that allowed me to become familiar with the context, take photos, map out spaces and places and take notes accordingly. The focus groups were often documented with the support of a professional photographer after seeking the consent of the community participants and without too much intrusion that would alter how participants engaged in the dialogue.

All these different methodologies were adopted as part of the research process of *Batman Gżirjan*; however, these were not the only methods that were employed. On the contrary, these became part of a wider web of stories that the community participants shared and documented.

Figure 3. A construction crane invading a residential place in Gżira. Photo by the author, taken during one of the research walks.

Experimental and Cocreative Documentation Methods

At the onset of the project, the idea to invite the community participants to also document their shared experiences and narratives had already been planned out. However, this was challenged by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Explaining tasks online, carrying out the task on an individual basis and passing on the required resources were impossible and very time-consuming at times. This required a good amount of adaptation. As the artist-researcher, I also felt the need to take it slower, workshop by workshop, to better understand what was possible to do in a remote manner and what resources the participants had available. I also wanted to better gauge the participants' skills and educational backgrounds; this was only possible to analyse after the first few sessions.

The original idea was to adopt an inclusive approach by utilising multiple forms of expression that could address the diverse skills, needs and preferences of the participants. The online adaptations still respected this vision. Drawing on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, whose application leads to eight different ways of processing information, new and different research insights can be obtained (Liu, 2020). The research process for the current study referred to five of these eight types of intelligence: the verbal-linguistic, visual-spatial, musical (sounds), interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. The final stage of the project also referred to the bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence; however, the final cocreative community performance piece falls outside the objective of this chapter's discussion.

The initial attempt to cocreate the documentation process together with the group of locals was to take advantage of the digital means and generate word clouds in real time through online interactive presentations. During the first

online workshop, to start off from a common ground, everyone shared their perceptions of their hometown Gżira, an aspect they liked and another aspect they disliked. These thoughts generated a collective word cloud per question, as shown in Figure 4. Two of the elderly participants found it a bit challenging to switch from the online meeting room to the online presentation software, and the FAA representative, who followed all research workshops, had to intervene to add their responses. Even so, one of these two seniors felt left out and after the workshop felt the need to call me to share this concern.

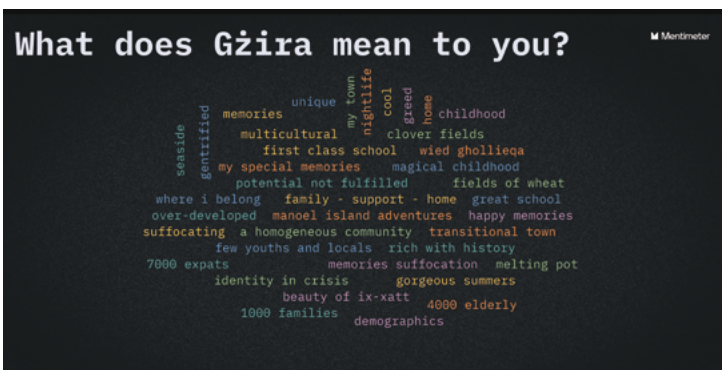

Figure 4. One of the collective word clouds. Screenshot taken by the author.

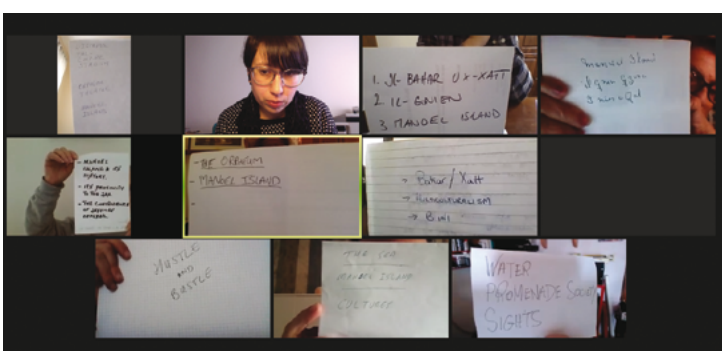

Figure 5. What makes up Gżira's soul? Screenshot taken by the author.

With this in mind, the next workshop was planned using more traditional resources that every participant could easily have access to at home: paper and pen. The second workshop followed with a verbal discussion, sharing personal memories and narratives. These were documented by writing down messages and/or points on paper, and then, these were shown collectively to the computer's camera, and a screenshot was taken, almost imitating the presence of a photographer during in-person workshops, as illustrated in Figure 5.

By this time, I was concerned about the lack of in-person human interaction and thought of ways to render the experience more tangible. After discussing this as a group, it was agreed to prepare a journal for each participant where they could write, draw and paste images or found material, as presented in Figure 6. Clarifications on how, where and when to use this journal were also discussed. These journals were handmade and sent by post. As illustrated in Figure 7, the papers used in the second workshop were eventually pasted in this journal.

Figure 6. Handmade participant journals. Photo by the author.

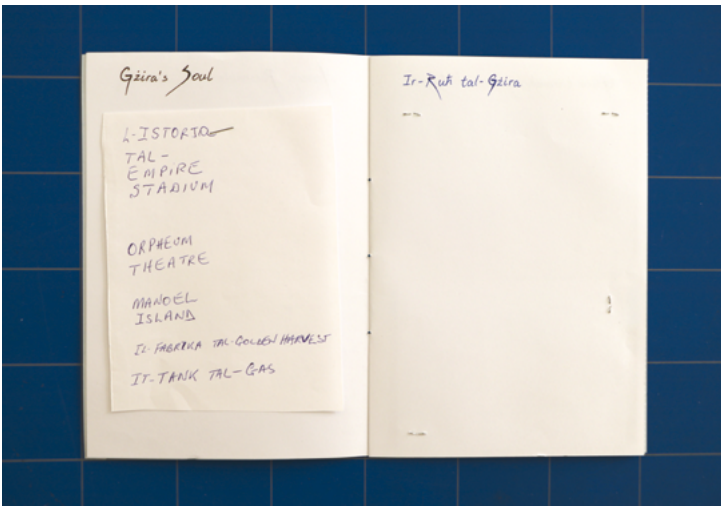

Figure 7. One of the participant journals showing documentation from the second workshop. Photo by the author.

Eight of the local participants completed this journal, whereas two participants did not find the time to do so. The journals have definitely helped to contextualise the research process and render it more holistic. With each journal being used over a number of weeks, dealing with a number of issues, the document cannot be considered to be about one specific issue; it needs to be viewed within its holistic and specific environment, where it continues to contextualise its information (Kosciejew, 2018). These participant journals further complemented the visual journal I kept as the project artist-researcher (Figure 1), in which I reflected on the creative and collaborative processes, the participants' strengths, the challenges encountered and the plans for improvement.

On the other hand, the workshop sessions with the group of fishermen were less experimental and more verbal. After the first meeting, because of their needs from their advanced age, it became obvious that certain forms of

expression were not possible. It was also very apparent that they preferred to engage in verbal narrations and discussions. Their memories were documented through handwritten mind-maps I created in real time, as shown in Figure 8, and through photographs of objects they brought in relation to their fishing experience, as illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 8. Mind-map from one of the fishermen's workshops. Photo by Elisa von Brockdorff.

Figure 9. A compass that one of the fishermen inherited from his father. Photo by Elisa von Brockdorff.

Mapping Gżira's Transformation Through Our Senses

The local participants documented the transformation of their hometown by making use of three different senses: the sense of sight, the sense of smell and the sense of hearing. In each of these three scenarios, a comparison was made between past and present experiences, and this was documented in their journals.

Gżira Through the Sense of Sight

The first type of expression included a photovoice exercise whereby the participants reflected on how their sense of sight allows them to experience Gżira and make their way through town. They also reflected on what they could see in the past and how this changed in the present day, highlighting both a strong point in Gżira and a concern they have. Originally, this was planned as an in-person photovoice group session, whereby we could go on-site together and help each other out. Instead, some basic photography instructions were communicated verbally during the online meeting and reinforced by email or over the phone. In certain cases, not every participant had access to a digital camera or smartphone; this required further adaptations, such as referring to photos they already had, making drawings (though no one opted for this), finding online images and, in one case, one participant helping another—who happened to be his neighbour—by transferring her photos from the phone to the computer and sharing them via email. The photos were then pasted on the journal; some participants also opted to write a short description, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10. One of the participant journals showing documentation of the photovoice exercise. The top photo shows the buttons factory in Gżira, which was demolished during World War II, while the bottom photo shows the present skyscraper that rises in the same area. Photo by the author.

Gżira Through the Sense of Smell

The second form of expression invited the participants to focus on their sense of smell—a sense that is gradually being lost, becoming less powerful and more uniform, as some of the participants commented. Indeed, this was found rather challenging because the participants agreed that any smells from the past, including that of the nearby sea, were being overridden by new smells coming from the restaurants, traffic, air pollution and construction work. To activate their sense of smell, the participants were also invited to leave the online meeting room and walk around the house, searching for different smells. Apart from the smells found in a domestic environment, they could not recognise any other smells. This contrasted greatly with the smells of the past, which included natural smells from the sea environment and former fields, smells from the number of bakeries and confectioneries that were present and smells of the various street food vendors that used

to roam around town. All the participants preferred to document this experience through written journal entries, as presented in Figure 11.

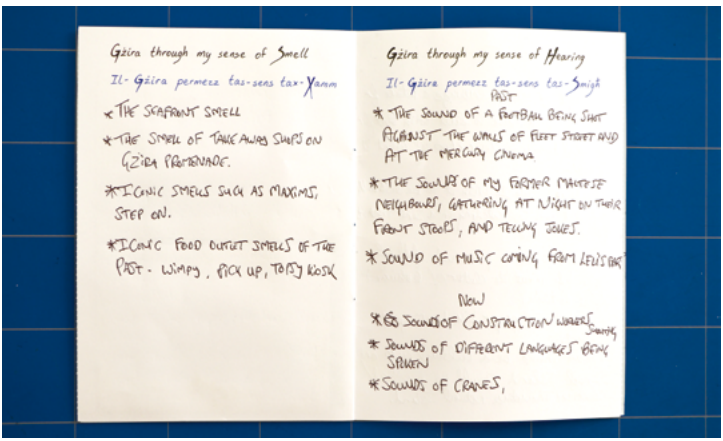

Figure 11. One of the participant journals showing documentation about the sense of smell and hearing. Photo by the author.

Gżira Through the Sense of Hearing

Finally, the participants reflected on the different sounds they heard in the past and how these contrast with what they hear in the present day. To a certain extent, this documentation process led to a similar experience as that of the sense of smell. The past smells mentioned above generated unique sounds, together with the sound of children's voices playing out in the streets and families chatting while sitting outdoors in the evening. These were complemented with cheering sounds from the nearby former national football stadium, which is now a dilapidated space. Two participants audio-recorded the most predominant present sound—construction work—while the other participants opted for a written description.

Conclusion

The research presented in this chapter clearly highlights that although artefacts and creative productions may be created from community and participatory processes, the participants' experiences and the respective transformation that may take place are as important as the final artistic product (Bishop, 2012; Kester, 2013). Such experiences are indeed what can help create a communal feeling that supports a collective effort in documentation. Through *Batman Gżirjan*, it becomes clear that this collective effort has been crucial for documenting the locals' hometown transformation from different angles and perceptions, providing more holistic outcomes. Needless to say, this cocreative process presents its own challenges and surely requires more time than other conventional documentation methods. The community members needed time to settle, to grasp the project's objectives, to find their own space within the group, to trust and to adjust to the different abilities and characters of one another, including those of the artist-researcher. Time was also required for the artist-researcher to better understand the skills and resources that each participant community-member had available. It is also essential to acknowledge that such a methodology is a continuous process that might require revisiting, flexibility and adaptation. The experimental cocreative research and documentation process of *Batman Gżirjan* definitely lays some groundwork to continue building on such practice while informing future long-term engagements.

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The project and all data collection tools employed in it were approved by the University of Malta's Research Ethics Committee.

CHAPTER 12

Documentation of Reflective and Interpretive Representation of Youth: A Study through Rudimentary Photographic Close-ups in the Context of Visual Literacy

Amna Qureshi
University of Lapland

Abstract

This chapter demonstrates an enriched reflective and interpretive learning experience made possible by a process of close-up photography as a form of documentation prior to an artistic work in a visual literacy workshop (VLW) done by youth in the Arctic region. The results of this study have proven to be a successful tool for research in the field of representation and interpretation to support and build useful knowledge about reflective thinking for society.

Key words: Documentation, Reflective, Interpretive, Representation, Youth (Arctic region), Visual Literacy

Background

Is there such a thing as a 'tabula rasa', which is Latin for 'a blank slate' (Wikipedia, 2021)? According to the epistemological literature by John Locke (1632–1704), individuals are born without any inbuilt mental content, so all knowledge and learning comes through experience or perception (Fuller et al., 2000). He opposes the doctrine of innatism (Winchester, 1985), which states that the mind is already born with ideas, knowledge and beliefs. Prominent philosophers like Plato argued that certain knowledge pre-exists in one's mind (Yacouba, 2016). According to Kenny (1968), Descartes supported innatism as a concept of knowledge that is universal to all mankind.

In this chapter, I intend to introduce these two opposing theories to illustrate both sides of the argument. Both doctrines and theories have their strengths and weaknesses, but when viewed from the perspective of congenital visual knowledge, not much evidence has been found. On the contrary, Noam Chomsky presented a detailed theory on innatism that focuses on language (Chomsky, 1975, 1986; Cowie, 2017), while Pinker (2003) argued that the blank slate doctrine could have done more harm than good. Therefore, a gap has been identified related to the existence of previsual knowledge.

Another strong concept favouring the tabula rasa theory is the 'nature versus nurture' theory (Plomin, 1994), which contends that human conduct is determined by environment rather than a person's qualities because one's identity is moulded by the culture they live in. For this reason, in this chapter, I discuss the role of visual literacy (VL) and how visual language and cultural representations can nurture one's visual reflexivity and interpretation. Moreover, I discuss the embodied experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1961, 2004) in this artistic experiment as a preliminary task during a visual literacy workshop (VLW; Qureshi et al., 2021) carried out in the Arctic city of Rovaniemi in Lapland, Finland. The participants ranged from ages 19 to 22 and were from the University of Lapland in Finland. The results of this research contributed to the European *Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture* (AMASS) project, a Horizon 2020-funded research project. Additionally, the current study was approved by the University of Lapland's research ethics committee.

The main objective was to document the contribution and importance of the lived experiences (Burch, 1990; Merleau-Ponty, 1961, 2004) of cocreated visual images in the context of VL (Messaris, 1987, 1994). I argue that VL should not be

only operated within one literal subject 'as visual' but that it has vast implications (Little et al., 2015) that are always rich, layered and plural (Johnson, 2008). Various examples make it clear that people interpret visuality in opposing ways. For instance, different people experiencing a book or movie are always going to give diverse results because of their varied emotions and understandings.

Similarly, art can be expressed in a variety of ways, each of which offers a unique experience. One of these ways of expressing ourselves is through language, which is a whole different experience than solely employing the visual arts. Language is always open to interpretation, and through creative processes, we understand art metaphorically as a linguistic communication because we generally *express*, *describe* and *state* our ideas through language (Sullivan, 2006, p. 1). Hence, the current study shows that embodied experiences foster open discussion as a way to discover and share new knowledge, promoting critical thinking through communication (Newfield, 2011).

From an epistemological point of view, two methodological approaches are used for this study. One of these is reflexivity, which refers to examining one's beliefs, judgements and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research (Finlay, 1998; Hammond & Wellington, 2020). The second interpretative approach leads to constructivism, which supports how individuals acquire knowledge of the world and how knowledge can be positively constructed based on our experiences (Magoon, 1977; Hall, 1997; Schwandt, 1994; Mills et al., 2006).

The constructivist approach actively helps people to construct or make their own knowledge, and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learners (Elliott et al., 2000, p. 256; McLeod, 2019); here, knowledge is better expanded when

the participants construct it themselves while engaging in an interpretive cocreative process. The method employed in the current study was a thematic analysis of the visual images photographed by the participants, who then went on to write reflective narratives about their experiences. This activity led to the construction of a representation of their own personal experiences and interpretations, which added new knowledge among the group.

Language not only conveys thoughts and feelings, but it also helps construct concepts. It is a product of a society's thinking and behaviour (Guessabi, 2020). Hall (1997) claimed that 'representation connects meaning and language to culture' (p. 15). He further illustrated that in addition to expanding meaning, it also becomes a means of exchanging ideas between the members of a culture made up of language, signs and images. 'Things don't mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs' (Hall, 1997, p. 25). Across cultures, people, understand and communicate differently, therefore; there is no guarantee that every meaning in one culture is also the same as it is in another. Hence, mutual acceptance is only possible through the exchange of multidimensional perspectives and interpretations to expand the conceptual understanding of people from diverse cultures.

Methodology

To achieve the research goal, the central research questions were created, as follows:

1. How can reflexivity help construct youths' personal representations?
2. How can the documentation, interpretation and reflection in the artistic process be relevant for creative and critical thinking?

Documentation Through Photography

The current study is based on an overarching research strategy approach that primarily focused on the documentation of the entire artistic process through photography (Meron, 2019). Here, the use of an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) led to focus group discussions and note taking as research methods.

Critical thinking is fundamental and crucial to everyday decision making (Turan et al., 2019). For this reason, the research began from an observational study of form and texture through the lens of camera. As the camera lens was utilised as a filter to limit what could be seen, the expression of seeing changed when compared with the naked eye. Reading and exploring the cocreated visual data helped decipher the varied interpretations of the participants, thus creating a rich visual language that came about through by sharing these abstract images.

Through this artistic reflection process, I identified the reflexivity in the representation and interpretation of commonalities; it proved to be a successful tool for conducting research in the field of interpretivism (Díaz Adrade, 2009) to establish and build collaborative knowledge. The introduction of this method created new knowledge and language for the participants, enabling them to think critically, reflect on each other's perspectives and experience the lived phenomenon. Moreover, taking on the role as a participant in this qualitative study allowed me to experience a role change and uncover the potential for reflective visual interpretation to inform society about meaningful yet hidden life experiences. This artistic experiment also enhanced the youths' understanding of the contribution of VL to meaning making, attitude change, decision making and self-expression.

Study Design

The participants were presented with a brief objective of the study and their possible contribution to the artistic inquiry. They were encouraged to be intuitive and imaginative. For this purpose, they were assigned a preliminary task, as discussed below:

Pretask: Photographic documentation as an expression (VLW).

During the pretask phase of the VLW, the participants were asked to photograph a minimum of 10 close-ups of everyday rudimentary objects in a unique and abstract manner, focusing primarily on the lines of the object. Next, they were engaged in a detailed discussion on how these graphical images spoke to them. One of the participants was online and shared the photographs and reflections through a digital platform (Teams). The relevance of lighting, clarity and aesthetic in the photos reflected their own unique representation and perceptions. Everyone came up with stimulating clarifications, hence establishing how each person's perceptions, interpretations and meaning making varied (see Table 1).

The primary role of this activity was twofold. First, the aim was to assess the VL level among the participants: how they framed a simple everyday object using a camera as a tool for documentation and then gave it meaning. The second purpose was to help them see through each other's perspectives and have a dialogue about their results.

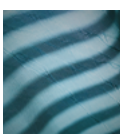
Figure No.	Participant	Photo Image	Participant's original idea	Other participants	Reflection of the other participants
Figure 1	2		*Waves*	2	Bond, tied up
				3	Community
				4	Swaddle
Figure 2	3		*Order*	1	Focused
				3	Hide and seek
				4	Distance
Figure 3	4		*Bend, curve*	2	Focal point, attention
				3	Divided
				4	Space
Figure 4	1		*Tight, breathless*	1	Bleached
				3	Clawed
				4	Ocean floor, serenity

Table 1: Example from each participant's pretask: Photographic documentation as an expression (VLW)

Note taking of focus group discussions.

A focus group discussion was initiated with the aim of creating a dialogue between the interpretative and reflective examination of the images. By means of IPA, it was found that each participant had a different point of view about each photographed image. During the discussion session, the participants commented on each other's captured images, sharing their reflections on what they saw based on their immediate interpretations. They wrote down their responses in one word on the provided sticky notes, which was very helpful in the thematic analysis, as discussed later in this chapter. Table 1 shows the variations in the perceptions, interpretations and meaning making

of each participant in their individual words. When asked by the other participants about their views of the same image, they perceived and interpreted it differently and had different opinions about it. This motivated the participants to move on to the next session of the workshop, which was about making a two dimensional artwork.

Participants.

The participants (M=0, F=4) were a small group, two of whom were researchers and the other two students. But as the sole author (researcher) of this particular chapter, I do not see the small number of participants as a limitation, but it can also be seen as one of the strengths and a beginning of a meaningful process. As a researcher, I immersed myself as a participant to comprehend the phenomenon closely. By becoming part of the whole process, I was able to see through the youth's viewpoint. All the steps that were taken together during the workshop were cocreated by this close-knit group. The group had in-depth discussions about the cocreated data, in which we all shared our ideas, interpretations and spaces (virtual and physical). Consequently, this intimate process led to the personal mandala-making process, which, in the context of VL, produced promising results.

Results and Discussion

The key findings are discussed and summarised in themes that can also provide recommendations for future research.

Categories of Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis categories helped collect a number of results showing the participants' experiences and how the role of documentation affected the group's interpretation of their experiences.

Association with the photographic images.

The participants became aware of the associations that resonated through the photographic images. This allowed the participants to better reflect their personal creativity and express opinions to gain new knowledge about general societal phenomena, including the same ideas that often came up. In this photo (Figure 5), for example, they subconsciously shared the same connotation. According to one participant, 'It reminds me of a bio lab or perhaps sense of demise and re-birth', while another participant added, 'It looks green and dingy and I feel trapped'. The remaining two participants titled this photo as 'lost and tangled' because they found the element of tangling in it. From similar comments on other photo images, the concept of 'associations' emerged within the working group.

Figure 5. Bio lab (Participant 2)

Figure 6. Protection (Participant 3)

Cocreation appreciation.

The cocreation experience was valued, even though the participants were in a blended physical and digital environment. This allowed them to participate in a process that demonstrated that staying in a hybrid digital space does not limit artistic expression. The images were being shared on the same digital platform, and the participants discussed the similarities and differences in each other's perspectives. An interesting conversation about this image (Figure 6) took place when three of the participants saw a shelter, but one saw an open crocodile mouth about to bite. This discussion culminated in an additional concept, which was the 'discovery' of one's own imagination because they were the actors of this specific discussion and reflective activity.

Figure 7. Waffle (Participant 2)

Smooth generation gap.

All the participants reflected enthusiastically, despite the generation gap between the youth and researchers. To support this process, the researchers stepped out of their research role and took part in the participants' 'art worlds' (Becker, 1982) and experienced their ideas around cocreation. An important perspective on the social art was introduced by Becker, who explained, 'Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art' (p. 34), going on to state, 'Art is social in being created by networks of people acting together, and proposes a framework for the study of

differing modes of collective action, mediated by accepted or newly developed conventions' (p. 369). While translating this image (Figure 7), the participants contributed different meanings. One of the participants commented, 'It reminds me of the surface of the waffle cone and I can even feel the taste of it'. The other participant added, 'It is a kaleidoscopic image that makes me feel nostalgic'. The next participant said, 'To me, this is giving an idea of growth, moving forward or even upwards'. Whereas, the last participant remarked, 'How sturdy and militant looking this is!' This deep, diverse and multilayered thinking led to the concept of provoking 'innovation' within the task that has potential to develop overtime.

Cocreated visual language and culture.

The involvement of the participants grew with each image interpretation, as if a Pandora box had opened, letting out lots of complex and exciting ideas. The main value of the current study was to perform it together because the experiences and views of youth and researchers were very similar. This created a common visual language for the group within that specific space and time. The young people's ideas were quite mature and, as already mentioned, I did not experience a large generation gap. One reason could be our common artistic background.

In the further course of discussion about how certain effects are recorded in the photos, the emotional impact was also discussed. It was noticed that certain images shared the same elements, such as line, shape, colour and gradient but differed in meaning. The participants also identified the significant influence of these photos in evoking moods and emotions. This got them talking about different angles, lines, shots, directions and the role of light and how it helped them decode their understanding of each photo image.

Figure 8. Ruffle (Participant 1)

Figure 9. Mould (Participant 1)

In these two photos (Figures 8 and 9), for instance, the discussion began from the perspective of elements of art and principles of design. The participants identified the same form and texture, but their perceptions varied. There were, however, some commonalities, but mostly, it was discussed that there is always the potential to incorporate visual methods of learning and exchange views to develop a 'common' visual and cultural language; this prompted them to grasp both perspectives: 'art and design'. For example, Figure 8 was titled 'Ruffle' by participant 1, whereas participant 2 labelled it as 'Coral and Happiness'. Participant 3 and 4 saw it as a transcript of saga. Similarly, Figure 9 was interpreted as a mould stain by participant 1 but was seen as a new start, birth and gift by participant 2; participant 3 called it a loop, whereas participant 4 described it as comforting and embracing.

Role of reflection and reflexivity.

The open discussion gave promising results when reflections on lived experiences were discussed. Reflection is a highly personal expression and can lead to personal transformation through deep thinking (Dewey, 1933); it can

help people make sense of experiences in relation to oneself, others and contextual conditions while reimagining and/or planning future experience for personal and social benefits (Ryan, 2014). Hence, the act of reflection can take place on multiple levels and can serve as a tool to help achieve more abstract or transformative levels of reflection.

Similarly, reflexivity leads to planning, conducting and writing about research and promotes an ongoing, recursive relationship between the subjective responses of researchers and the intersubjective dynamics of the research process itself (Probst, 2015). The role of researchers in reflexivity (Finlay, 1998, 2002a; Pillow, 2003) can pave the way for broader research. During the session, sharing experiences and discussing the value of the reflective approach to research brought the participants closer because they made connections between storytelling and exchanging personal views.

Broader and Future Perspectives

The results discussed above can be adopted for longitudinal research to develop the method into a process that can be used for obtaining a deep understanding and appreciation of note taking and reflection in the enhancement of VL. The participants' reflections indicated that storytelling and discussing creations together can be an advanced and ground-breaking means of learning and exploration. In the reflective cocreation process, themes were identified that can be decisive for the future understanding of the further development of VL, not only for educational purposes, but also for the citizens intellectual growth as it refines their interpretation. These skills include self-awareness, critical thinking, empathy, self-confidence, creative thinking, discovery and belief in one's own creative potential. All of this goes a long way towards strengthening reflexivity.

Limitations

Despite the success demonstrated, COVID-19 was a significant limitation because fewer participants could attend; however, I consider this a minor shortcoming because it allowed the reflective factor of the research to be more detailed. The relationship between the researcher and participants also became closer. However, the lack of participants with no artistic background limited the results of this research and needs to be re-experienced with mixed backgrounds. In addition, the cultural representation from the perspective of VL can be examined more closely with more variations.

Conclusion

In summary, after the completion of this cocreative artistic reflective and interpretive process, I return to the same question as to whether there is such a thing as a tabula rasa. This is a never-ending debate, but in my opinion, I lean towards the idea of a clean slate that can be enriched with all the knowledge acquired over one's lifetime. All this can be accomplished through documentation, which, in addition to providing crucial insights into the relationships between culture, people and events, also reveals how cultural circumstances influence people's visual language (Gill, 2016). As a result of this documentation process, the participants developed their personal expression, thereby increasing their previous knowledge through interaction and discussion. They became aware of the associations that echoed through the photographic images. This enabled the participants to better reflect on their inner creativity and voice their opinions to build new knowledge about common social phenomenon.

A number of positive conclusions were drawn, including the idea that the cocreation experience was valued by the participants, even though they were in a hybrid digital and physical setting. In addition, despite the generation gap between the youth and researcher, all contributed to interpreting the photos, thus creating a common visual language within them. Entering each other's 'art world' changed their thinking significantly and added more value to the artistic cocreations in a social context.

This is consistent with the above-mentioned 'art world' conclusion, which carries over to the documentation role. The value of documentation (Burnaford, 2007) in building knowledge on knowledge was illustrated by the substantial variations found and explored in the current study. I was able to capture the creative process by participating and documenting it as it unfolded. This proved to be the most valuable part of the research because it provided tangible ideas for how to use interpretive and reflective processes to refine creativity. It also confirmed that such introspective creative processes generate powerful emotional experiences, guiding the manner of seeing and thinking, ultimately leading to awareness and a sense of self.

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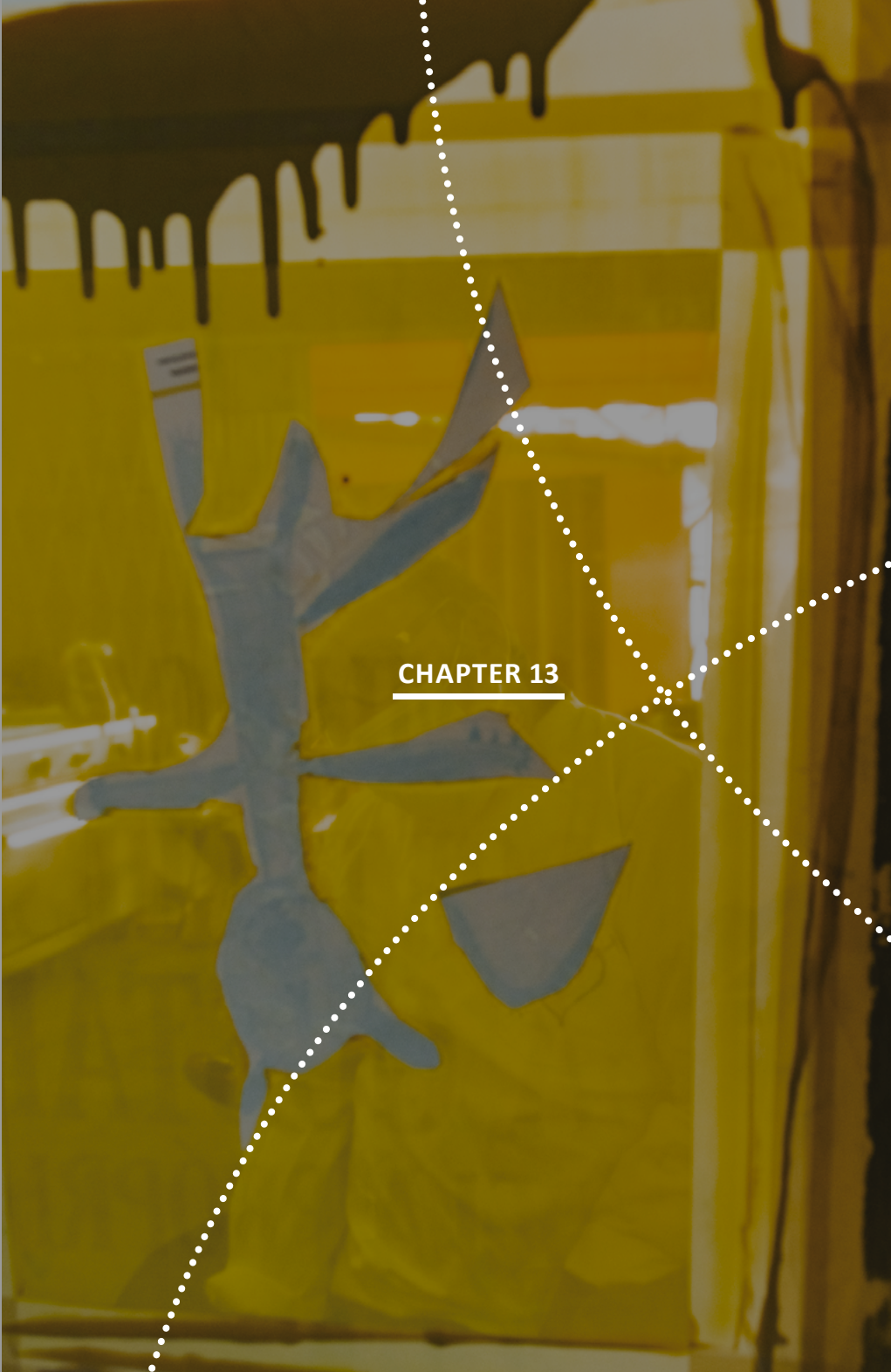

CHAPTER 13

Impacts of Socially Engaged Art and Design Projects: The Need for Documentation

Ângela Saldanha, Célia Ferreira, Raquel Balsa, Teresa Eça
APECV

Figure 1 Working together, seeing with and through the plurality of connections.

Abstract

This visual essay approaches multimedia issues about technologies for data collection and skills. Questions about the collection of data and the need to archive the records of actions for evaluation purposes will be raised to understand how to achieve medium- and long-term impact of participatory art projects.

Keywords: participatory design; art activism; social transformation; social inclusion; marginalisation; evaluation; visual data collection.

The Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture (AMASS) project was funded by the European Union and seeks to investigate the role of the arts in societal challenges, especially in places located on the margins. It aims to promote and investigate transformative artistic actions with minorities or disadvantaged groups from peripheral regions around Europe. In their artistic and cultural practices, various issues related to the archive arise. Reflections emerge from relationships: connections between the participants and the voices that sculpt their design, hence creating a live archive defining the project that emerges from within. The essay will reveal some of the threads that cross and tangle, weaving together relationships.

Figure 2. Working together from collected stories to be retold and (re)incorporated into new travelling artefacts. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Introduction

This chapter reflects on the importance of documenting projects based on artistic and activist processes developed with marginalised and disadvantaged communities, allowing project participants to revisit the memories of the moments they experienced as a form of social transformation and community empowerment.

We see how the various possibilities of recording and archiving each moment in the development of projects can help in the participants' reflection on the past, present and future, working a means of disseminating the experiences lived in the projects.

Who Are We?

The Research Group in Arts, Community and Education (GriACE)

We are a group of arts educators, visual art teachers, art education researchers, social designers and artists integrated in the Association of Teachers of Visual Expression and Communication APECV in Portugal. Our projects normally use participatory action research and artistic and activist processes. We understand the practice of art and design as an open learning space for social transformation and community empowerment.

Figure 3. First encounter at ASSOL with APECV and Dori Nigro Oliveira de Frades, Portugal. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Figure 4. Encounter at Museu Tesouro da Misericórdia with Carlos Sousa and Juliana Ferreira, Paradinha group Viseu, Portugal. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Figure 5. Third encounter with Abel Andrade at Gaia, Portugal. Photography by Ângela Saldanha.

Working with Vulnerable and Marginalised Communities

In Portugal, we have been working with communities from marginalised sectors of the population, with participants with multiple disabilities and also with participants from rural and low economic backgrounds. Some of our projects are funded by the European Union, such AMASS.

In our team, we are aware of several limitations related to the project design, which tends to be influenced by funding agencies, not by the participants. Even when we codesign a project and try to bring in the needs of our stakeholders and participants, we need to design the project in line with the objectives of the calls, which are normally related to the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 (United Nations, n.d.). As the creators of a project whose purpose, financing, process and outcomes have been determined outside the communities by an international team of researchers (project partnership), we understand the inequalities of such projects. We also understand the imbalance in power between the professionals working in institutions (researchers, artists) and the participants from vulnerable communities who work in our projects.

Hence, having these limitations in mind and always being aware of relevant ethical issues, we try our best to work honestly with others by starting from storytelling activities that will help us adapt the projects to the needs of the participants and our goals for social inclusion and community empowerment.

> *Empowerment does not mean giving power to someone. Empowerment cannot be given. We gain power through building our skills, our confidence, our knowledge and our networks, and because we have earned it, it cannot be taken away from us* (Gobard & Matarrasso, 2021, p. 8).

In the projects, we try to listen to the participants, bring our artistic skills to make their stories visible in other contexts through texts, exhibitions and art and design collaborative productions. By doing so, the project brings self-recognition to each participant and the entire community.

Figure 6. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Figure 7. Beyond the margins: we listened to stories and recreated them with love; an inner part of us extends beyond us.

Data Collection Using Artistic Processes

Within this context, we bring our professional expertise to collect stories and document communication processes for learning together. We usually adopt image-gathering technologies such as photography and video, audio recordings and handwritten notes or journals. Sometimes, our artists take photos of the activities; on other occasions, we invite the participants to take photos using photovoice activities with cell phone cameras or polaroid cameras. We tend to invite everyone to be a coauthor in the image collection and production, though this is not always possible in terms of time and technological skills.

We also use more classical data-gathering techniques through written questionnaires and audio/video interviews. However, some of the participants in our groups cannot write or speak, and in this case, we need the collaboration of the caregivers, social workers or other health professionals who can help the participants reply to written questionnaires or audio interviews. We are aware that the data collected in this way are always mediated by a third person.

These aspects may seem as though they lack collaboration in all stages, and we acknowledge the imbalance here. As a way of compensating and overcoming it, we have conversations in groups about the images, photographs and videos. Photo-elicitation has been a very interesting process in our interviews, where the participants tell a story using a photograph taken by them. Sharing the photos and videos taken by our artists in focus sessions has been indicated as a positive tool to achieve the visibility of the voices involved in the participatory projects.

One important ethical aspect to draw attention to here is the right of the participants to be visually silent, or imageless. It is our responsibility as researchers to

guarantee the participants' rights. If the participants wish to be part of the project but be visually anonymous, it is our responsibility to find other artistic ways to include their voices and stories in the project results.

Figure 8. One of the expressions collected in the photovoice, calligraphed and shared in a pin.

Figure 9. Kit isolate with love. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Figure 10 . The archive is active and integrated in the process, and the voices are engraved and activated in the artefacts.

Organising

Organising, storing and archiving the data have been, for us, a very complex exercise, especially because during a project that lasts, for example, for one year, we end up with thousands of recorded documents and objects. Ideally, all the participants should be involved in the process: artists, caregivers, social workers, art educators, researchers and other professionals, but when working in the field, there is little time for that. However, for the purposes of evaluation and the possible impact of the project, it is crucial that we organise the data in a virtual archive. For that purpose, the team designates one or two researchers who can help the others store the documents. One big problem we have encountered at this stage is related to the selection of the images because it is impossible to analyse all the photographs and videos produced during the project's duration.

Figures 11 and 12. From photovoice to the museum. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Figure 13. Into the margins: we put the margins in the centre.

Reflecting

As a strategy, our team has merged reflection about data with the project activities, so internal evaluation is a crucial aspect of each project and may be expressed as an exhibition, an article or an e-book. Curating an exhibition about the project in a collaborative way has been pointed out in our research group as a useful strategy to overcome the problem of selection and analysis of visual data. Each exhibition tells a story about the project and reflects about the activities. Pop-up categories and clusters ultimately make the project and voices of the participants visible outside the group. The visibility of art projects lead them to expand the range and skills beyond the group, enabling encounters, connections, legitimacy, funding, audiences and partnerships:

> *The political projects of community arts can be taken up in different ways, and involve a range of relationships and practices of art and cultural production. Democratising agendas converge with economic rationales, which means that community art is more complex formation than is usually assumed. Community artists and participants are implicated in various processes of cultural exchange and the acquisition of cultural capital.* (Khan, 2015, p. 82)

An exhibition, which can be viewed as open dialogue, is a cultural exchange process that fosters connections and perceptions that can develop and contribute to cultural capital acquisition, closing the gap between groups and allowing the interchange of knowledge and mutual learning: each group can learn with the other.

A final video about the project is also an interesting way of achieving research goals. To make the video, data are selected according to a story line, and during the process of video editing, important aspects and findings are highlighted that are further discussed with the participants to include all opinions in the evaluation stage.

Figures 14 and 15. Getting to know the Paradinha group. Drawing and photography by Teresa Eça. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Figure 16. “I learn from a drawing”.

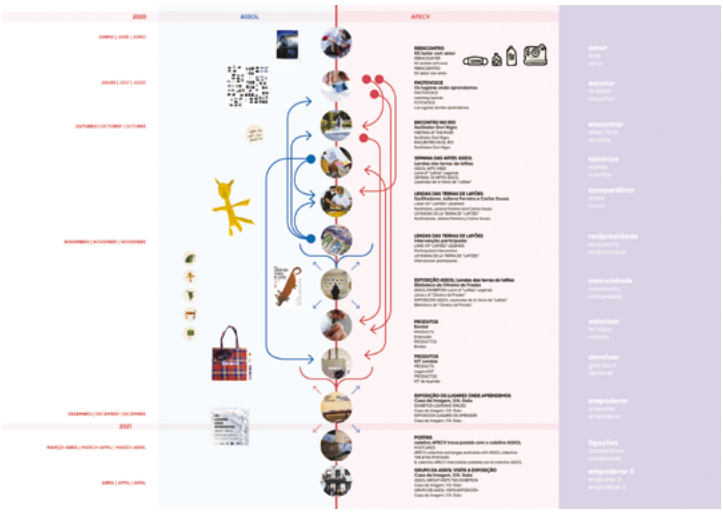

Figure 17. Relations and steps of the pilot project.

Organising

The collection and processing of data allow for a more careful and critical reflection. It allows us to go back to places, remember events and relate activities that have occurred at different times. The analysis of data by the various participants in the investigation allows us to create a narrative with different perspectives. For the study, the participants look at images, art works, notes and videos of the process, which reveals relations and contributes to a better reflection on self-evolution and the possibility of creating future goals. With this, a more sustained reflection on the past, present and future can occur.

As we noted, in our participatory art projects, there are many difficulties, ethical problems and collaboration obstacles. However, when we work with participants and the participants feel the arts have helped them in telling their stories to others, hence emancipating them from cultural amnesia, it becomes our mission to make their

stories visible to others. For this reason, we need to be careful and rigorous in documenting the processes.

Figure 18. A gift. Handmade with love. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Figure 19. From margin to margin. We embroidered and shared lace. (gifts handmade with ASSOL for the group of Gaia)

Figure 20. An archive that contributes to the project through the relationships that emerge from it. Photography by Raquel Balsa.

Telling a story

When the process is dialogic, the arts can help the participants tell their stories and can be the start of new possibilities of growth through sharing a narrative. For researchers, documenting becomes a responsibility to archive records of actions for evaluation purposes, which gives space, time and place to the voices to be heard and to echo in other individuals and groups, creating new ties and learning. The voices just have to emerge so that others can grow with them. Our commitment is to give all participants the tools, form, place and time through affection, disseminating the collaborative reflection about visual documents to understand how to achieve a medium- and long-term impact of participatory art projects.

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CHAPTER 14

Reddish Orange – Ruskie

Heidi Pietarinen
University of Lapland

Abstract

Heidi Pietarinen´s textile art collection *Reddish Orange – Ruskie* was exhibited in Gallery Pihatto, Lappeenranta in 2020. The jacquard woven and printed textiles visualize the textiles from her grandparents' home in Sortavala, an area that was evacuated and ceded to the Soviet Union in 1944. The collection is an imaginary series of textiles because her grandparents took nothing with them when they were evacuated, except a few photographs and a black chair. The layers of the textile collection are constructed from the narratives of three generations. Different materials – living, moving, figurative and symbolic – are combined to create new compositions, in the layering of materials, the past is given new life. The new *Reddish Orange* textile art collection will be exhibited in Gallery Valo in Rovaniemi in 2022. Although the collection is in the name of one author, the artistic process is not limited to one person.

Key words: Art-based research, textile design, material-driven design, a living design medium, co-designing

Cultural Mapping – White Sacred Textiles

The city of Sortavala is located on the northern shore of Lake Ladoga, more than 30 km from the Finnish border. My grandparents lived in Rautalahti village in a house called Koivikko *(Birch Grove)*. My grandmother often told me her story of what it was like to leave her home in Sortavala. She also recalled how the rooms in the house were decorated. According to the story, the home remained

in ‘a sacred condition’, decorated with the best interior textiles, including curtains, carpets and table cloths with fringes and other ornate details. It was just after the death of my grandmother that I started to think about the colours, patterns and shapes of sacred textiles (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Koivikko 2021 (Birch Grove) captured in layered patterns. Jacquard and embroidery 140 x 3000 mm. Photographs: Heidi Pietarinen.

The narratives were artistic approaches to *cultural mapping*, focusing on imaginative cartography and memories of textiles. My creative process emphasized the importance of “felt sense” narratives. I was mapping the intangibilities of lost artefacts and places through narratives, photographs, events and the senses (material, tactile and olfactory) (Santo, 2019, pp. 205–218). Baking became part of a creative process producing an embroidered, woven and printed collage from the milieu.

Figure 2. Grandmother´s life story was captured in a water bagel recipe and in this name day card (1918). A decorated detail from a photograph began to tell a story of its own, which was captured in an enlarged digital image (140 x 300 cm) called Ruskie neitsyt, valgie neitsyt 2020 (Redhead maiden, blond maiden). The archives at Nurmes Museum confirmed that this specific pattern was traditionally coloured bright red and yellow. Photograph: unknown photographer and Heidi Pietarinen, private collection.

My research journey started with an old family photograph (Figure 2). My uncle's photograph collection contains five photographs related to life in Sortavala. The photographs show family members in front of the house, in the garden or in the marketplace in Sortavala. One of them is a studio photograph, which was received as a name day greeting card in 1918. In the picture, attention is drawn to two women standing in the background wearing similar richly embroidered aprons, which were the festive costumes of the region. I remember looking at this photograph in particular many times while listening to my grandmother´s stories about how to bake water bagels and how the home in Sortavala was decorated. It is possible that my memory has conflated several memories and photographs into this one image because while I was growing up I often watched her bake and imaged the Sortavala textiles being wheat flour white in colour. In truth, I have no memories of my grandmother baking bagels or of seeing any textiles from Sortavala, but my grandmother´s life story was captured in a water bagel recipe and in this name card photograph (Figure 2). Water bagels are made of water, yeast, salt, sugar

and butter cooked in salt water and baked in an oven until golden brown (see Isotalo & Kuittinen 1908/2016, p. 479). I continued my research through conversations with my two uncles, both of them born in Sortavala in the 1930s, and baking sessions with my mother. I also began to search for information from museums, such as the North Karelian Museum (Joensuu) and the Nurmes Museum (Nurmes).

I began by outlining an ornate detail from an apron depicted on a name card, the sender of which is unknown. I magnified the pattern to 25 times its original size, which made it easier to find out more information about its origin. Embroidery was part of the Karelian folk costume and came into fashion in the early 20th century. The embroidered apron was a festive costume of the region. The pattern was embroidered on a white base fabric with red and yellow threads (Rossander 2019). Information about the origin of the costume and the embroidery took me back to a lost past. It's layers of colour merged in my memory with the taste of my grandmother's water bagels, and these sensations were somehow present and at the same time lost, like the past in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*:

> *But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.* (Proust, 1913/ 2015, p. 50)

The digital printed fabrics I created for *Ruskie neitsyt, valgie neitsyt 2020 (Redhead maiden, blond maiden)* reminded me that my art-based research was not about

studying my own works of art but about making works of art (Arlander, 2009, p. 49; Barad, 2003). I used hands-on, material-based methods, such as baking, weaving and printing to capture visual, haptic and olfactory experience in the three-dimensional spatiality of textiles. Textiles also bring out the symbolic content of memories, narratives and cultural meanings from the past lives of materials and everyday living. They say something about the layers of memory, the nuances of colours, differences in textures and about diverse versions of the past. It is because the five human senses, including that of taste, can unlock memories and provide privileged access to the past (see Kontturi 2018, 128; Saarikangas, 2011; Scouwenberg, 2010; Proust, 1913/2015) that the journey of this design process continued with water bagel baking.

Baking and Weaving – Flavour, Texture and Colour

Just like jacquard weaving, baking for me was an in-between practice: it brought a three-dimensional and tactile aspect to the reading of materials and the creation of narratives, photographs and sketches, involving other sensory modalities, such as taste and smell. In line with contemporary trends in bioart, they offered the possibilities of shared experiences, collaborative practices, cooperation and shared authorship (Berger et al., 2019, p. 15; Sonnevald & Schifferstein, 2008, pp. 41–67).

Figure 3. The baking process: A living design medium and a new perspective on (bio)materiality. Photographs: Heidi Pietarinen.

Baking offered me the experience of being a practitioner and maker, which is often part of the material-centric field of textile design. This living design medium involved material production that incorporated simple living organisms such as yeast (a living design medium), material-driven design and co-design with something that has its own agency. Baking recipes that were more than a hundred years old led me to create imperfect and uneven shapes and produced sensorial and interpretative experiences 'with and through' the materials that were my ingredients (Figure 3; Lauri, 2021; Collet, 2020; Tuominen, 2020, p. 2; Camere & Karana, 2018, p. 576; Karana et al., 2015, p. 37). In this respect, it was rust or lichen dying or wind painting, where oxidized iron or lichen seem almost to take on a personality of their own, speaking in quick bursts or gentle whispers or occasionally making an emphatic point (Figure 4).

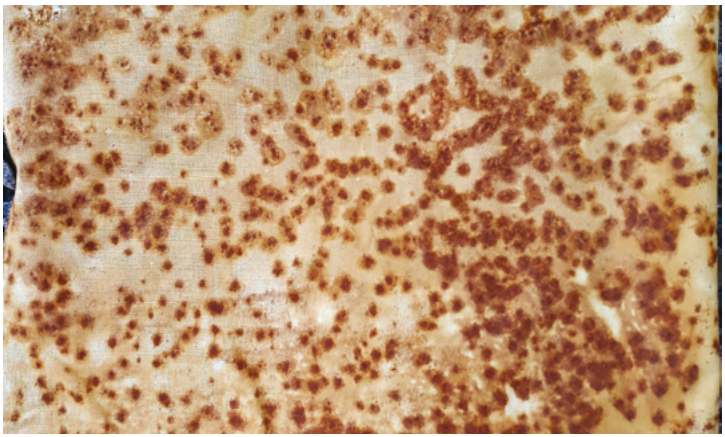

Figure 4. Rust and lichen dying and wind painting (2021). Photographs: Heidi Pietarinen.

For me, baking was not only about producing objects (freshly baked bagels); the process was more important. Baking showed me the relationship between human experience and oblivion. There are traces, gaps and holes in the textile collection because the work is not approached as a single episode but as a process with no end point. For example, the baking process produced new and unexpected narratives, like glints of memories and fragments of tastes and smells. They allowed space for interaction, sharing, collaboration and contribution. Every gap, hole and silent or missing part of the narratives made the source material stronger and the baking and design process more engaging.

The Reddish Orange Collection

The *Reddish Orange* collection opens on to a new horizon using colours, spaces and narratives and introducing their backgrounds and birth processes (Pietarinen, 2020; Parjanen, 2020). At its best, cultural mapping means learning through experiment, where the experiments are

inherently unreadable. It means hands-on work following DIY (do-it-yourself) and DIWO (do-it-with-others), that is, shared authorship, approaches. The baking process in particular enhanced my empathic understanding by helping me to see and hear someone else's point of view. The process had some similarities with both interdisciplinary and holistic ways of working.

Printed and jacquard woven textile design and colour detailing are different methods of producing a surface ornamented fabric, but there is more to the process than these textile design techniques. Originating from a name day card the collection conflates numerous memories, narratives, senses and photographs into one fabric, visualized layer by layer. They are linked by pleated and embroidered patterns, creating the impression of layering narratives.

Collage, as a series of overlapping images, is a way to illustrating narratives. However, it does not provide the illusion of a continuous linear chain of events but instead that of a multi-generational reality. This served me both as an artist and a researcher by helping me to discover elusive aspects of knowledge that might otherwise have remained hidden. As an art-based method, collage uncovers, juxtaposes and transforms multiple meanings and perspectives and integrates different aspects of knowledge through a living multisensorial design process.

Conclusion

Combining personal storytelling and intergenerational documentation and re-documentation with cultural contextualization is a way of creating a unique self-portrait and of getting closer to one's own experiences. A self-portrait is generally considered a private performance, but as soon as a material-driven design and living

design medium took place in a process (e.g., baking) or presentation (e.g., an exhibition), private became public and shared. The story created empathetic connections between the artist, the narrators of the stories and the exhibition visitors, allowing for a more general understanding to emerge based on exclusive private experiences. Stories are both tangible and intangible; we can document them and bring them to life in our own ways before they disappear.

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Contributor Biographies

RAQUEL BALSA is a Portuguese designer. She was integrated in several companies, co-founded one, collaborates with GriArCE, C3 and ID+. Through her work in the Portuguese Visual Communication Teachers in Portugal (APECV), Raquel dedicates herself to community and participatory projects such as Circle, AMASS, EU no musEU, Jóias que nos unem, Talho o Mimo, Criação de uma Marca na ASSOL, Horta de Deméter, Abraçadores (de árvores), Talho O Mimo, and Pedais - ANEIS Viseu. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7715-8429

KRISTINA BORG is a socially engaged artist and an art educator/lecturer. In her transdisciplinary research-practice she spends time integrating into specific communities and devotes her attention to relationships between people. In 2020 her collaborative project *Nimxu Mixja* (Let's take a walk) was awarded Arts Council Malta's Art Award as 'Best project in the community'. She is also a fellow of the Salzburg Global Forum for Cultural Innovators and a member of the international Community Economies Research Network.

TERESA TORRES DE EÇA holds a PhD in art education. She is a visual artist, teacher in secondary education and a researcher. Teresa coordinates APECV Research Centre in Arts Education and Community and collaborates with the CIAC Research Center in Arts and Communication at the University of Algarve in Portugal. She served as president of the International Society for Education Through Art – InSEA from 2014 until 2019. Since 2008 she has also been the president of the Portuguese Visual Communication Teachers in Portugal (APECV). Her research interests include participatory action research, socially engaged arts, transcultural educational projects, eco-citizenship and art education activism. Currently she is the Principal Editor of INVISIBILIDADES, the Ibero-American research journal for education, culture and arts. She has produced several E- books and articles about art education. She has organised several exhibitions and conducts activist art and education international projects with C3 collective of artist educators.

CÉLIA FERREIRA is a PhD Candidate in Child Studies, specialising in Artistic Education. She holds an MA in Art Education and postgraduate qualification in Pedagogical Supervision. Celia is also a secondary level art teacher in schools in Portugal. Her research interests include education through art, textile art, handicrafts, community art and heritage. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9082-7014

MGR. VENDULA FREMLOVÁ (Ph.D.) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art Education at the Faculty of Education, Charles University, Prague, and in the Department of Art History and Theory at Faculty of Art and Design Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic. She is also a freelance curator and art theorist. In her research she focuses on visual literacy as an interdisciplinary topic and on critical attitude to visuality and contemporary art. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2919-2467

DR MARIE FULKOVÁ is associate professor and Deputy Head of the Department of Art Education, Faculty of Education, Charles University, Prague. Her research focuses on exploring ways in which the cultural artefacts function as a polysemy across different social domains. Her research activities cover visual literacy and modalities of perception of visual arts in children and youths, transpositions between artistic, cultural and pedagogical domains and creative interactions between education and visual arts.

MARIJA GRINIUK is a performance artist and doctoral candidate at the University of Lapland, Faculty of Art and Design and lecturer at Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Business Management. Her research concerns the new channels of performance documentation, derived from, usually invisible biometric data, such as brain activity. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5648-5575

CAROLINA GUTIÉRREZ NOVOA is a Chilean design strategist and researcher based in Italy. She currently collaborates with PACO Design Collaborative in Milan, where they address social innovation projects. Her work concerns the application of the design discipline to shape concepts, behaviours, interactions and strategies. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5867-9747

NINA LUOSTARINEN has a background in puppetry, scenography, and event production. She works at Humak University of Applied Sciences in Finland in cultural management projects. She is also a doctoral candidate at the University of Lapland in the Faculty of Arts and Design. Both her research interests and artistic work are intertwined with topics of changing perspective, narrative dimensions of places, empathy, and adult playfulness. She believes in serendipity, fun and invisible worlds as potential change agents. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0777-2858

DR SATU MIETTINEN is professor of Service Design at the University of Lapland, Finland, with research interests spanning the themes of design methods in engaging with the Arctic region, service design methods for inclusion, the participatory development of services, as well as socially responsible art and design methods. satu.miettinen@ulapland.fi. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4440-0001

TUE BRISSON MOSICH holds an MSc in Computer Science & Performance Design. His fields of interest include music, coding, electronics, art, design, research and education. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7191-9864

DR HEIDI PIETARINEN (Ph.D in Arts) is Professor of Textiles in the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Lapland, Finland. She holds a PhD degree in textile design and her research interests include textile art methdologies, design and history. Her research includes projects and working groups such as the Future Bio Arctic Design, High Altitude Bioprospecting and BioARTech Laboratory, which include biochemists and artists. Pietarinen is curious about the narratives and multiple cultural influences told by textiles. Different cultures can teach us how to recognise and appreciate the contrasts of materials, colours and textures within the simplest forms. Stories should not think only as a written history, but as what we do – doing is thinking.

AMNA QURESHI is a researcher and PhD candidate at the at the University of Lapland in Finland. Her doctoral research entitled Visual Voice: Exploring Youth Personal Identity through Creative and Empathic Processes, explores the factors such as search for identity, conformity, desire to be heard, communication and the interpretation of the youth of Arctic city of Rovaniemi in Finland. Her research interests are artistic and art & design education experiments which will contribute to the H2020 funded research project Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture (AMASS) at the University of Lapland, Finland. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8146-7216

DR MILOSH RAYKOV is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education Studies at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. He teaches courses in sociology and research methods and he is involved in studies of early school leaving, student involvement in paid and voluntary work and socially engaged art. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0612-2872

SILVIA REMOTTI is a designer and researcher based in Italy; in 2013 she founded PACO Design Collaborative. Her interest in design for social innovation and design for education started before founding PACO and it has grown over the years. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5825-7704

DR ÂNGELA SALDANHA is vice-president of the Association of Teachers of Expression and Visual Communication (APECV - Portugal), where she coordinates research in art and community and art education. She holds a PhD in Arts Education and Postdoctoral degrees in Digital Media Art. She is a Postdoctoral fellow at the University of Brasilia, Institute of Arts at the Design Department. Her research interests are contemporary art for sustainability, art and community, art education and diversity. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0404-0088

DR MELANIE SARANTOU is adjunct professor in social design and senior researcher at the University of Lapland, investigating how arts and narrative practices impact on marginalised women in diverse global settings. Her current research focuses on the role of arts in societies that exist on the margin of Europe in the European Commission-funded Horizon 2020 project titled 'Action on the Margin: Arts as Social Sculpture'. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2209-3191

DR TANG TANG is an Associate Professor of Design at the University of Leeds, UK. Tang has a BEng and MSc in Industrial Design and a PhD in Design. Her recent research focuses on exploring how design can be used to create healthy, sustainable user behaviour and effective cross-cultural communication and collaboration. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5410-7271

MICHELLE OLGA VAN WYK is currently a lecturer in the Design department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa. Her background in jewellery design informs her research interest in decolonising design practices in education and creative making processes, and is also the foundation of her practice-led PhD at the University of Lapland, Finland. She enjoys

exploring non-traditional materials through the lens of handmade body adornment and Indigenous crafting. Her work is embedded in exploring inclusive creative environments where learning can flourish through innovative artistic approaches that incorporate ways of making, research, and multi-layered storytelling. Her rich Namibian heritage informs the artistic threads that weave together my artistic endeavours. A child of the African sun, she believes there is much to learn from the deckle edge of resilience that is brought forth from the conversations between the global South and global North. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8445-352X

DR RAPHAEL VELLA is an Associate Professor in Art Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta, where he coordinates postgraduate degrees in art education and social practice. Current research interests include socially engaged art, sustainability in art education, curatorial practices and contemporary art. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2295-9661

DR PAUL WILSON is a Lecturer in Graphic Design at the School of Design, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures, University of Leeds. Much of his work orbits ideas and ideals of utopianism found in manifestations of the utopian action in both community and place, and made concrete via language and typography. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2262-5629

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